



March 3, 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Peace be with you!

As vaccines for COVID-19 continue to become available, we wish to address the moral questions that have arisen, insofar as some vaccines are developed using cell lines that have originated from the tissue taken from babies who were aborted decades ago.<sup>1</sup> Abortion is a grave evil, and we must avoid complicity in abortion. Let us also pray for God's peace, healing, and mercy for all those who have had abortions.

It is morally permissible to receive the vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna. Neither of these vaccines have used cell lines originating in tissue taken from aborted babies in their design, development, and production. However, both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccine did use such a cell line in the confirmatory testing. This connection to the abortion is very remote, however, and it is important to keep in mind that there are varying levels of responsibility. Greater moral responsibility lies with the researchers than with those who receive the vaccine. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has indicated that it is morally permissible to be vaccinated if there are no alternatives and there are serious health risks.<sup>2</sup> Such serious health risks are present due to the current pandemic.

The vaccines developed by Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca are more morally problematic, however. They utilized in the design, production, development, and confirmatory testing a cell line that originated from tissue taken from an aborted baby. These vaccines may be received only if there are no other alternatives. If one does not have a choice of vaccine and a delay in immunization may bring about serious consequences for one's health and the health of others, it would be permissible to accept the Johnson & Johnson or AstraZeneca vaccine. Both are somewhat similar in production to the Rubella vaccine, which the Pontifical Academy of Life indicated could be received for grave reasons and if there are no other alternatives.<sup>3</sup>

If one were to choose not to be vaccinated, one would have a moral responsibility to embrace the necessary precautions to avoid spreading the disease to others.

At this same time, we join our voices to call for the development of vaccines that have no connection to abortion. Our consciences must not be dulled, nor may we imply in any way that abortion is acceptable.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the morality of COVID-19 vaccines, see the joint statements of the chairmen of the USCCB Committee on Doctrine and Pro-Life Activities on which our statement is based: [moral-considerations-covid-vaccines \(usccb.org\)](https://www.usccb.org/news/2021/us-bishop-chairmen-doctrine-and-pro-life-address-use-johnson-johnson-covid-19-vaccine)  
<https://www.usccb.org/news/2021/us-bishop-chairmen-doctrine-and-pro-life-address-use-johnson-johnson-covid-19-vaccine>

For more information about specific vaccines being developed for COVID-19 see this reference chart from the Charlotte Lozier Institute: [COVID-19-Vaccine-Candidates-and-Abortion-Derived-Cell-Lines.pdf \(lozierinstitute.org\)](https://www.lozierinstitute.org/COVID-19-Vaccine-Candidates-and-Abortion-Derived-Cell-Lines.pdf)

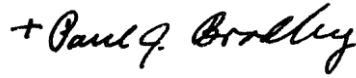
<sup>2</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Certain Bioethical Questions (Dignitas Personae) (2008), nos. 35-36: [Instruction Dignitas Personae on Certain Bioethical Questions, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith \(vatican.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cdf/communications/documents/2008/08/15/instr_081508_dignitas-personae_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> Pontifical Academy for Life, "'Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses,'" (9 June 2005) in National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly 6:3 (2006): 541-49

Let us implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that God may bring an end to the pandemic and that all esteem and respect the dignity of human life.

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Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron  
Archbishop of Detroit

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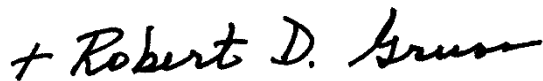
Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley  
Bishop of Kalamazoo

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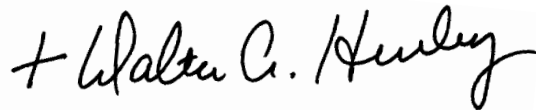
Most Reverend Earl A. Boyea  
Bishop of Lansing

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Most Reverend John F. Doerfler  
Bishop of Marquette

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Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss  
Bishop of Saginaw

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Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley  
Apostolic Administrator  
Diocese of Gaylord

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Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak  
Bishop of Grand Rapids