



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



BISHOP OLSON INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT TO USCCB ADDRESSING
ETHICAL CONCERNS ON THE NEW COVID-19 VACCINES

December 14, 2020

The Bishop-Chairmen of the USCCB's Doctrine Committee and Pro-Life Committee in issuing this statement, after seeking sound counsel from reliable sources, are appealing to the Principle of Material Cooperation to assure the faithful that they are not objectively sinning by being immunized with these vaccines despite their morally compromised and distant origins in connection with the grave evil of abortion. The Principle of Material Cooperation is a long-standing and trustworthy principle in the Catholic Intellectual and Moral tradition dating back hundreds of years. In appealing to this principle, the Bishops are not counseling that evil may be done that a greater good might come of it.

The late moral theologian, Father Benedict M. Ashley writes, "The Principle of Material Cooperation" articulates that one may act in cooperation with other people who are committing evil, even when one sees that this may be of some assistance in their performing morally evil actions, but only under the following conditions:

1. One intends and only does what is morally good in the cooperative action and disapproves and even attempts if possible, to prevent what is evil.
2. One does not formally cooperate with the evil action of another by directly assisting it, advising it, or approving it.
3. One's material cooperation with this evil action is remote. The greater the evil of the other's action in relation to the good one hopes to achieve by the cooperation or harm that would result from non-cooperation, taking also into account possible scandal, i.e. the appearance of formal cooperation which might be a cause of temptation to others to commit evil.

Reviewing the Statement by the Bishops in light of the Principle of Material Cooperation:

1. The Bishops begin by articulating that we Catholics disapprove and have always disapproved of the use of the cell lines morally compromised by abortion — the Bishops give reasons for that disapproval and they refer to the letter written by Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann that attempted to dissuade the pharmaceutical companies from developing the cell lines (we have no control over the actions of the pharmaceutical companies of which we disapprove). The Bishops also begin by affirming that the development of a vaccine and its use in itself (without morally tainted cell lines) is morally good because it combats the spread of a deadly disease like COVID-19,

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especially among the elderly and chronically ill, among the economically disenfranchised and minority populations, and for the common good of society (including the economic aspects of the common good).

2. The Bishops clearly are not advocating the formal cooperation with evil actions of another by directly assisting, advising, or approving the pharmaceutical companies in their use of morally tainted cell lines (in fact the Bishops formally do the opposite).
3. The material cooperation with this evil action is remote. The Bishops take into account the long distance in time (around 50 years) from the commission of the original abortion. Furthermore, the tempting of others to commit future abortions as acceptable for the sake of medical progress is discouraged by the bishops. The good one hopes to achieve by the cooperation, the cure of disease, the saving of lives, and the alleviation of legitimate suffering especially among the vulnerable and economically disenfranchised, is considered in relation to the harm that would result from non-cooperation (the continued spread of COVID-19, suffering from illness, more deaths, more suffering especially among the vulnerable and poor, and damage to the common good).
4. Scandal, the appearance of formal cooperation with the wrongdoing of the pharmaceutical companies, which might cause a temptation to others (the future and ongoing development of vaccines and other therapies with the use of future abortions or continued disrespect for the humanity of the unborn baby who was aborted so many years ago from which the cell line was initially developed). The Bishops convey the message to the faithful that this behavior on the part of pharmaceutical companies is not an acceptable evil that good might come from it and such actions should not be repeated.

U.S. Bishop Chairmen for Pro-Life and Doctrine Address Ethical Concerns on the New COVID-19 Vaccines
<https://www.usccb.org/news/2020/us-bishop-chairmen-pro-life-and-doctrine-address-ethical-concerns-new-covid-19-vaccines>

Full USCCB Statement: Moral Considerations Regarding the New Covid-19 Vaccines
<https://www.usccb.org/moral-considerations-covid-vaccines>

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