

U.S. Bishop Chairmen for Doctrine and for Pro-Life Address the Use of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 Vaccine

WASHINGTON— In March, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Doctrine, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City in Kansas, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities, issued a statement on the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine recently approved for use in the United States.

“The approval of Johnson & Johnson’s COVID-19 vaccine for use in the United States again raises questions about the moral permissibility of using vaccines developed, tested, and/or produced with the help of abortion-derived cell lines.

Pfizer and Moderna’s vaccines raised concerns because an abortion-derived cell line was used for testing them, but not in their production. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine, however, was developed, tested and is produced with abortion-derived cell lines raising additional moral concerns. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has judged that ‘when ethically irreproachable Covid-19 vaccines are not available ... *it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process.*’¹ However, if one can choose among equally safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, the vaccine with the least connection to abortion-derived cell lines should be chosen. Therefore, if one has the ability to choose a vaccine, Pfizer or Moderna’s vaccines should be chosen over Johnson & Johnson’s.

While we should continue to insist that pharmaceutical companies stop using abortion-derived cell lines, given the world-wide suffering that this pandemic is causing, we affirm again that being vaccinated can be an act of charity that serves the common good.

1 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines” (17 Dec 2020), no. 2.