



COLORADO CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
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A Letter to the Faithful from the Bishops of Colorado

The Colorado Bishops affirm that Catholics should consider how a vaccine was created and tested before receiving it.

In their Letter to the Faithful on COVID-19 Vaccines (December 14, 2020), the Colorado bishops wrote:

“The bishops of Colorado affirm that the use of some COVID-19 vaccines is morally acceptable under certain circumstances.... At the same time, we must remember that a good end cannot justify evil means. Vaccines need to be developed according to ethical criteria. Human cell lines that come from aborted fetuses should not be used in the design, development, production, or lab testing of vaccines. The development of vaccines and other medicines using aborted fetal cells is ethically unacceptable.”¹

The Catholic Church recognizes the incredible potential of the COVID-19 vaccines to eliminate suffering and potentially lead to an end to the current health crisis. Already, there has been progress from the vaccines to bring about lower infection rates in Colorado and nationwide. The rapid development of effective vaccines for COVID-19 is an astounding medical accomplishment, and government leaders across the world should be working to ensure that every person who desires it, be vaccinated.

However, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which recently received emergency approval from the FDA, used aborted fetal cell lines in its design, development, production, and testing and is, therefore, *not a morally valid option if one has the ability to choose a vaccine*. Given the availability of the more *morally acceptable* Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines in Colorado, Catholics should avoid the *morally compromised* Johnson & Johnson or AstraZeneca vaccination (as noted in the December letter) in favor of Moderna or Pfizer. Most Coloradans have a unique opportunity to choose morally acceptable options when electing to be vaccinated, but for those who do not have this choice, the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has explained the criteria under which Catholics can receive a morally compromised vaccine.

On March 2, 2021, Governor Jared Polis established Colorado as a national leader in allowing people to choose which vaccine fits their conscience. In a press conference discussing vaccine distribution he said,

“When [people are] signing up for an appointment, they will know what [vaccine] they would get at that [provider], and if it’s not the one they want, they can sign up at a different site at a different time to get the one they want.... It will be visible to consumers which one you are getting at which clinic, it should be already, and it will be even more going forward because we want to make all our partners make that visible.”²

The bishops of Colorado continue to oppose any initiative to make vaccinations mandatory or to force individuals to receive the Johnson & Johnson or AstraZeneca vaccination instead of waiting to receive a COVID-19 vaccine that did not use aborted fetal cells in production, such as the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine. Furthermore, if individuals have serious moral objections or health concerns about *any* vaccines,

¹ <https://www.cocatholicconference.org/a-letter-to-the-faithful-from-the-colorado-bishops-on-covid-19-vaccines/>

² <https://www.9news.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/vaccine/colorado-covid-cases-vaccine-johnson-johnson-latest/73-72f1500f-236c-416e-9b9a-2ede89322722>

those concerns should be respected by society and government, and those individuals should not be forced into vaccination, contrary to their conscience. The government should never mandatorily impose the COVID-19 vaccines on its citizens.

While each individual should give careful consideration to the morality of different vaccines, the Colorado bishops affirm the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) statement that "being vaccinated can be an act of charity that serves the common good."³ Each of us has the responsibility, *whether we choose to be vaccinated or not*, to take measures that promote the public health and care for our neighbors.

Additionally, in some cases, individuals may be restricted in their access to morally acceptable vaccines, Pfizer and Moderna. This could be because of vaccine location, health care coverage, or other reasons for limited access. In these rare cases, *when an individual has no other option*, it is morally acceptable to be vaccinated with more morally compromised vaccines. According to the the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,

*"In this sense, when ethically irreproachable Covid-19 vaccines are not available (e.g. in countries where vaccines without ethical problems are not made available to physicians and patients, or where their distribution is more difficult due to special storage and transport conditions, or when various types of vaccines are distributed in the same country but health authorities do not allow citizens to choose the vaccine with which to be inoculated) it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process."*⁴

However, whenever possible, the Colorado Bishops encourage making a sincere effort to choose the morally acceptable options. By exploring every available option to receive a morally acceptable vaccine, an individual is engaging in clear opposition to the morally compromised vaccine, even if he or she ultimately finds that they have no other option. Websites such as <https://www.vaccinespotter.org/CO/> will also help individuals find morally acceptable vaccines nearest them.

With the decrease in COVID-19 spread and an increasing vaccination rate, the end of the current pandemic is within sight. It is crucial, however, that our pursuit of public health is in accordance with our moral beliefs and commitment to respecting life at every stage of development. As more vaccines become available for public consumption, the Charlotte Lozier Institute remains a useful resource to identify which vaccines are morally acceptable.⁵ We continue to encourage our community to reference that list.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila
Archbishop of Denver

Most Reverend Stephen J. Berg
Bishop of Pueblo

Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan
Bishop of Colorado Springs

Most Reverend Jorge Rodriguez
Auxiliary Bishop of Denver

³ <https://www.usccb.org/news/2021/us-bishop-chairmen-doctrine-and-pro-life-address-use-johnson-johnson-covid-19-vaccine>

⁴ <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/12/21/201221c.html>

⁵ <https://lozierinstitute.org/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-covid-19-vaccine/>