



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for Life, Family and Public Engagement

Catholics in Australia encouraged to receive COVID-19 vaccine

MEDIA RELEASE

April 20, 2021

Catholics in Australia are being encouraged to receive a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to them, with the relevant Bishops Commission saying it is morally permissible to accept any vaccine.

In a document published today, the Bishops Commission for Life, Family and Public Engagement acknowledges that there are ethical concerns about the way some of the vaccines have been developed or tested. That includes the use of cell lines derived from an abortion in the 1970s.

Despite those concerns, the Commission follows the guidance of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in urging people to be vaccinated for their own health, and for the health of the wider community.

There is a particular imperative to protect the health of those who are vulnerable.

Citing the Vatican document, the bishops say "it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process".

They add that "if you are only offered one option, you may receive whichever vaccine you are offered, including the AstraZeneca one, with a clear conscience".

For those who have "a serious reason" not to receive the vaccine, they are "morally obliged to do their utmost, by other protective means and appropriate behaviour, to avoid contracting COVID-19 themselves and to avoid transmission of the disease".

The bishops' advice expresses a strong preference for people to have a choice of which COVID-19 vaccine they receive.

When that choice is offered, Catholics should choose the least morally compromised vaccine – which in Australia would currently mean the Pfizer vaccine or, in future, Novavax (if approved).

Archbishop Peter A Comensoli, the chair of the Bishops Commission for Life, Family and Public Engagement, reiterated the Church's view that civil and health authorities should "work ethically with respect for every human person from conception until natural death".

"At all times we oppose the destruction of human life," Archbishop Comensoli said.

"At the same time, remote connection with such actions is an important factor when considering our responsibility to the common good and the health of others."

The document released today, which includes questions and answers about COVID-19 vaccines, encourages people to consult with their own medical practitioner when making decisions about vaccines.

Women who are pregnant or hoping to get pregnant are specifically advised to consult their doctor.

Find the bishops' guidance on the COVID-19 vaccines, including frequently asked questions, at: <https://catholic.org.au/coronavirus>