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December 3, 2020

My dear Brother Priests:

Numerous reports indicate that at least two COVID-19 vaccines will soon be available. This development in fighting this terrible disease is indeed very good news and should be for us a source of hope and gratitude.

The development of these vaccines will also raise, and indeed already has raised, some questions about the moral permissibility of receiving these vaccines if they have been developed in any way that involves the use of cell lines from aborted babies. It is a complex and sensitive matter. Nonetheless, a careful evaluation of this situation from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (the USCCB), includes the following:

“Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccine involved the use of cell lines that originated in fetal tissue taken from the body of an aborted baby at any level of design, development, or production. They are not completely free from any connection to abortion, however, as both Pfizer and Moderna made use of a tainted cell line for one of the confirmatory lab tests of their products. There is thus a connection, but it is relatively remote.”

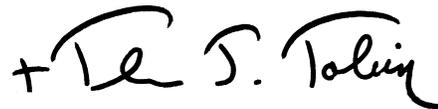
In short the USCCB evaluation, backed-up by previous instructions from the Holy See, affirms that *“at the level of the recipient, it is morally permissible to accept vaccination when there are no alternatives and there is a serious risk to health.”*

When the vaccines become available, individuals should be encouraged to receive the vaccine to promote their own health and safety and that of others. This is consistent with the Catholic commitment on promoting the common good. Nonetheless, if individuals have serious moral objections to, or health concerns about, receiving the vaccines, those concerns should be respected and the individuals should not be forced to be vaccinated if so doing is contrary to their conscience.

I hope that this information will be helpful to you in responding to questions that might come your way. In receiving the news of the vaccines we realize that the fight against this terrible pandemic is not over. We need to continue our vigilance, and to pray for all who have suffered from the dire consequences of the virus. May God remove this terrible plague from our midst and grant healing, comfort and peace to all.

With my best wishes, prayers and blessings, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Th. J. Tobin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Providence