



DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

August 26, 2021

Dear Monsignor/Father,

In recent weeks, the Diocese has received inquiries regarding vaccine exemptions and the role of the Church. Because of these inquiries, it is now felt opportune to address these matters.

The Church has clearly stated that it is morally permissible to receive the Covid-19 Vaccination. Pope Francis has recently released a message strongly encouraging vaccination. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has also indicated that it is acceptable to receive the Covid-19 Vaccinations. Further, the appropriate USCCB Committees have said, "Given the urgency of this crisis... inoculation with the new COVID-19 vaccines in these circumstances can be morally justified." Please recall that the purpose of all vaccinations is not only to protect one's own health, but also to protect the health of those around them.

However, I note that the Church recognizes the importance of an individual's conscience in such decisions. The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith has said, "At the same time, practical reason makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary." Indeed, the Church believes that the State should not mandate vaccination without allowances for conscientious objection.

It is an individual and personal decision whether to receive a Covid Vaccine. While the Church supports the right of a person to seek exemption from vaccine mandates and requirements on the basis of conscience; it is an individual decision that should not be dependent upon an attestation by a member of the clergy. Thus, the issuance of a document by a Priest is not recommended.

Priests are encouraged to speak with Parishioners who may have questions or concerns regarding the ethical and moral dimensions of receiving the Covid Vaccine. To aid in this discussion, several resources are provided with this letter.

Thank you for your assistance and understanding in this matter. Let us all pray for an end to the scourge of the Coronavirus Pandemic and remember in prayer all who have been affected by the virus.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


+ Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of the Diocese of
Venice in Florida

FJD/mm
Enclosures