



## *South Dakota Catholic Conference*

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### MEMORANDUM

From: Chris Motz, Executive Director  
Re: Covid-19 Vaccinations in South Dakota  
Date: November 25, 2020

Vaccines have recently been a topic in the Catholic and secular news media. Some reports have been the source of confusion or contention.

#### **South Dakota context**

According to the South Dakota Department of Health, our state will receive its first vaccine shipment on or about December 15, with approximately 7,800 doses arriving from Pfizer. The following week, approximately 2,200 doses are expected from Moderna. These numbers may change. Additional shipments are expected on a weekly basis thereafter. Initially, South Dakota's major health systems will be responsible for distribution, which is expected in several phases, with early priority given to health care workers and at-risk persons. As more doses become available and distribution is extended to the population at-large, retail pharmacies and other care settings will also participate in vaccination. According to the Department of Health, these vaccines were not tested for children and accordingly will not be distributed to children.

#### **Moral analysis**

Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccine used cell lines derived from tissue taken from an aborted baby. However, one of the tests that these two companies used to confirm the efficacy of their vaccines relied upon an abortion-tainted cell line. Three Vatican documents speak directly to abortion-connected vaccines.

- ["Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses,"](#) Pontifical Academy for Life (2005).
- [\*Dignitas Personae\*](#), nos. 34-35, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2008).
- ["Note on Italian Vaccine Issue,"](#) Pontifical Academy for Life (2017).

In brief, these documents draw distinctions of varying levels of moral responsibility of those involved (i.e., pharmaceutical company executive on the one hand, and a vulnerable person on the other), and describe various duties that can arise (e.g., to advocate for ethically-sound development).

With the test that Pfizer and Moderna used, there is a remote connection to the evil of abortion. This connection to a tainted test is even more remote than if the vaccine itself had been developed using an abortion-connected cell line. For a person to receive such a vaccine can be described as "remote mediate material cooperation" with the evil of abortion. It is morally permissible to receive such a vaccine if there is a "proportional reason," such as serious risk to one's health, and when no alternative exists.