



DIOCESE OF BOISE

January 19, 2021

Bishop responds to concerns regarding COVID-19 vaccines

BOISE – Bishop Peter Christensen of the Diocese of Boise today affirmed a statement issued by the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that says Catholics may use the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines against COVID-19. Use of the AstraZeneca and Janssen vaccines are also morally acceptable, but only if no other vaccines comparable in safety and efficacy are available.

“Many faithful Catholics have expressed reservation about using vaccines with cell lines harvested from aborted babies,” the Bishop said. Catholics should always be very cautious about the morality and ethics of participating in any medical research with direct links to abortion, he said. Two of the vaccines – Pfizer and Moderna – do not include cells from aborted babies. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are the ones administered by Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, according to hospital officials.

Bishop Peter referred to a Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities statement that says that cell lines from aborted babies were used decades ago to research vaccines to combat rubella and chicken pox. Those same cell lines can be and are reproduced indefinitely for research. While the *cell lines* were used to test the efficacy of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, the *cells themselves* are not present in the vaccines that patients receive.

There is, however, additional moral concern with the AstraZeneca and Janssen vaccines because an abortion-derived cell line was used not only for testing, but also in development and production. The Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities said it can be morally acceptable to receive a vaccine that uses abortion-derived cell lines *if there are no other available vaccines available*. “If it is possible to choose among a number of equally safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, the vaccine with the least connection to abortion-derived cell lines should be chosen,” the statement said.

Bishop Peter emphasized that the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities statement (which is available in both English and Spanish at uscbb.org/prolife) is in accord with guidance issued four times to date by the Holy See, through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and the Pontifical Academy for Life.

“Currently, there are hundreds of vaccines for COVID-19 in development worldwide, with more than a dozen in final stages of testing, so it is important that the worldwide Church is vigilant in its protection of life, not only for the pre-born, but for those receiving the vaccines as well,” Bishop Peter said.

The Bishop commended the faithful for their attention to the always pre-eminent issue of life from conception to natural death.