

Reverend and dear Father,

The Diocese of Scranton strongly recommends that all members of the Catholic community who are eligible, become fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine should be seen as an act of charity – an action that not only protects oneself – but also helps to safeguard our neighbors and the well-being of our entire community.

Over the last few weeks, the Diocese of Scranton has received a small number of requests from parishioners requesting a religious exemption letter to avoid vaccination. After careful consideration, the Diocese of Scranton will not provide support, written or otherwise, for individuals seeking an exemption from the vaccine on religious grounds.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has made it clear that it is morally acceptable to receive any of the current COVID-19 vaccines that have been determined to be clinically safe and effective. Pope Francis and Pope emeritus Benedict XVI have both received their COVID-19 vaccinations, further emphasizing that being vaccinated is consistent with the Catholic faith.

Individuals remain free to exercise discretion regarding vaccination based upon their own reasons of conscience – but those decisions would be rooted in personal belief and not validated by the Diocese of Scranton or its clergy.

For additional information on the morality of receiving the COVID-19 vaccination, please refer to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's Note from December 2020:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html

Faithfully yours in Christ,

† *Joseph C. Bambera*

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.

Bishop of Scranton