



## MEMORANDUM

TO: All Pastors and Administrators

FROM: Bishop Robert J. McClory *RJM*

DATE: August 25, 2021

RE: Vaccine Exemption Requests

---

When considering vaccine exemption requests and discussing them with the faithful, pastors should affirm the moral permissibility of COVID-19 vaccines, as detailed in the following authoritative documents/statements:

- [Pope Francis](#): “Being vaccinated with vaccines authorized by the competent authorities is an act of love. And contributing to ensure the majority of people are vaccinated is an act of love – love for oneself, love for one’s family and friends, love for all people.”
- [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#): “When ethically irreproachable Covid-19 vaccines are not available...it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process.”
- [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#): “Receiving one of the COVID-19 vaccines ought to be understood as an act of charity toward the other members of our community. In this way, being vaccinated safely against COVID-19 should be considered an act of love of our neighbor and part of our moral responsibility for the common good.”
- Affirm the [CDF’s judgment](#) (also linked above) that “practical reason makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary.” Individuals who refuse vaccines “must do their utmost to avoid, by other prophylactic means and appropriate behavior, becoming vehicles for the transmission of the infectious agent. They must avoid any risk to the health of those who cannot be vaccinated for medical or other reasons, and who are the most vulnerable.”

If the parishioner is looking for additional resources, he or she may consult the [National Catholic Bioethics Center Website](https://www.ncbcenter.org) (<https://www.ncbcenter.org>).

In addition to the above pastoral response, a pastor may sign a letter verifying an individual’s parish membership. This has always been permissible. If asked, a pastor also may author a letter (addressed to his parishioner) sharing all the above affirmations. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my office.