

**Memo from
Rev. John J. Chadwick, S.T.D.
Vicar General
Archdiocese of Newark
Re: Religious Exemptions for Vaccination
August 27, 2021**

I have been asked to clarify the teaching of the Church regarding the morality of receiving the vaccines against COVID-19 and to articulate archdiocesan policy on the matter. Concretely, there is a pastoral need to answer the question of whether the faithful may request an exemption on religious grounds from accepting the vaccines. We have received some questions here in the Archdiocesan Center. You likely have had to field similar requests.

It is important to note that the Archdiocese of Newark does not provide for an exemption on religious grounds from receiving the vaccine. Any concerns based upon our respect life teachings have been addressed. In addition, it has been noted that reception of the vaccine can be seen as an act of charity in support of the common good. In a recent public service announcement, Pope Francis called receiving the vaccine an “act of love.” The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have issued statements in support of the morality of receiving the vaccine as have a number of American bishops.

As such it is not possible for a Catholic to claim an exemption from vaccination on religious grounds. Like anyone else, a Catholic may claim a personal exemption on the grounds of conscience but such a decision should consider our Christian responsibility to work for the common good in service to the benefit of all.

Therefore, you should not support a religious exemption for the people entrusted to your pastoral care. If you are approached with such a request, kindly remind the unvaccinated of their obligation to preserve the health of others and themselves by wearing a mask, maintaining social distance, getting tested as necessary, and other recommended safety measures.

Please access the links below for background information.

[Video Message of the Holy Father to the people on the vaccination campaign against COVID-19, 18.08.2021](#)

[Video: Pope urges people to receive Covid-19 vaccine](#)

Statement from the CDF:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20210821_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html and

Statement from the Doctrine Committee of the USCCB:

<https://www.usccb.org/moral-considerations-covid-vaccines>

Please refer any questions from the media about our policy to Maria Margiotta in the Office of Communications at the Archdiocesan Center. And feel free to reach out to me with any personal questions or concerns as well. Let us work together to respect life and put an end to the pandemic. Be assured of my prayers for you and your ministry. God bless!