



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MEMPHIS

5825 SHELBY OAKS DRIVE
MEMPHIS, TN 38134 901-373-1200

2 September 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus, the Lord:

From the beginning days of this deadly pandemic, I have turned to the Lord's instruction, His Golden Rule (Leviticus 19.18, Matthew 7.12, Luke 6.31), and have asked all to renew our obedient love for this new Way of Life (John 14.6). We remain in His love, even during these difficult days, as branches on the living Vine (John 15. 5). We remain united, as members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12. 12-13, 27).

As an act of love and seeking a way to contribute to the common good of all during these difficult days of the worldwide pandemic, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have been vaccinated against this novel coronavirus, COVID-19. As an act of love for the people of the Diocese of Memphis, Bishop Emeritus Terry Steib and I have been vaccinated. I encourage all who are able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine to do so. I ask parents to seek vaccination for children who are eligible, always in consultation with a physician.

Regarding these COVID-19 vaccinations, Archbishop Joseph Naumann, Chairman, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said in a recent statement, "The sound moral analysis by the Church supporting the permissibility of receiving the vaccines as well as the public health crisis evidenced by the many COVID deaths, the mental, emotional and economic stress suffered by so many and the ensuing social isolation harming all, especially our young people, motivated me to be vaccinated."

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a new focus placed on the matter of vaccines and their moral use. The use of vaccines, in helping rid the world of previous pandemics, such as Polio, Smallpox and Rubella have been a great scientific achievement. Most of us as children received these lifesaving vaccines allowing us to live safely and attend school. The morality of vaccines and their use has been addressed by Church authorities and while we are not obligated to vaccinate, the act of being vaccinated is a moral act and an act of charity.

Regarding the issue of exemptions from the COVID-19 vaccines, the Supreme Authority of the Church has not granted such an exemption. As you will read in the links below, the Holy See has spoken of the vaccines developed to combat this deadly virus, recognizing their worth and the morality that allows for their use. For the Catholic disciple that has reasons for refusing the vaccine, this is an issue of his or her personal moral conscience. It is not a matter of whether a Bishop, Priest or Deacon approves or disapproves of the vaccine. Simply put, no religious

authority can vouch for another person's well-formed internal moral conscience. Though I continue to urge all to be vaccinated, in caring for the gift of health and our common good, we must remember the rights of conscience of those who decide not to be vaccinated, asking that this voice of conscience be respected at places of employment, schools and elsewhere that vaccines are mandated.

I pray for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic; and I pray for a renewal of our minds and hearts. Enlighten our minds and hearts, dear Father, granting us insight and courage as we strive to protect our loved ones and neighbors, for the common good of all, always in loving obedience to your Word of Life! I am yours

In the light and love of the Lord,


Bishop David P. Talley

Note: The following links from The Holy See, USCCB and Archbishop Naumann are intended to assist all with forming consciences, vaccine decision-making and prayers:

- **The Holy See** - Morality of Using COVID-19 Vaccines, Dec. 17, 2020: [HolySeeCOVID-19VaccinesNote](#)
- **The Holy See** - Note from Vatican COVID-19 Commission, Dec. 29, 2020: [VaticanCOVID-19CommissionStatement](#)
- **USCCB** - Moral Considerations on COVID-19 Vaccines, Dec. 23, 2020: [USCCBCOVID-19VaccinesStatement](#)
- **USCCB** - Answers and Questions about COVID-19 Vaccines, Jan. 1, 2021: [USCCBCOVID-19VaccinesQ&A](#)
- **Archbishop Naumann** - Statement on Vaccine Mandates, Aug. 27, 2021: [ArchbishopCOVID-19VaccineMandates](#)