



# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This week, it was announced by the Prime Minister that the first shipment of Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines had arrived in Australia and that from Monday, those in the designated categories would begin to be inoculated. This is welcome news for all of us here in Australia as it gives all people the opportunity to be inoculated as a defence against COVID-19.

Many people have rightly raised questions about the morality of some vaccines, given that some have been developed using cells from foetuses aborted several decades ago. The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has issued a document clarifying the moral questions involved. It can be found at the following link:

[www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20201221\\_nota-vaccini-anticovid\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html)

In summary, the Congregation's document makes the following observations:

- The destruction of unborn human life for medical research or treatment is, and has always been, a gravely immoral act.
- Despite this moral evil having taken place decades ago, and the fact that some current vaccines have been developed using cells obtained from these abortions, the reception of such vaccines today is not morally sinful, because of the seriousness of the pandemic and because the co-operation in the immoral act by the person receiving the vaccine is remote<sup>1</sup>.
- If people have a choice, they should choose the vaccine that is not developed with the assistance of immoral actions; but if they do not have a choice, they are morally free to receive the vaccine that has been developed with such assistance.

As a result of this teaching of the Magisterium, given that the Australian government has indicated that there will not generally be a choice available to individuals (at least for most of us in the Diocese of Rockhampton), a person *does not* commit an immoral action by receiving any of the vaccines being offered in Australia. I invite you all to read the statement from the Congregation for the Faith closely and be informed of this part of Church Teaching.

Finally, I would urge you, for the sake of the common good (and especially for the sake of those most vulnerable), to seriously consider receiving the vaccine so that the effects of COVID-19 can be mitigated in our land as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Most Rev Michael McCarthy  
Bishop of Rockhampton

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<sup>1</sup> In its teaching the Church has always made a distinction between formal or direct cooperation in an immoral act and that cooperation which is incidental and remote (*Dignitatis Personae* 34-35). This means that, in the absence of alternatives, a person who decides to accept a vaccination today which has some link with fetal cell lines in the past, does not imply any agreement on their part to the abortion from which the cell lines came.