



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

An Encouragement to take Covid-19 Vaccine

Some people and groups have expressed a few safety and ethical concerns around the Covid-19 vaccines. These have caused a number of people refusing or expressing a reluctance to accept the vaccine.

In this letter I wish to address some of the concerns and to encourage people and communities to take the opportunity and to get vaccinated.

1. *Vaccines usually take a long time to be produced as a lot of research and tests are required. Covid-19 has taken less than a year to produce, and the question is "is it really genuine and effective?"*

Different trusted South African scientists have severally assured us: "The research was done faster with large numbers of people ensuring safety and efficacy measurements were not compromised"; and "The trials were totally ethically and scientifically sound and the licensing completely thorough. The speed of development is really a reflection of the level of scientific advancement that we are now at rather than that it was in any way recklessly rushed through.

2. *Some sections of the Christian community have strongly argued that the vaccine is not from God but is part of the "new world order" governed by the devil and has 666, the "mark of the beast" (Rev. 13:16). Many fear, that by taking the vaccine, they will be forced to take "the mark of the beast."*

This association of the vaccine with the "mark of the beast" is based on a wrong and fundamentalistic interpretation of the Book of Revelation and ignores the historical and biblical context.

3. *The COVID-19 vaccine is a ploy by the rich industrialized nations of the West to reduce the global population through the elimination of the black race.*

This theory is baseless. In fact, vaccines are not new. Vaccines have been a reality for all of us from birth, e.g., Vaccine against polio, measles etc

4. *The Covid-19 Vaccine will change our DNA*

The Covid-19 Vaccine is not made of DNA elements and therefore cannot change our genetic code.

5. *The Covid-19 Vaccine is made from aborted fetuses*

It is true that some vaccines including Covid-19 Vaccine originally included a protein sourced from a foetus but there is no evidence that current vaccines are directly made out of foetal tissue, nor is it true that foetuses were intentionally harvested to make the Covid-19 vaccine. Yet, the use of foetus cell line at one stage of the development of Covid-19 vaccine remains an ethical problem. In the absence of an alternative vaccine, however, and in the interest of saving lives, according to the principle of choosing a lesser evil, use of Covid-19 vaccine with a link to a foetal cell line.



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican in a *Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines* (21 December 2020) said “it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process.(2) and “from the ethical point of view, the morality of vaccination depends not only on the duty to protect one's own health, but also on the duty to pursue the common good. In the absence of other means to stop or even prevent the epidemic, the common good may recommend vaccination, especially to protect the weakest and most exposed.” (5)

6. The Vaccines have side-effects including clotting and sometimes death

This is true, some people have experienced side effects including pain, swelling Fatigue, headaches, fever, muscle and joint pain, but as with other medication, such side effects eventually go and you are protected from severe Covid-19 infection. A few cases of blood clotting have also been reported and even fewer (less than one percent) have died after taking the vaccine, but there is no conclusive evidence that less than 1% of vaccinated people have died from the vaccine, so it is a safe risk to take the vaccine.

7. The Pope has taken the vaccine

In the light of these facts, and as Pope Francis has led by example when he got vaccinated, we should be encouraged to take the vaccine. Pope Emeritus benedict XVI and a large number of religious leaders across the world and here in South Africa have been vaccinated.

8. The Vaccine must be made available to all

Let us join the efforts for equitable distribution of the vaccine and call those rich countries hoarding Covid-19 vaccine to task so that this common good may be accessible to all.

We must all continue to pray for our health care workers and for all those who are assisting those in need at this time

Bishop Sithembele Sipuka
President of the Southern African Bishops Conference
04 June 2021