



COVID-19 Vaccines: Resources for Church Leaders

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

News of the successful development of effective vaccines against COVID-19 has brought much needed hope, yet the pandemic is far from over. As cases rise and the virus mutates, the pandemic continues to bring suffering, isolation, financial hardship and death, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable among us. Yet the crisis has also “revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all” (Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* [FT], 32). “With our gaze fixed on Jesus (cf. *Heb* 12:2) and with the certainty that His love is operative through the community of His disciples, we must act all together, in the hope of generating something different and better” (General Audience, 26 August 2020).

In times of coronavirus and “great human and socio-economic viruses,” the Church is called to walk with others on a “journey of healing,” bringing “light in the midst of darkness, [...] justice in the midst of so many outrages, [...] joy in the midst of so much pain, [...] healing and salvation in the midst of sickness and death, [...] tenderness in the midst of hatred [...] to ‘vitalize’ love and to ‘globalize’ hope in the light of faith” (General Audience, 30 September 2020). We must “rediscover once for all that we need one another, and that in this way our human family can experience a rebirth, with all its faces, all its hands and all its voices” (Cf. FT, 35).

A first step in our journey toward a more just, inclusive and equitable world is making COVID-19 vaccines available and accessible to all, as outlined in the December 2020 paper, *Vaccine for all: 20 points for a fairer and healthier world*, published by the Vatican COVID-19 Commission and the Pontifical Academy for Life.

The following resources are designed to support all bishops, parish priests and staff in diocesan offices and health and social service agencies. You will find information about the COVID-19 vaccine for varied audiences, resources to support the preparation of homilies, relevant quotes from Pope Francis, links to useful information, and short messages for websites, parish bulletins or other media. A *Family Guide to the Coronavirus (COVID-19)* is designed to help local communities and to counter misinformation.

These pastoral resources echo Pope Francis' concern that all receive the vaccine and that it be available for all persons. While reception of vaccines does remain voluntary, “the morality of the vaccination depends not only on the duty to protect one’s own health, but also on the duty to pursue the common good” (CDF, 21 Dec. Nota). As we look towards a better future, we are reminded “how vulnerable and interconnected everyone is” (General Audience, 12 August 2020) and that “to build a healthy, inclusive, just and peaceful society we must do so on the rock of the common good” (General Audience, 9 September 2020). Ensuring access to vaccines for all should be considered an act of love of our neighbour and part of our moral responsibility.

We hope this material can be helpful for use in parishes, clinics, schools, social service agencies, and beyond. If you have any questions or suggestions for how local churches can get involved, please contact vcc@humandevlopment.va.

Cabina di Regia of the Vatican COVID-19 Commission

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DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

COVID - 19
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The contents of this resource kit are designed to be shared at your discretion either as individual pieces or as a whole. Sources for the information used in the *Clinical Questions Regarding COVID-19 Vaccines* and *A Family Guide to the Coronavirus (COVID-19)* can be found in the *Links to Resources on COVID-19 and Vaccines* and will direct you to external websites that provide further scientific and health information.

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Recent Notes on COVID-19 Vaccines

As we continue to face unprecedented conditions as a result of the global threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, moral and ethical concerns have been raised about COVID-19 vaccines. The following notes can help answer questions on the morality of using some COVID-19 vaccines and the ethical issues related to their development and distribution.

Note on the morality of using some anti-COVID-19 vaccines from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 21 December 2020.

A note from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was approved by Pope Francis, states that due to the situation of the ongoing pandemic, “all vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such vaccines does not constitute formal cooperation with the abortion from which the cells used in production of the vaccines derive.” The note addresses doubts and questions about the moral aspects of COVID-19 vaccines, including the responsibility of biomedical researchers and drug agencies, the morality of vaccination, vaccine access, and makes clear that “that the morally licit use of these types of vaccines, in particular conditions that make it so, does not in itself constitute a legitimization, even indirect, of the practice of abortion.” ([CDF, 21 December 2020](#)).

Vaccine for all. 20 points for a fairer and healthier world from the Vatican COVID-19 Commission & Pontifical Academy for Life, 29 December 2020.

Jointly released by the Vatican COVID-19 Commission & Pontifical Academy for Life, this note addresses the issues and priorities arising at the various stages of the vaccine journey, from research and development to patents and commercial exploitation, including authorization, distribution and administration. The note reiterates the critical role of vaccines to defeat the pandemic, not just for individual personal health but to protect the health of all. The Vatican COVID-19 Commission and the Pontifical Academy of Life remind world leaders that vaccines must be provided to all fairly and equitably, prioritizing those most in need ([Press Release of the Vatican COVID-19 Commission and the Pontifical Academy for Life, 29 December 2020](#)).

Urgent Action for Access to COVID-19 vaccines: Nobody should be left out from Caritas Internationalis, 5 February 2021.

In a statement released in 2021, Caritas Internationalis called on political leaders to look beyond the interests of their own nations and ensure that the COVID-19 vaccines are accessible to all, especially the poor, and that nobody is left out. The confederation of 165 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations operating in over 200 countries worldwide, called for a number of specific actions, including a meeting of the UN Security Council to address the issue of vaccine access as a global security problem, debt remissions for the poorest nations, promotion of local vaccines, and more ([Vatican News, 5 February 2021](#)).





COVID-19 Vaccine: Clinical and Ethical Questions



Photo Credit: Vatican News

"Vaccines for all, especially for the most vulnerable and needy of all regions of the planet."

- Pope Francis, January 2021

We hope these resources will be helpful when responding to questions about COVID-19 vaccines in your local churches and communities. Information included on vaccines is based on the latest scientific research and will continue to be updated as new information becomes available. For more information about COVID-19 vaccines, please speak with your local health department or health care providers.

What is vaccination and why is it important?

- **Vaccination is a simple, safe and effective way of protecting people against harmful diseases** using the body's natural defenses to build resistance to dangerous infections.
- Different types of vaccines work in different ways to provide protection. Vaccines train your immune system to create antibodies — just as it does when it is exposed to a disease — but they do not cause the disease or put you at risk of its complications.
- Vaccination is a safe and effective way to prevent disease and save lives. Today, there are vaccines that protect against at least 20 diseases, saving the lives of up to 3 million people every year. When we get vaccinated, we are not just protecting ourselves but are also protecting those around us. Because some people cannot get vaccinated due to health conditions or other reasons and are advised not to get certain vaccines, they depend on the rest of us to get vaccinated to reduce the spread of disease.
- More information about the importance of vaccines is available [here](#)

How do vaccines work and how do they protect individuals and communities?

- **Vaccines reduce risks of getting a disease** by working with your body's natural defenses to build protection. Rather than treating a disease after it occurs, vaccines usually prevent us in the first instance from getting sick.
- 'Herd immunity' — also known as 'population immunity' — is the protection we can get from an infectious disease that happens when immunity develops in enough of the population either through vaccination or through previous infection. Achieving herd immunity through vaccination is safe and saves lives.

How are vaccines developed and tested, and what is in them?

- **Every vaccine must go through extensive and rigorous testing** to ensure it is safe before it can be introduced in a country. An experimental vaccine is first tested in animals to assess its safety and potential to prevent disease. It is then tested in a number of human clinical trials, which are rigorously reviewed before a vaccine may be introduced into a national immunization programme.
- Following the introduction of a vaccine, close monitoring continues to check for any unexpected adverse side effects and to review the vaccine's ongoing effectiveness.
- Vaccine ingredients listed on labels can look unfamiliar, but we naturally have many of them in the body and in the environment. All of the ingredients in vaccines — as well as the vaccines themselves — are thoroughly tested and monitored to ensure they and the quantities in which they are used are safe.





Photos Courtesy of Vatican COVID-19 Commission

Why should people get vaccinated, including with the COVID-19 vaccine?

- **Two key reasons to get vaccinated are to protect ourselves and to protect those around us**, as part of loving your neighbour. Without vaccines, we and those around us, especially those who are most vulnerable, are at risk of serious illness from diseases, including COVID-19.
- Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine should be understood as an act of charity toward other members of our community. We should keep in mind that some people cannot themselves be vaccinated; they must rely on the rest of the community to become immune through vaccination so that the disease does not travel through the community and infect them. In this way, being vaccinated safely against COVID-19 should be considered an act of love for our neighbour and part of our moral responsibility for the common good.
- In today's world, infectious diseases can easily cross borders and infect anyone who is not protected. This means no one is safe until everyone is safe in a pandemic.

Are vaccines safe, including the COVID-19 vaccines?

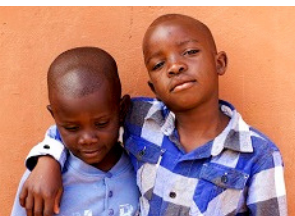
- **Vaccination, through rigorously tested vaccines, is safe**, and side effects from a vaccine are usually minor and temporary, such as a sore arm or mild fever. More serious side effects are possible, but these side effects are extremely rare.
- Scientists constantly monitor information for any sign that a vaccine may cause health risks. To date, the vaccine is the best known solution to COVID-19 virus infections and response to the pandemic.

Does the fact that the COVID-19 vaccines were developed quickly affect their safety?

- Scientists were able to develop COVID-19 vaccines quickly because many phases of vaccine development happened at the same time, not because safety standards were overlooked.
- COVID-19 vaccines undergo the same number of trials and are subject to the same safety checks and independent assessment as other vaccines. They are also carefully monitored after their authorization and application to ensure they continue to meet effectiveness and strict safety standards.
- The development of COVID-19 vaccines are also informed by years of research about similar viruses and vaccine development and manufacturing. Scientists are collaborating and sharing research like never before.
- For more information, visit: [The World Health Organization](https://www.who.int)

What COVID-19 vaccines are currently available?

- The scientific and vaccine manufacturing communities around the world have been working faster than ever to develop and produce vaccines that can protect people against COVID-19 and help end this crisis. Since the emergence of this new coronavirus, several vaccines have been authorized and started to be rolled out. Most countries have their own national regulatory authority that decides whether a vaccine is appropriate for use in their territory. Check with your country's health department to find out which vaccines are authorized and which are available for use in your country.
- Other entities, such as the World Health Organization, the European Union and national regulatory agencies, update the latest vaccine developments on a regular basis.



Are there side effects from vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccines?

- Like any medicine, vaccines can cause mild side effects, such as a low-grade fever, or pain or redness at the site where the injection was given. Mild reactions go away within a few days on their own. Severe or long-lasting side effects are extremely rare.
- There have been some reports of non-life-threatening allergic reactions to specific COVID-19 vaccines, but public health authorities are able to provide local advice to those experiencing reactions.



Will I be protected as soon as I have a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Some vaccines require individuals to receive two injections. Some require only one injection. It may take a week or two for your body to build up some protection from the first dose of vaccine. For those that require a second dose, maximum protection will not start until a couple of weeks after your second dose.



Photos Courtesy of Vatican COVID-19 Commission

Will the COVID-19 vaccine protect me from new variants and strains of the coronavirus?

- More studies are needed to understand how new variants may affect the effectiveness of existing COVID-19 vaccines. The World Health Organization has been tracking variants since the beginning of the global COVID-19 outbreak in January 2020. Systems have been set up to quickly identify and study emerging variants. The World Health Organization is keeping countries and the public informed as they learn more about the variants.
- For more information, please see the [Disease Outbreak News](#) for an overview of coronavirus variants and an updated [Q&A](#) on virus evolution.

Will I still need to follow physical distancing and hygiene measures if I have a COVID-19 vaccine?

- While vaccines can protect you from severe forms of COVID-19, we do not know yet how effective they will be at preventing transmission. Therefore, you should continue to wear a mask, wash your hands regularly and keep your distance from others for as long as your government or local authorities recommend.
- If you live or work in crowded conditions and where safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene facilities are lacking, you should continue to be extra careful. This applies equally to resident populations and to refugees and internally displaced persons in humanitarian settings.

Will COVID-19 vaccines provide long-term protection?

- It is too early to know if COVID-19 vaccines will provide long-term protection. As vaccines are rolled out globally and studies continue, we will be able to learn more about how long this protection lasts.

Will other vaccines help protect me against COVID-19?

- Currently, there is no evidence that existing vaccines or treatments for other diseases (e.g., malaria pills) will protect against COVID-19. To be protected, you need to get one of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines and continue practicing physical distancing and hygiene measures.

More information about COVID-19 vaccine development is available from [The World Health Organization](#) and the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).



COVID-19 Vaccine: Special Questions for Church Leaders



"I am convinced that fraternity is the true cure for the pandemic and the many evils that have affected us. Along with vaccines, fraternity and hope are, as it were, the medicine we need in today's world."

- Pope Francis, February 2021

As Church leaders, you may potentially face challenging questions regarding COVID-19 vaccines, but it is possible to navigate these through a focus on the common good. As explained in the [Vaccine for All: 20 Points for a Fairer and Healthier World](#) note, safeguarding life is an essential element in service of the common good, and as such, entails a deeply communal dimension. Given our deep interdependence, no one is safe until all are safe. The following information may be helpful to you when responding to challenging questions with an emphasis on promoting the common good and safeguarding the integral health of people and the natural environment.

Could you comment on the Church's position regarding vaccines that are tested and/or developed using fetal cell lines?

- The Church has a long history of addressing this issue with other vaccines. The longer the pandemic continues, the more death and human suffering will occur. The Church defends life and the common good, and the vaccines that are now available are an essential tool in the fight against the pandemic. They should be embraced to both protect life and reduce suffering.
- We have a duty to protect others from infection with its danger of serious illness—and death for some—and a vaccine is the most effective way to achieve this. The approved vaccines can and should be accepted, with a clear conscience, as an act of human solidarity.
- The Pontifical Academy for Life reaffirmed in [2005 and 2017](#) that clinically recommended vaccinations "can be used with a clear conscience and that the use of such vaccines does not signify some sort of cooperation with voluntary abortion"; the moral responsibility is to vaccinate in order to avoid serious health risks for children and the general population. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose task is to promote and protect the correctness of doctrine in matters of faith and morals, issued the *Instruction Dignitas Personae on Certain Bioethical Questions* in [2008](#) and wrote at the end of [2020](#) that in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, all vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective may be used.

What expertise does the Pontifical Academy for Life have to make recommendations in favor of vaccination and receiving COVID-19 vaccines, as outlined in the [joint paper](#) with the Vatican COVID-19 Commission?

- Founded in 1994, the Academy is a bridge between science, faith and the world. It is dedicated to "study, information and formation on the principal problems of biomedicine and of law, relative to the promotion and defense of life, above all in the direct relation that they have with Christian morality and the directives of the Church's Magisterium." The Academy is a valuable source of objective scientific information made available to the Holy See and a wider public in cooperation with the international scientific and medical community.
- The Academy does not work in isolation but is linked to various other Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, including the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, a partner on the vaccine issue.
- The work of the Academy is also informed by the expertise of its partners, including epidemiologists, experts in pandemic response, and others with deep experience in global public health.
- Nevertheless, decisions concerning matters of doctrine and morality are reserved to the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and ultimately to the Holy Father.

We hear conflicting information in the media about vaccines and talk about conspiracy theories. What are we supposed to believe?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a parallel pandemic of misleading and fabricated information. Rumors, in the form of conspiracy theories, including about how the virus can be cured and who is to blame for its spread, are rampant. Like the virus, misinformation can spread quickly. It is also harmful and complicates COVID-19 pandemic response efforts.
- It is important to follow the advice of trusted sources, including local public health authorities and the websites of relevant regional and international organisations, such as the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) and the [World Health Organization](#). Individuals can also help by not sharing unverified information that comes from dubious sources.
- As the Holy Father reminds us, "social aggression has found unparalleled room for expansion through computers and mobile devices," which "has now given free rein to ideologies," blocking "the kind of serene reflection that could lead us to a shared wisdom" and preventing us from penetrating "to the heart of matters, and to recognize what is essential to give meaning to our lives" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 44-45; 50). Yet we can, together, "seek the truth in dialogue," through "the process of building fraternity be it local or universal... by spirits that are free and open to authentic encounters" (*ibid.* 50).

What does the coronavirus have to do with bats, wildlife and the ecological crisis?

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals. While evidence suggests that the SARS CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19, most likely originated in bats, the exact source of the virus has not yet been identified. The increased risk of emerging infectious diseases such as COVID-19 can be linked to human interference in the intricate balance of natural ecosystems. The rapid destruction of the Earth's life-sustaining ecosystems and biodiversity through wildlife trading, deforestation, mining, logging and agriculture, is increasing the danger of new and possibly deadlier viruses evolving to infect humans. If we fail to rebalance our relationship with the environment and wildlife, more pandemics of this scale are likely to follow.
- "Everything is connected" as Pope Francis repeatedly reminds us in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. If we are to emerge from the crisis better than before, we need to rethink our relationship with the environment and care for our common home.



COVID-19 Vaccine: Resources for Homilies and Conversations

From Pope Francis Urbi et Orbi blessing, 25 December 2020

At this moment in history, marked by the ecological crisis and grave economic and social imbalances only worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, it is all the more important for us to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters. God has made this fraternal unity possible, by giving us his Son Jesus. The fraternity he offers us has nothing to do with fine words, abstract ideals or vague sentiments. It is a fraternity grounded in genuine love, making it possible for me to encounter others different from myself, feeling compassion for their sufferings, drawing near to them and caring for them even though they do not belong to my family, my ethnic group or my religion. For all their differences, they are still my brothers and sisters. The same thing is true of relationships between peoples and nations: brothers and sisters all!

Today, in this time of darkness and uncertainty regarding the pandemic, various lights of hope appear, such as the discovery of vaccines. But for these lights to illuminate and bring hope to all, they need to be available to all. We cannot allow the various forms of nationalism closed in on themselves to prevent us from living as the truly human family that we are. Nor can we allow the virus of radical individualism to get the better of us and make us indifferent to the suffering of other brothers and sisters. We cannot place ourselves ahead of others, letting the law of the marketplace and patents take precedence over the law of love and the health of humanity. We need to ask everyone – government leaders, businesses, international organizations – to foster cooperation and not competition, and to seek a solution for everyone: vaccines for all, especially for the most vulnerable and needy of all regions of the planet. Before all others: the most vulnerable and needy!

In the face of a challenge that knows no borders, we cannot erect walls. All of us are in the same boat. Every other person is my brother or my sister. In everyone, I see reflected the face of God, and in those who suffer, I see the Lord pleading for my help. I see him in the sick, the poor, the unemployed, the marginalized, the migrant and the refugee: brothers and sisters all!

From Pope Francis' Interview with Canale 5 (Italy), 10 January 2021

I believe that ethically everyone should take the vaccine. It is an ethical choice because you are gambling with your health, with your life, but you are also gambling with the lives of others.

From Pope Francis' Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 8 February 2021

I thus renew my appeal that every person receive the care and assistance he or she requires. [...] It is likewise essential that the remarkable medical and scientific progress attained over the years – which made it possible to create so quickly vaccines that promise to be effective against the Coronavirus – benefit humanity as a whole. I encourage all states to contribute actively to the international efforts being made to ensure an equitable distribution of the vaccines, based not on purely economic criteria but on the needs of all, especially of peoples most in need. Even so, before so a devious and unpredictable an enemy as Covid-19, access to vaccines must be accompanied by responsible personal behaviour aimed at halting the spread of the virus, employing the necessary measures of prevention to which we have become accustomed in these months. It would be disastrous to put our trust in the vaccine alone, as if it were a panacea exempting every individual from constant concern for his or her own health and for the health of others. The pandemic has once more shown us that, in the celebrated expression of the English poet John Donne, “no man is an island,” and that “any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.”





COVID-19 Vaccine: Resources for Homilies and Conversations

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops statement, 11 December 2020

Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine ought to be understood as an act of charity toward the other members of our community. We should keep in mind that some people cannot themselves be vaccinated; they must rely on the rest of the community's becoming immune through vaccination so that the disease does not travel through the community and infect them. In this way, being vaccinated safely against COVID-19 should be considered an act of love of our neighbour and part of our moral responsibility for the common good.

From Archbishop of Dublin's Christmas Day Sermon 2020

As many of us around the world dare to hope that with COVID-19 vaccines beginning to be rolled out that we may be a step closer to finding our way of this pandemic, and putting it behind us, we must never forget that, in the distribution of the vaccine, there are substantial justice issues of which we must not lose sight of. We have a moral responsibility, as scripture reinforces, to seize this new sense of neighbourliness and understanding of the realities and suffering others are experiencing as a result of this crisis, and grasp the opportunity to each play our part in building a new and fairer society as one global family.

From the President of the Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM)'s New Years Message, 31 December 2020

We must attend and take care of the lives of thousands of our brothers and sisters, strengthening the health system to successfully face the coronavirus pandemic and find a solution to the economic crisis that has impoverished thousands of families [...] There is no doubt that the hope of access to the vaccine for all is an urgent need and a requirement of all sectors of society [...] To get better out of this crisis we must do it together, in solidarity.

From the President of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference's Statement, 14 January 2021

Vaccines work, and they protect against a wide range of illnesses. Because of vaccines, once-universal diseases ... have been wiped out, saving countless lives. To protect everyone against a disease, it is vital that most people in a country be vaccinated. [...] Everyone, including Catholics, has a moral responsibility to protect themselves and others by getting a Covid-19 vaccine as soon as they become eligible for it under the Government's planned vaccine programme.

From the Pastoral Letter of the Filipino Bishops Conference, 15 January 2021

After nearly a year of the pandemic - both in terms of lives lost and the devastated economic impact - we must thank God because scientists have developed vaccines to immunize people against Covid [...] everyone should be aware of their obligation to protect themselves and others from infection and to protect themselves against the further spread of the virus.





COVID-19 Vaccine: Resources for Homilies and Conversations

From the Caritas Internationalis Statement, 5 February 2021, "Urgent access to COVID-19 Vaccines: nobody should be left out"

Pope Francis encouraged people to get vaccinated because it was one way of exercising responsibility towards others and collective well-being. He reiterated the need for "vaccines for all, especially for the most vulnerable and needy in all regions on the planet. Before all others: the most vulnerable and needy!" We are at a crucial moment, an opportunity to live the miracle of charity, through addressing together the present challenge [...] This pandemic is a global human security problem that threatens the whole human family. Addressing the vaccines issue from the perspective of a narrow national strategy might lead to a moral failure in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable across the globe.

From the Mexican Bishops Conference statement, 9 February 2021

It is necessary to consider the purpose and ethical relevance of personal collaboration in the vaccination campaign. Vaccines are preparations intended to generate immunity against a disease by stimulating the production of antibodies. In today's world, the use of vaccines clinically accepted by the international scientific community helps to protect personal health and that of our neighbors, helps to care for creation; it is an action that safeguards the true common good and promotes the true culture of life, based on unrestricted respect for the dignity of every human person and the justice derived from it. [...] We Catholics must not contribute in any way to disinformation because the lives of people, especially the most vulnerable, are at risk. We invite all the Catholic faithful, and all brothers and sisters of good will, to commit ourselves to prevention as part of our daily lives, in order to avoid unnecessary suffering and the eventual loss of life.

From the Joint Statement of Caritas Europea and the Commission of the Bishop's Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), 23 February 2021, "The European Union and the Challenges of COVID-19 Vaccines: EU's core principles demand equity in vaccine access"

Commitment to solidarity must be the decisive criterion in this historic moment. It is urgent to implement mass vaccination campaigns quickly. We urge the European Union to promote widescale vaccination not only for Europe's own safety and protection, but also for global public health as a public good, benefiting people living in poorer nations as much as they benefit people living in countries with the resources to create and produce the vaccines. Ensuring vaccine access for all – that they are available and affordable – is a global moral urgency.





A Family Guide to the Coronavirus (COVID-19)



Photo Credit: Vatican News

"I believe that morally everyone must take the vaccine. It is the moral choice because it is about your life but also the lives of others."

- Pope Francis, January 2021

This guide is designed to answer questions you and your family may have about the COVID-19 vaccines. Information on vaccines is based on the latest scientific research. For more information about COVID-19 vaccines, please speak with your local doctor or health worker.

Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- We should get vaccinated to protect ourselves and to protect those around us. Without vaccines, we — along with our friends, families, co-workers and neighbours — are at risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Receiving the vaccine is an act of love toward the other members of our community and part of our moral responsibility for the common good.
- As people move from one place to another, diseases like COVID-19 can easily cross borders and infect anyone who is not protected. This means no one is safe until everyone is safe in a pandemic.
- A pandemic disrupts social and family life. In order to protect people, countries have taken extreme measures like nationwide lockdowns that have had serious socio-economic, political, ecological and psychological implications. Vaccines can do a great deal of good to stop the spread of the virus and prepare the ground for physical and socio-political healing. Therefore, receiving the vaccine, once it is available, can be considered an act of social love.



Photos Courtesy of Vatican COVID-19 Commission

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe and what is in them?

- Even though COVID-19 vaccines are being developed as rapidly as possible, vaccines will not be authorized by regulatory agencies or introduced in countries in the general population until their effectiveness and safety have been demonstrated. Even after COVID-19 vaccines are authorized, monitoring for safety and effectiveness continues.
- All of the ingredients in vaccines — as well as the vaccines themselves — are thoroughly tested and monitored to ensure they, and the quantities in which they are used, are safe. Vaccine ingredients listed on labels can look unfamiliar, but we naturally have many of them in the body and in the environment.

Are there side effects of COVID-19 vaccines?

- You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection. A mild fever or soreness or redness in the arm is common. But these mild reactions go away within a few days on their own. There have been some reports of mild allergic reactions to specific COVID-19 vaccines. Your healthcare worker can give you more information if you experience such symptoms.



Photos Courtesy of Vatican COVID-19 Commission

How are COVID-19 vaccines developed and tested?

- Before a vaccine can be introduced in a country, it must go through extensive and rigorous testing and be proven to be safe and effective across a broad population. A COVID-19 vaccine is first tested in animals to make sure that it is safe for humans to use and to see if it is likely to work against the disease. It is then tested in a large sample of humans before it is authorized and made widely available.
- Each country has regulatory bodies that oversee vaccine safety and efficacy before they are used widely. Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) coordinates a number of independent technical bodies that review the safety of vaccines prior to and even after they have been introduced. Vaccines that are authorized for use by WHO have gone through rigorous tests and clinical trials to show that they are safe and effective.

Will I be protected as soon as I have had a COVID-19 vaccine?

- It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity (protection against the virus that causes COVID-19) after vaccination. Some vaccines require individuals to receive two shots. Some require only one shot. For those that require a second dose, maximum protection won't start until a couple of weeks after your second dose. It's important to remember, however, that no vaccine provides 100% protection.

Will I still need to follow physical distancing if I have a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Even after you get your vaccine, you should continue to wear a mask, wash your hands regularly and keep your distance from others for as long as your government or local authorities recommend. While vaccines can protect you from severe forms of COVID-19, we still do not know yet how effective they will be at preventing transmission. Continued physical distancing and hygiene measures give you and others the best protection from catching and spreading the virus.

Will COVID-19 vaccines provide long-term protection?

- Both this disease and the vaccine are new. We don't know how long protection lasts for those who get infected or those who are vaccinated. As vaccines are rolled out globally and studies continue, we will be able to learn more about how long this protection lasts.

Will other vaccines help protect me against COVID-19?

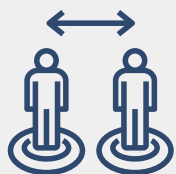
- Currently, there is no evidence that existing vaccines or treatments for other diseases will protect against COVID-19. To be protected, you need to get one of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines and continue practicing physical distancing and hygiene measures.
- Vaccines are one of the most effective tools to help stop the pandemic. Vaccines will work with your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus as soon as possible if you are exposed.

What COVID-19 vaccines are currently available?

- The scientific and vaccine manufacturing communities around the world have been working faster than ever to develop and produce vaccines that can protect people against COVID-19 and help end this crisis. Since the emergence of this new coronavirus several vaccines have been authorized and started to be rolled out. Most countries have their own national regulatory authority that decides whether a vaccine is appropriate for use in their territory. Check with your country's health department to find out which vaccines are authorized, and which are available for use in your country. Some international institutions, such as the [WHO](#), and academic institutions, such as [McGill University](#), have created instruments to track vaccine developments and authorizations.



WEAR A MASK



PRACTICE
PHYSICAL
DISTANCING



WASH
HANDS OFTEN



COVID-19 Vaccine: Sample Social Media Content

We encourage you to help share and amplify the messages about the importance of vaccination, about the responsibility to take the COVID-19 vaccines when clinically possible, and about the need to ensure equitable and fair access to these vaccines for everyone, no matter their social condition or where they live.

Here are some suggested social media posts and links to additional social media content and resources.

Sample Social Media Posts

Sample Tweets

As individuals we/I have a moral duty to protect others from #COVID19 and a vaccine is the most effective way to achieve this, which we can undergo with a clear conscience to protect not only our own health, but also out of solidarity with the most vulnerable #COVID19vaccine #VaticanCovidCommission @VaticanNews @VaticanIHD @PontAcadLife

Across the Catholic Church, we need to speak out to ensure the world delivers universal access to a #COVID19vaccine as an important first step towards a more just, inclusive and equitable world. We need to show that we are one human family and not look the other way @VaticanNews @VaticanIHD #COVID19vaccine #FratelliTutti #VaticanCovidCommission

As @Pontifex has affirmed, the #COVID19vaccine must be available to everyone, everywhere. Nations & businesses need to cooperate not compete to protect the most vulnerable on our journey towards regenerative healing #FratelliTutti @VaticanNews @VaticanIHD #VaticanCovidCommission

As @Pontifex writes, #Fraternity is the true cure for the pandemic and the many evils that have affected us. Along with vaccines, fraternity and hope are, as it were, the medicine we need in today's world. @VaticanNews @VaticanIHD #COVID19vaccine

In the spirit of #Fraternity, we cannot forget the most vulnerable and needy throughout the world. Receiving the vaccine is an act of love @VaticanNews @VaticanIHD #VaticanCovidCommission #COVID19vaccine

Since every life is inviolable, nobody must be left out. Vaccines are a means to respect and save the gift of life @VaticanNews @iamCARITAS @VaticanIHD #VaticanCovidCommission #COVID19vaccine

Sample Facebook and Instagram Shareable Quotes from *Fratelli Tutti* - available [here](#)

Additional (Editable) Immunization Assets from the World Health Organization can be found [here](#)





Links to Resources on COVID-19 and Vaccines

The following notes and statements have been released to respond to moral and ethical concerns about COVID-19 vaccines.

- [Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines](#) from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 21 December 2020
- [Vaccine for all. 20 points for a fairer and healthier world](#) from the Vatican COVID-19 Commission & Pontifical Academy for Life, 29 December 2020
- [Urgent Action for Access to COVID-19 vaccines: Nobody should be left out](#) from Caritas Internationalis, 5 February 2021

The following resources direct you to external websites that provide further scientific and health information on COVID-19 and were used as sources for the *Clinical Questions Regarding Covid-19 Vaccines* and *A Family Guide to the Coronavirus (COVID-19)*.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (United States) - [COVID-19 information](#)
- Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Africa - [COVID-19 information](#)
- European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention - [COVID-19 information](#)
- Pan-American Health Organization/The World Health Organization - [COVID-19 information](#)
- The World Health Organization - [COVID-19 information](#)
- The World Health Organization - Regional Office for Africa - [COVID-19 information](#)
- The World Health Organization - Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean - [COVID-19 information](#)
- The World Health Organization - Regional Office for Europe - [COVID-19 information](#)
- The World Health Organization - Regional Office for South-East Asia - [COVID-19 information](#)
- The World Health Organization - Regional Office for Western Pacific - [COVID-19 information](#)
- The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) - [What you need to know about a Covid-19 Vaccine](#)

