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STATEMENT REGARDING COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

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Greetings in the Peace of Christ! These are challenging times for all of us as we journey through the struggles of a global pandemic. Yet the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, whose birth we are preparing to celebrate, desires to comfort us even in the midst of these difficulties. With multiple vaccines on the way, an end of this tragic time seems to be in sight for our society. While it will take many months to distribute the vaccine, we must remain vigilant in our homes, schools, workplaces, and parishes by wearing masks, social distancing, washing hands, and sanitizing spaces after each use. I am grateful that our pastors have been so responsible and that our parish churches have been safe and that you feel secure therein.

Our diocesan Presbyteral Council has encouraged me to reach out to you, our Catholic faithful, in my capacity as your bishop and teacher of our diocese to alleviate any fears related to the morality of taking the vaccine. Respect for the dignity of the unborn and their right to life holds the pre-eminent place in the Church's moral and social teaching. The importance of this issue prompted the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to issue a memorandum through the Committee of Doctrine and the Committee for Pro-Life Activities to clarify the moral permissibility for taking the newly developed vaccines for the treatment of COVID-19 ([link to the whole memorandum](#)):

Some are asserting that if a vaccine is connected in any way with tainted cell lines then it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. This is an inaccurate portrayal of Catholic moral teaching.

There are three documents from the Holy See that treat the question of tainted vaccines: 1) the 2005 study by the Pontifical Academy for Life, "Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses" ([link](#)); 2) paragraphs nos. 34-35 in the 2008 Instruction on Certain Bioethical Questions (*Dignitatis Personae*) by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ([link](#)); 3) the 2017 Note on Italian Vaccine Issue, by the Pontifical Academy for Life ([link](#)).

All three cited documents offer a greater depth of discussion on the morality of vaccinations than is possible to cover here. I encourage you to read them if you are looking for further reasoning to understand this concept. Minds greater than my own have struggled with these questions, and I trust the Church in the process of discernment of such issues. While I cannot mandate that you take the vaccine, my desire is to put you at peace regarding their moral permissibility.

The vaccine is a step toward a return to normalcy for our society, and I am grateful to our medical professionals who have labored so tirelessly to assist the infected and return health to our communities. When the opportunity arises, I will take the vaccine as a way of protecting myself and those around me. It is not just morally permissible to take the vaccine, but in many ways a virtuous act at this time. May the Good Shepherd lead us out of this "valley of the shadow of death" to a brighter future of hope. Let us cry out every day: "Jesus, I trust in you!"

Bishop David L. Toups