

# origins

CNS documentary service

## USCCB Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccines

### Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann

In a Nov. 23 memo to U.S. bishops, the heads of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops doctrine and pro-life committees offered guidance on two main vaccines for COVID-19 that may become publicly available in the coming weeks. With data from trials showing these vaccines with a 90% and above effective rate, the bishops discussed the vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech and one by Moderna. COVID-19 has killed more than 250,000 Americans and more than 1.4 million worldwide. At least two U.S. bishops have publicly stated the new vaccines may have been developed using methods con-

*“It is morally permissible to accept vaccination when there are no alternatives and there is a serious risk to health.”*

trary to Catholic teaching. But in the memo obtained by Catholic News Service, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, head of the doctrine committee, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, head of the pro-life committee, said, “Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccine involved the use of cell lines that originated in fetal tissue taken from the body of an aborted baby at any level of design, development or production.” The bishops noted that both vaccines “made use of a tainted cell line for one of the confirmatory lab tests of their products. There is thus a connection, but it is relatively remote.” The bishops also said, “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.” The memo follows.

There appears to be some confusion in the media regarding the moral permissibility of using the vaccines for COVID-19 developed by Pfizer Inc. and Moderna. We would like to offer some clarifications.

Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccine involved the use of cell lines that originated in fetal tissue taken from the body of an aborted baby at any level of design, development or production.<sup>1</sup> They are not completely free from any connection to abortion, however, as both Pfizer and Moderna made use of a tainted cell line for one of the confirmatory lab tests of their products.

*continued on page 470*



### contents

- 469 USCCB Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccines  
*by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann*
- 470 CHA Statement on Developments on COVID-19 Vaccines  
*by Sister Mary Haddad, RSM*
- 471 Pandemics and the Blame Game: How Plagues Have Affected Jews, Christians and Muslims  
*by Father Patrick J. Ryan, SJ*
- 479 Suffering in a Pandemic: A Jewish Perspective  
*by Rabbi Abraham Unger*
- 481 Muslim Responses to Pandemics  
*by Ebru Turan*
- 484 Datebook
- 484 On File

December 3, 2020  
Volume 50  
Number 28

2249A