

An update on the rollout of new vaccines for COVID-19 that are becoming available.

On the info graph that I provided in December 2020, I talked about a hierarchy of vaccines. Two more vaccines have now become available and are likely to be in use in the near future. These vaccines are produced by Johnson and Johnson and Astra Zeneca.

Ethically, these vaccines are more problematic. As well as using stem cell lines derived from an abortion in the 1970s in the research stage they also continued to use that cell line as part of their production process. This does not mean that receiving a vaccine includes receiving aborted tissue. But it does mean that the use of embryonic stem cell lines has been more extensive.

In January 2021 the Pontifical Academy for life again reiterated that it is acceptable to receive even these vaccines because any type of cooperation with evil remains remote.

The Johnson and Johnson vaccine requires only one shot. Both vaccines can be stored at higher temperatures than the two previously approved vaccines. As a result these inoculations are more likely to be used in the poor and marginalized parts of our community because they are simpler to administer. You may have noticed from the news that there is a push to bring the vaccine into communities that may be hesitant to receive it or lack the ability to travel to receive it. Churches and community centers are likely to be used. These locations cannot store vaccines at very low temperatures and the Johnson and Johnson vaccine in particular will become very useful.

Needless to say, the ideal solution would be the production of a vaccine that is not tainted in any way. Thankfully there are some companies that are beginning to produce these vaccines and as they come online we may be in a position to recommend them above the others. For now they do not exist.

At the moment the ability to choose which vaccine one receives is almost nonexistent. Most locations simply allow people to register to receive the vaccine and are then given the one that is available on that day at that time. They then receive the follow up dose for that vaccine automatically.

Even when alternative vaccines come online it is highly possible that people will not be given a choice of which vaccine to receive. Only as time develops will we see if it is possible to choose one's vaccine through one's health care provider. In the meantime, parishioners should be encouraged to receive the vaccine they are offered, while always respecting their choice to receive one or not as a matter of conscience.

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