

TYLER

Dear Flock of East Texas,

"To know that God is not distant but close, not indifferent but compassionate, not aloof but a merciful Father who follows us lovingly with respect for our freedom: all this is a cause of deep joy which the alternating ups and downs of daily life cannot touch."

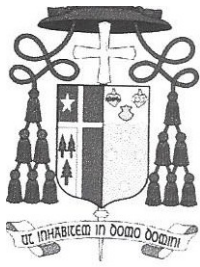
Pope John Paul II, Angelus, Third Sunday of Advent, 2003

As the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tyler, I wish you peace as we approach the end of a challenging 2020 and unwavering faith as we enter 2021. We have walked together through these difficult times. Soon we will face the availability of vaccines which we hope will alleviate the painful consequences of COVID-19 and its spread. Along with other Christian leaders, I have stressed the importance of ensuring that vaccines respect the dignity of human life and do *not* use the remains of electively aborted children in any part of the process.

We have the responsibility to make an informed and moral choice as to the use of a particular vaccine. The Church teaches: "Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1783). Christians are called to form their consciences in accordance with what is true as revealed in natural law and divine revelation and to act accordingly when deciding about the use of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Every procured abortion murders an innocent human person. For university, government, or industrial scientists to use materials obtained from the remains of an electively aborted child in the research, development, testing, or production of any vaccine is immoral and constitutes formal cooperation in evil. We must never cease to protest this practice with maximum determination to defend the dignity and sacredness of children in the womb. They are not objects to be used, but persons to be received as gifts, our brothers and sisters. As your shepherd, I cannot in good conscience receive a vaccine that has been produced using an aborted child. There are ethical vaccines in development which are worth waiting for.

The instructions, which were promulgated in 2008, say we have a duty to ask healthcare systems to do better. In this time of Covid-19, Catholic leaders have not asked for better. Too many have accepted the exploitation of aborted children. I urge you to reject any vaccine that uses the remains of aborted children in research, testing, development, or production. Testify to the truth that abortion must be rejected and make a choice that is consistent with the dignity of every human life from conception to natural death and is rooted in a mature faith and trust in eternal life, not fear of suffering in this life.



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As bishop, from the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Pediatricians, Catholic Medical Association, and Christian Medical and Dental Associations that we should all "expect and demand vaccines that are safe, effective, and ethically sound" (Joint Statement, December 2, 2020). Until that day, I urge all of us to exercise patience and to educate our conscience by studying the teaching of the Church. Then remain faithful to the truth concerning the dignity of every human life. We must prayerfully consider how we might best conform our will to Jesus Christ and seek the good in all things for ourselves, for our families, and for our communities. To echo *Dignitas Personae*, may we here in East Texas "*mobilize our consciences in favor of life.*"

Most Reverend Joseph E. Strickland
Bishop of Tyler