

Rebuttal to the Statement of the
Catholic Bishops of Connecticut
Regarding Vaccinations

The statement of the Catholic bishops of Connecticut concerning the Catholic Church's teaching concerning vaccines is inaccurate in its interpretation of the 2005 document on vaccinations (*Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses*, 2005) and somewhat misleading in other points.

The bishops state that "the Catholic Church encourages the use of vaccines." This is untrue in the sense that the Church has never made a definitive statement encouraging vaccines. The implication of this statement is that there does exist definitive teaching by the Church, which is untrue. Some Catholic medical organizations may have made statements encouraging the use of vaccines but this sort of statement is far from an official dogmatic statement.

The bishops go on to state, "The Church recognizes the conscientious objection to certain vaccines that use human fetal cell lines, but the use of such vaccines is **not immoral** [emphasis added] according to Church guidance." This statement totally misrepresents the teaching contained in the above noted document (which the bishops themselves reference to support their position). The actual teaching of the document, based upon the Church's perennial moral theology, is that it would be morally **tolerable** to use vaccines derived from the cells of aborted children since such use would represent remote material cooperation in the sin of abortion. However, this toleration would only be acceptable if there were no other alternative vaccines available (i.e., those not derived from aborted children) and if the health threat of not using the vaccines was sufficiently serious. This is a far cry from saying, as the bishops do, that the use of vaccines derived from aborted children is not immoral.

Another point not mentioned by the bishops is that the above referenced Vatican document based its moral **toleration** of vaccines derived from aborted children on the fact that the cells used were collected in the 1960s (thus making their use remote material cooperation). However, new lines of fetal cells have been introduced into the MMR vaccines in the last number of years. This would make the cooperation in the sin of abortion much more **proximate** and therefore much less tolerable from the moral perspective. In a very real sense, the 2005 *Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses* is outdated since it was written before the introduction of these new cell lines. The document, therefore, should not be relied upon as the definitive Church teaching in 2020.

There is another consideration which must be acknowledged when discussing the issue of forcing children to be vaccinated and it is that of parental rights. The Church has consistently taught that parents have the right to decide what is best for their children while still in their minority.

In his encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri*, Pope Pius XI very clearly puts forward the Church's teaching on parental rights and duties. The pertinent section (paragraphs 32 and 33) concerning this issue is this: *The family therefore holds directly from the Creator the mission and*

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hence the right to educate the offspring, a right inalienable because inseparably joined to the strict obligation, a right anterior to any right whatever of civil society and of the State, and therefore inviolable on the part of any power on earth.

*That this right is inviolable St. Thomas proves as follows: The child is naturally something of the father . . . so by natural right the child, before reaching the use of reason, is under the father's care. Hence it would be contrary to natural justice if the child, before the use of reason, were removed from the care of its parents, **or if any disposition were made concerning him against the will of the parents** [emphasis added].*

And as this duty on the part of the parents continues up to the time when the child is in a position to provide for itself, this same inviolable parental right of education also endures. "Nature intends not merely the generation of the offspring, but also its development and advance to the perfection of man considered as man, that is, to the state of virtue" says the same St. Thomas.

“Any disposition concerning him” — St. Thomas is not only speaking about education here. The Church has always held this right of parents, even regarding the Sacrament of Baptism which is necessary for salvation! Church law is very clear: a child may not be baptized without the consent of its parents (at least tacit consent).

Interestingly, Pope Pius XI in this same encyclical even makes mention of the decision of the United States Supreme Court [*Pierce, Governor of Oregon, et al. v. Society of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925)] which said States could not force parents to send their children to public schools. He [Pius XI] writes in paragraphs 37 and 38: *This incontestable right of the family has at various times been recognized by nations anxious to respect the natural law in their civil enactments. Thus, to give one recent example, the Supreme Court of the United States of America, in a decision on an important controversy, declared that it is not in the competence of the State to fix any uniform standard of education by forcing children to receive instruction exclusively in public schools, and it bases its decision on the natural law: the child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right coupled with the high duty, to educate him and prepare him for the fulfillment of his obligations.*

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