I believe that ethically everyone should take the vaccine. It is not an option, it is an ethical choice because you are gambling with your health, with your life, but you are also gambling with the lives of others.

- Pope Francis

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an airborne respiratory disease that easily spreads from person-to-person. It is mainly transmitted when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Symptoms can appear 2-14 days after exposure to an infected person and can include fever, chills, and cough. It is possible that infected persons may not display symptoms, however, they can still spread the virus. Adults 65 years and older and people of any age with underlying conditions are at higher risk of contracting a severe case of the virus.¹

Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

All COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States are effective at preventing COVID-19. Based on early data, experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine also keeps you from getting severely ill even if you do contract COVID-19. Additionally, receiving the vaccine helps you protect the people around you who might be at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.² Pope Francis has received the vaccine and believes that it is ethical to do so to protect the vulnerable.³

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

All currently available COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and reduce your risk of severe illness from COVID-19.⁴
What are the most common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

Side effects are signs that your body is building protection against the virus. While some people have no side effects, others may experience soreness, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, or nausea. Most side effects go away in a few days.⁵

Is it morally acceptable to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

Given that pharmaceutical companies that have developed the primary vaccines used to fight COVID-19 have relied on cell lines that were originally procured via abortion, many people who are concerned for the sanctity of human life have asked if it is ethical to accept any of the vaccines that have some connection to abortion. Church leadership has expressed concern regarding the use of abortion procured cell lines for use in medical experimentation and for medical research. Nevertheless, in December, 2020, the Vatican released a statement on the ethical viability of using COVID-19 vaccines that were developed in connection to abortion procured cell lines. In this message Vatican leadership stated that “all vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such vaccines does not constitute formal cooperation with the abortion from which the cells used in production of the vaccines derive… the morality of vaccination depends not only on the duty to protect one’s own health, but also on the duty to pursue the common good.”⁶

More recently, the Catholic Bishops of the United States reaffirmed this position, declaring that given “the lack of available alternative vaccines, and the fact that the connection between an abortion that occurred decades ago and receiving a vaccine produced today is remote, inoculation with the new COVID-19 vaccines in these circumstances can be morally justified.” Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, TX and Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of the Diocese of Austin are two examples of individual bishops who have issued pastoral letters declaring that it is morally licit to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. Pope Francis himself has been inoculated against COVID-19 using existing vaccines, as have other bishops including Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles.⁹

Can I receive a vaccine if I am undocumented?

The Center for Disease Control has stated that vaccines are available free of cost to anybody who wants to be vaccinated against COVID-19, regardless of immigration status or lack of insurance. According to the National Immigration Law Center, personal information collected by vaccination sites can only be used in the furtherance of the COVID-19 health response: “Information about vaccine recipients may not be used for any civil or criminal prosecution or immigration enforcement.”¹¹ Furthermore, The Department of Homeland Security has stated that it will not conduct immigration enforcement at vaccination sites and urges everyone, regardless of immigration status, to receive a vaccination.¹²
Endnotes