



THE CURIA
of the
ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

MEMORANDUM

Office of the Vicar General
Office of the Chancellor

To: Pastors, Administrators, Parochial Vicars

From: JPL
John P. Cahill *J.P. Cahill*

Date: July 30, 2021

Subject: Religious Exemption from COVID-19 Mandates

We occasionally hear from Catholics who have a sincere moral objection to the COVID-19 vaccines due to their connection to abortion. This concern is particularly acute among people who are strongly pro-life and very loyal to the teaching of the faith. It is a serious issue for some people who often seek guidance and support from the Church. His Eminence has requested that clarity be provided to assist our priests in response to requests of this nature which they are receiving.

Pope Francis has made it very clear that it is morally acceptable to take any of the vaccines and said we have the moral responsibility to get vaccinated. Cardinal Dolan has said the same.

There is no basis for a priest to issue a religious exemption to the vaccine. By doing so he is acting in contradiction to the directives of the Pope and is participating in an act that could have serious consequences to others. Imagine a student receiving a religious exemption, contracting the virus and spreading it throughout the campus. Clearly this would be an embarrassment to the archdiocese. Some even argue that it might impose personal liability on the priest.

Any individual is free to exercise discretion on getting the vaccine based upon his or her own beliefs without seeking the inaccurate portrayal of Church instructions. Our priests should not be active participants to such actions.

Refer to the [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Note on the Mortality of Using COVID-19 Vaccines](#).