



THE DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON

March 13, 2015

Dear Pastors and Principals:

Due to recent events in other regions of the United States, several questions have surfaced concerning whether or not our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Charleston will accept a religious objection to the requirement that all students receive minimum immunizations. We have the benefit of a moral analysis on this matter from the National Catholic Bioethics Center. Dr. John M. Haas, President of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, offered his analysis of this issue and confirmed that Catholic schools cannot grant an exemption from vaccination on religious grounds. The Catholic Church does not teach that the use of vaccinations produced in cell lines, even those derived from the tissue of an aborted fetus, is intrinsically evil.

Both the Pontifical Academy for Life and the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in *Dignitas Personae* have declared the use of these vaccines is licit if no others are available. In the 2005 statement from the Pontifical Academy for Life, vaccines could be foregone unless it would constitute considerable dangers to health, citing particularly the dangers of contracting the measles. The statement even goes so far as to make the following argument in footnote 15:

This is particularly true in the case of German measles, because of the danger of congenital rubella syndrome. This could occur, causing grave congenital malformations in the fetus, when a pregnant woman enters into contact, even if it is brief, with children who have not been immunized and are carriers of the virus. In this case, the parents who did not accept the vaccination of their own children become responsible for the malformations in question, and for the subsequent abortion of fetuses, when they have been discovered to be malformed.

With all of this in mind, I believe it is prudent that we refuse to accept religious objections to immunizations at our Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Charleston. I pray with gratitude for each one of you. May we seek what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect.

In the Lord's Peace,

Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmo
Bishop of Charleston

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