



Memo

Date: August 25, 2025

To: Priests, deacons, men and women religious, principals and presidents

From: The Most Rev. Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv.

Re: Requests for vaccine exemption letters from clergy

I understand some of you are getting requests from your parishioners to sign vaccine exemption forms. Priests and deacons of the Archdiocese of Atlanta should not sign a religious exemption request form for vaccines.

Neither Church doctrine or canon law prohibits the vaccination of persons, nor does it reduce the responsibility of Catholic institutions to protect those they serve.

The matter at hand has been examined by the Dicastery for Doctrine and Faith on at least three occasions in its instructions concerning the current state of scientific research.

Clearly the congregation has ruled that even in the event a needed vaccine may be obtained or manufactured from an illicit source, especially as it pertains to the common good, in this case children, neither the parent or child is complicit in the sin of the procurement of the biological material thereby negating the need for a doctrinal exemption.

Archdiocesan schools do not grant religious exemptions from vaccination. If there is a medical need for a child to omit a particular vaccine, the Office of Catholic Schools will accept a medical exemption document from a licensed practicing medical doctor who has treated the child in question.

Georgia allows for religious exemptions to vaccination requirements from public entities such as public schools. **Parents or guardians** must complete and file an Affidavit of Religious Objection to Immunization, according to the Georgia Department of Public Health.

The required exemption form **does not require** the affirmation of doctrinal or other faith-based exemption to be confirmed by the pastor of the parish the parties attend.

This form also requires that the party must request the exemption and swear: “I sincerely affirm that vaccination is contrary to my religious beliefs, and that my objections to vaccination are not based solely on grounds of personal philosophy or inconvenience.”

Since there is no magisterial or canonical prohibition to getting vaccinated, a priest should not sign an affirmation that would indicate such a prohibition. The parents can sign affirming that the action is contrary to their personal belief, but not the Church’s. Whether or not the exemption is granted is up to the school or organization from which the parents are requesting an exemption. As stated above, archdiocesan Catholic schools do not accept religious exemption requests, but some public schools may. Parents should check with the school or entity requiring the vaccine.

The Church encourages the faithful to challenge the scientific community to perform research and provide vaccines and medical treatments that do not use illicit materials such as aborted fetal tissue. Clergy could provide families with [sample letters](#) they can send to research and manufacturing facilities to amplify this call and negate the need for families to desire an exemption.