



LAY WITNESS

November 1, 2021

The Solemnity of All Saints

Vol. 39, No. 4

to unite the faithful from all walks of life in order to support, defend and advance the efforts of the teaching Church

A Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

“Grace to you, and peace from Him Who is, Who was, and Who is to come” (Rev. 1:4).

Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. Humble thy heart, and endure: incline thy ear, and receive the words of understanding: and make not haste in the time of clouds. Wait on God with patience: join thyself to God, and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end. Take all that shall be brought upon thee: and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation (Ecclesiasticus 1:1-5; DRV).

Catholic priests and catechists from the time of the Early Church through the Middle Ages used the Book of Ecclesiasticus (aka: Sirach) as a formation manual for right conduct. I do not know why it fell out of use, perhaps because commentaries on moral theology became more prevalent? I really don't know. What I do know is that this extraordinary book, together with the Book of Wisdom, contains easily understood and very practical presentations on living a pure and holy life. I encourage each of you to revisit these books from God in quiet prayer and thoughtful meditation.

We live in a very dark world. In the months since the last issue of *Lay Witness*, it would seem the world has gotten a bit darker. Aside from all the national and international mayhem over Afghanistan, right to life issues, and vaccine mandates, two events in the Church caught widespread attention. The Pope issued an apostolic constitution on the Extraordinary Form of the Latin Rite Mass. He also publicly supported a mandate within the Vatican that bars Vatican employees from returning to work without proof of vaccination against COVID-19 or a negative COVID test. An exception to this new policy was made for the Swiss Guards who must have the vaccine. If they refuse, they are considered to have “resigned.” The former document seemed to fall into historical obscurity fairly quickly as State and Church supported vaccine mandates took center stage in popular and Catholic discourse. If you read the news, such mandates have been extremely polarizing and touch on basic doctrines about the nature of man. People are afraid of sickness, loss of jobs, and death. Vaccine mandates, which involve all these fears and more, have deeply divided communities. The numerous inquiries our office has received about these mandates reflect considerable concern about this issue.

Is it surprising? Not to me. History repeats itself. Why? Because evil is not very imaginative. True imagination emanating from the image of God is creative; evil is destructive. It naturally follows

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Prayer of Catholics United for the Faith

O God our Father, who sent Your only-begotten Son to suffer and to give His life for the life of His Church, rule, protect, and nourish her continually, we beseech You. Teach us of Catholics United for the Faith to direct our zeal first of all to the renewal of our own hearts. Then, if it be Your holy will to allow us to be in any way Your instruments in the wider renewal of Your Church, give us the grace to know what services, small or great, You ask of us, and let the Holy Spirit teach us to perform them in obedience, patience, and charity, leaving entirely to You what fruits they may bear. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,
have mercy on us.
Holy Mary, Mother of the Church,
intercede for us.
St. Joseph, Head of the Holy Family
and Patron of the Universal Church,
pray for us.

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that evil will utilize new circumstances to drive old rhetoric and further the dehumanization and destruction of man. For example, although the issues discussed are distinct, the public discourse in opposition to *Humanae Vitae* in the 1960's and 70's and today's public discourse that attacks the legitimate exercise of one's spirituality and moral conscience are very similar. Both then and now, the Truth is distorted by removing key elements of doctrine from a public presentation, and presenting a conclusion based on false premises. To the uninformed, faulty conclusions seem reasonable, because much of the Truth about these situations remains hidden. To expose those points is an article in and of itself, and not the purpose of this letter. Today, I want to encourage you to see the signs of the times for what they are and live for God without fear. Particularly, I want to urge you to be patient and take proper steps to inform yourself before forming judgments about current situations affecting us.

The passage above from the second chapter of Ecclesiasticus is not a unique presentation in the Bible. In the Old Testament, we find such references in all the major divisions of books (Pentateuch, Historical, Wisdom, Prophets). We find the same in the New Testament. In the Book of Revelation, the letter of the Holy Spirit to the Church of Smyrna contains these words:

I know thy tribulation and thy poverty, but thou art rich: and thou art blasphemed by them that say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil will cast some of you into prison that you may be tried: and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful until death: and I will give thee the crown of life, (Rev. 2:9-10).

The key theme is ***“patience directed toward understanding”***.

It seems to me that the Scripture passage quoted above would encourage an understanding of Patience to be a *purposeful willingness to wait; a purposeful willingness to endure adversity*. Whether we like it or not, our lives are full of “waiting” and “enduring”. Some of us do this more gracefully than others. I do not believe that “waiting” or “enduring” are the same as Patience. The first is thrust upon us because we are creatures of time; but Patience is an act of the will that engages our minds and hearts to a specific purpose. Patience uses a time of waiting to pursue a purpose. Without that chosen purpose, we are no better off than the pet dog that lies around the house waiting for its master to feed it lunch; or worse, the dog that barks all day waiting to be fed.

Here, I will focus on two purposes to be pursued during a time of patient endurance as identified in Ecclesiasticus 2:1-5. The first is, *“incline thy ear, and receive the words of*

understanding.” To occupy one's intellect during a time of waiting, Patience encourages us to study and gain an understanding of the situation. As creatures made in the image and likeness of God, we possess an intellect that must be exercised for its proper development. If it is not exercised, the intellect becomes dull and overly subject to emotional reactions and stimulating hyperbole. The result is a darkness of mind and a heart full of fear (c.f. Wisdom 17:11). For the child of God, a time of waiting should be a time of purposeful study. Time should be used to gain information and knowledge about the situation at hand; to read Sacred Scripture and study how the Word of God encourages us to act in the situation. If we discipline ourselves to such a practice, our waiting turns into Patience and our course of action becomes more certain and less fearful.

A second purpose in a time of waiting is to *“join thyself to God.”* Just as the intellect must be exercised to avoid falling into intellectual doldrums and darkness, so the heart and soul must be exercised to remain healthy and strong. A time of waiting is a time of prayer. God understands the secrets of our hearts better than we do. He understands our frustrations and fears. Prayer is the opportunity to express fears and frustrations safely and without fear of judgment. When we cast our cares upon God in prayer, He responds with loving care (1 Pet. 5:7). Prayer becomes the appropriate moment to deal with emotional reactions and stimulating hyperbole. If we discipline ourselves in regular prayer, it will not be too difficult to increase it during a time of waiting. Such discipline encourages a more purposeful use of our intellect. Most importantly, when we join ourselves to God in prayer, we invite grace into the time of endurance.

We are living in a time of darkness, fear, and uncertainty, but we do not have to be afraid. When the Egyptians were enslaved by the darkness of the Ninth Plague and overcome with fear and even death, the Chosen People of God did not suffer the darkness but dwelt in light (Ex. 10:21-23). Just so, today's Children of Light should have no fear of the darkness of our times even when those around us embrace the darkness and suffer for it. I encourage you again to read the Book of Wisdom and allow this truth to become deeply rooted in your mind and heart.

Let us be Children of Light. In your anxiety and uncertainty, put a purpose to your waiting. Engage your mind in the task of understanding. Engage your heart in union with God in prayer. If you discipline yourself with study and prayer, if your focus becomes taking the place prepared for you in Heaven (c.f. Mt. 25:24), you will find Patience and the fruit of that treasure will be peace.

God bless you; St. Joseph keep you!
Peace,
Philip C. L. Gray

Mandate of Conscience: Balancing Obligations to the Common Good

by: Philip C. L. Gray

[S]tay constantly with a godly man whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments, whose soul is in accord with your soul, and who will sorrow with you if you fail. And establish the counsel of your own heart, for no one is more faithful to you than it is. For a man's soul sometimes keeps him better informed than seven watchmen sitting high on a watchtower. And besides all this pray to the Most High that he may direct your way in truth (Sirach 37:12-15; RSVCE).

“Getting the COVID vaccine is a personal choice.” “You have an obligation in charity to be vaccinated against COVID!” “Employers who establish Vaccine mandates for employees are encouraged to do so.”

These, and so many statements like them, have been made by Catholic bishops and Vatican officials. Based on these statements, Catholic institutions have begun threatening or implementing COVID vaccine mandates under threat of terminating employees who are not vaccinated. Some employers offer “religious” or “medical” exemptions. Many who do allow exemptions enforce a discouraging and offensive process to obtain the exemption. Some of these processes include elements in violation of a person's privacy and religious liberties and could be construed as unconstitutional. Both civil and canon lawyers are developing strategies to assist people who find themselves in danger of losing a job, a student seeking admission to a school of his choice, or a student being expelled from school because of COVID vaccination policies. For these developing strategies to work for a Catholic, those involved must understand what the Church teaches and how her disciplines should reflect the teachings.

It is the firm position of Catholics United for the Faith and The Saint Joseph Foundation that vaccine mandates violate obligations of the Natural Law and Catholic Doctrine as they touch upon the inviolable nature of moral conscience and the social doctrines on justice and charity.

In this article, I will explain the Catholic Church's teachings on moral conscience and the common good. I will demonstrate how the Church applies these teachings in situations involving an “obligation in charity.” Finally, I will apply these reflections to the circumstances involving the COVID vaccine.

Moral Conscience

The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides a synthesis of Church Teaching on the Moral Conscience in

1776 – 1802. It is not the purpose of this article to address the full notion of Moral Conscience, but only to apply it to the present circumstances.¹ There are three aspects of the doctrines on Moral Conscience that I will address here. All other aspects and notions associated with Moral Conscience are subordinate to these three. They are: 1. That which constitutes the moral conscience (what it is); 2. The obligation to act in accord with one's moral conscience; and 3. The obligations of others in respect to those decisions made based on one's moral conscience.

In essence, one's moral conscience is how God speaks to us of the Natural Law. It is not subjectivistic; meaning it is not merely an aspect of humanity that is as unique as the person who bears it. Rather, it is part of our spiritual nature by which God speaks to us, even to those of us who do not know Him. It is generally recognized that how a person listens to his moral conscience depends on personal formation. Nonetheless, whether he listens or recognizes the voice of God “[d]eep within his conscience” (Catechism 1776), God does speak to each of us about what is right, good and beautiful. Quoting John Henry Cardinal Newman, the Catechism sums up the nature of moral conscience in this way:

*Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; I mean that it was not a dictate, nor conveyed the notion of responsibility, of duty, of a threat and a promise. . . . [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. **Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ** (Catechism 1778, added emphasis).*

In this sense, moral conscience is intended to be a unifying factor of humanity, not a divisive factor. Regrettably, because of the distortion of sin, how we listen to God and the moral decisions we make are not always in conformity with the Good. This reality of distortion has significant effect on the obligations of others to respect those personal decisions emanating from our conscience.

Regarding one's obligation to follow his moral conscience, I offer two quotes that provide a much better synthesis of the matter than my own words ever could. The first comes from a manual of moral theology, the second from the Catechism.

Conscience that is certain, that is, where its possessor is clearly convinced that his conscience

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unhesitatingly imposes a definite obligation there and now, in the concrete, must be obeyed. Therefore, whether the speculative judgment which precedes the dictate of conscience is true or false in point of fact, the dictate following upon such judgment must be obeyed, if it is certain. Thus Abimelech (Gen. 20, 3-6) did what was objectively wrong, but God excused him saying: "I knew thou didst it with a sincere heart," and S. Paul (Rom. 14, 14): "To him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."²

Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. **He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.**" (Catechism 1782, footnote omitted, added emphasis).

Catechism 1907 makes clear that legitimate authorities in both the Church and civil society must allow each person "to act according to a sound norm of conscience." This notion of "sound norm of conscience" is a vague reference to the obligation to seek Truth and properly form one's conscience in pursuit of the Good, and for lawful authorities to respect the decisions of that properly developed conscience. Now, at this point, this article could get a bit unwieldy. I recognize that a properly developed conscience does not exist in every person in society, whether that society is the Church or the State. I recognize that necessity exists for law and order to be maintained by enforcing legitimate constraints imposed by the law. And, I recognize that when enforced, such enforcement can be difficult to bear in individual circumstances. Nonetheless, a key element in understanding the relationship between the dictates of moral conscience and the dictates of law is the application of the term "reasonable."

Only reasonable laws bind in conscience (c.f. Catechism 1903, *et al.*). So, what makes a law reasonable? Answering that question in a full sense would require a full series of articles. For our purposes here, it is necessary to consider what is "Good". By doing so, we can better understand whether a law is good and reasonable or not.

All Good is of God

'And as [Jesus] was setting out on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but God alone"' (Mark 10:17-18).

"Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from

above, coming down from the Father of lights with Whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:16-17).

From these, and other passages of Sacred Scripture, we know that God is the Good, and that this quality of being "good" only comes from Him. We also know that God cannot contradict Himself (cf. 2 Tim. 2:13). For an eternal, omnipotent being to contradict Himself is unreasonable and contradictory to His nature. For this reason, no good can be in conflict with another good. To claim otherwise would be an assertion that God contradicts Himself.

In the same way, the individual good of each person can never contradict the good common to all; and the common good can never violate the good of an individual (Catechism 1905, *et al.*). As further explained in the Catechism:

*First, the common good presupposes respect for the person as such. In the name of the common good, public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person. Society should permit each of its members to fulfill his vocation. In particular, the common good resides in the conditions for the exercise of the natural freedoms indispensable for the development of the human vocation, such as "the right to act according to a sound norm of conscience and to safeguard . . . privacy, and rightful freedom also in matters of religion."*³

From this we understand that an individual good and the common good are not opposed, cannot be in opposition, and the common good derives from the individual good.

Because God—not man—is the Author of all that is good, and because of God's omnipotence as opposed to man's power limited in part by time and space, an important distinction must be made between institutions established merely by man and those from God. Man-made things can never constitute an end in themselves, but only a means to an end. More importantly, merely man-made things and institutions do not contain *intrinsic* goodness. Rather, man-made institutions are morally evil or morally neutral insofar as they reflect or do not reflect the distortion of sin. Because man-made institutions are never an end in themselves, they are only means used by man to achieve an end. If the institution itself is a distortion of sin, it is evil by nature and cannot be used to achieve grace or merit even if some good is achieved through its use. Such means should be abandoned as evil. If the institution possesses no distortion of sin, it is morally neutral and can be used as a means to a good, neutral, or bad end.

From this, a principle of the Natural Law emerges. Because man-made things and institutions are “neutral” and not “intrinsically good”, they must cede to the individual’s moral conscience for choice of use. This is particularly true when the man-made institution focuses on an aspect of an individual that by Natural Law is the exclusive dominion of that person. This is most easily demonstrated when contrasted with a God-given “good”.

God made each of us self-determining so we can love. By its nature, the right to choose allows us to love and is intended only so we will choose good and learn to love. This right to choose is itself intrinsically good and is part of being in the image and likeness of God. As such, this right to choose is more important than the power of authority to impose a mandate about a human institution. That is why a woman cannot legitimately “choose” to abort a child, because the child is a God-creation and intrinsically good. Therefore, to choose abortion—which is a man-made institution that is intrinsically evil—violates the good of the child. The only legitimate choice available is to choose the good; the life of the child.⁴ In consideration of a neutral means and the right of one to choose in accord with conscience, let us consider the choice of education. The obligation to educate a child belongs to the parents in accord with the Natural Law. Because a public educational system is a man-made institution, it must cede to the parents’ innate, God-given authority to make decisions about the education of their children.⁵ Therefore, parents can choose not to use the public school system. Nonetheless, as a neutral element in moral consideration, use of a public educational system is a choice parents can legitimately make in pursuit of the Good.

Obligations of Charity

Unlike the Virtue of Justice, the Virtue of Charity cannot be constrained by laws. To do so would violate the very nature of Charity itself. By its nature, Charity is a purposeful act freely chosen by an individual and directed toward another for the sake of the good. When the freedom to choose the act is removed, the Virtue of Charity is also removed from the act. Keep in mind, the freedom to choose is principally intended by God to allow us to love. If we cannot choose the good, we cannot love. When the choice is removed, so is love.

Let me demonstrate this with a clear example from ecclesiastical jurisprudence. The Code of Canon Law provides the following norm regarding a person who either voluntarily leaves religious life or is dismissed for wrongdoing:

Canon 702§1: Those who depart from a religious institute legitimately or have been dismissed from it legitimately can request nothing from the institute for any work done in it.

§2: Nevertheless, the institute is to observe equity and the charity of the gospel toward a member who is separated from it.

Canon 702 repeats almost verbatim Canon 643 of the 1917 Code. The basic understanding is that when a person enters religious life and embraces the Evangelical Counsel of Poverty, the person renounces all and places complete dependence on God through the institute. As such, anything obtained while a member of the religious institute belongs not to the individual, but to the institute. Upon leaving, because the individual owns nothing, no claim can be made for anything. However, because the individual leaving must enter the world without accumulation of material goods, the institute has an obligation to provide for the person in an equitable manner, allowing the person adequate opportunity to establish himself in the world. As clearly stated in the Canon, the obligation to provide a subsidy does not derive from Justice, but from Charity. As such, it cannot be enforced or constrained.

This was highlighted in a decision by the Vatican in a case I handled. A religious sister who had been in final vows for more than 30 years was forced out of her religious institute when an active lesbian was elected the superior. She was thrown on the street with nothing but the clothes on her back. In response to our complaint, the Vatican expressed strong support for the dismissed sister, but made it clear that the obligation of charity noted in Canon 702§2 could not be constrained because it was an “obligation of charity”. Therefore, while the Vatican reminded the religious superior of her obligation in charity, it could not legitimately compel the superior to fulfill the obligation in a specific way. The superior, in conscience, had the discretion to determine what constituted an act of charity in this regard.

Simply put, obligations of charity cannot be constrained. If obligations of charity are enforced under compulsion, the constraint itself violates charity. Rather, obligations of charity must be freely given in conformity with the moral conscience of the giver. In this way, the intrinsic good of charity and the intrinsic good of the moral conscience are both protected and neither contradicts the other. A contradiction occurs only when constraint is made on the moral conscience to force a particular manner of acting. Such constraint, by nature of the circumstances, violates both the conscience and the obligation of charity.

Of Mandates and Men

In its 21 December 2020 document titled, “*Note on the Morality of Using Some Anti-Covid-19 Vaccines*”, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ends its comments on the use of vaccines with the following, unequivocal

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statement, “At the same time, practical reason makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary.” The paragraph concludes by pointing out that the individual good cannot be opposed to the common good, therefore one’s personal health choices cannot conflict with the necessity of making reasonable attempts not to threaten the health of others. The document points out that those choosing not to be vaccinated should use “*prophylactic means and appropriate behavior*” in an effort not to contract or spread the virus. This recommendation is both reasonable and a true expression of the justice we must demonstrate to others. Nonetheless, the Vatican is clear; a vaccine mandate cannot legitimately compel anyone to obtain the vaccine. Such a mandate violates moral conscience and the obligation of charity. Rather, as an obligation of charity, each individual has the discretionary choice to determine *how* to fulfill that obligation. In regard to the COVID vaccine, there are many ways to fulfill the obligation without obtaining the vaccine. In fact, this is the position held by the Vatican on the use of *any* vaccine.

All vaccines are man-made. They have side-effects. They are not fool-proof. Some—like the COVID vaccines in the United States—are developed by use of immoral means. Furthermore, their very nature is intrusive to the body of the individual, who is the one to suffer potential side-effects. Because of the nature of vaccines, the ordinary teaching authority of the Catholic Church has ruled that individuals must be free to choose whether or not to accept a vaccine, including the COVID vaccine. A COVID vaccine mandate violates the doctrine of moral conscience protected by the Church, and it violates charity. If such a mandate constrains a man to obtain the vaccine or lose his job, such a mandate also violates justice, as work is intrinsic to man’s nature and is a God-made good. Once obtained, a particular job becomes an acquired right and cannot be legitimately taken from a man for his refusal to be vaccinated. Doing so is significantly disproportionate; removing an acquired right associated with the Natural Law for cause of a merely human institution.

On the question of whether it is morally permissible to receive the COVID vaccines not produced using the cells of aborted children, but still tested using such cells: the Vatican has stated that only remote cooperation exists for those who receive the vaccine. Therefore, the Vatican rules that no sin occurs for the person who wishes to accept the vaccine. However, the Vatican is quick also to state that there is no obligation to accept the vaccine, only that it is morally permissible (not morally obligatory). Furthermore, the Vatican has also stated that if one accepts such vaccines, one has a moral duty to act in such manner as to encourage pharmaceutical companies and research

facilities to abandon use of these cell lines derived from aborted fetuses.

Considering these things, I cannot answer why the Catholic Church would teach and defend the Natural Law principles that shun vaccine mandates, while in practice Vatican employees are constrained to be vaccinated or not be allowed to work. I cannot explain the reasoning of bishops, who are entrusted with the obligation to teach the truth and uphold doctrine, and who make statements that they support a vaccine mandate. I am ashamed and angered by the bishops who have misquoted the Vatican document noted above and used such misquotes in support of vaccine mandates. These contradictions in practice are scandalous and significantly diminish the effects of the Church’s Mission in the world.

The Charter of the Rights of the Family provides a clear statement of the Natural Law on the right of each family to pursue its domestic existence in accord with the moral conscience of the parents without fear of discrimination.⁶ Vaccine mandates are discriminatory in nature and a violation of the Natural Law. Such mandates should be opposed by all who wish to protect, defend, and advance the Good of Man.

(Endnotes)

1 I do encourage our readers to closely examine what the Catechism has to say. Interested readers should look up the footnotes found in the Catechism and read the primary documents from which the Catechism explanations come. For further reading, I encourage you to find an older manual of moral theology (written before 1970) and read the section on Moral Conscience. It is usually found in the beginning of those older manuals, because a proper understanding of Moral Conscience provides the foundation for a proper understanding of Moral Theology and the doctrines on moral acts. For a lighter read, but faithful to Catholic doctrine, Catholics United for the Faith has a FAITH FACT on Moral Conscience. Call [1-800-MY FAITH (697-2484)] and ask for a copy.

2 Henry Davis, SJ., “Moral and Pastoral Theology”, vol. 1, Principles, p.64.

3 First emphasis original, second emphasis added, footnote omitted.

4 C.f. Holy See, *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, art. 5, 1983.

5 *Op. cit.*, art. 4.

6 *Op. cit.*, art. 7: Every family has the right to live freely its own domestic religious life under the guidance of the parents, as well as the right to profess publicly and to propagate the faith, to take part in public worship and in freely chosen programs of religious instruction, without suffering discrimination.

A Cleric Cannot Give an Exemption from the COVID Vaccine; the Faithful Must Simply Claim an Exemption!

It is not appropriate for a person to ask a priest or bishop for an exemption from receiving the COVID vaccine. Rather, the individual person must claim it. There are three reasons for this.

First, *‘Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. **He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters**’* (Catechism 1782, footnote omitted, added emphasis).

Second, the Vatican has made clear that the choice to accept or reject a vaccine is a matter of personal conscience. In its 21 December 2020 document titled, *‘Note on the Morality of Using Some Anti-Covid-19 Vaccines’*, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ends its comments on the use of vaccines with the following, unequivocal statement, *‘**practical reason makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary**’* (added emphasis).

Finally, matters of personal conscience are just that, personal and discretionary acts of the individual. Therefore, it is not for anyone else to give an exemption. Rather, it must be claimed. While this position is very clear under the doctrines and disciplines of the Catholic Church, legal aid groups such as the Thomas More Society, working within the jurisdiction of civil law, have expressed a similar

position. Following their recommendations and the doctrines and disciplines of the Church, Catholics United for the Faith and the Saint Joseph Foundation strongly recommend that anyone opposed to the COVID vaccine and who is “mandated” to receive the vaccine for school or work should not ask a bishop or priest for an exemption certificate. Rather, the person should simply claim a conscience or religious exemption with a simple statement such as:

In accord with the doctrines of the Catholic Church, the use of vaccines is not a moral obligation and belongs to the discretionary conscience of each person to accept it. I have a strong aversion to the use of the COVID vaccine for deeply personal and religious reasons. Therefore, I have chosen not to take the vaccine, and I consider it discriminatory if I am forced to receive it in order to keep my job.

If a person is a non-Catholic and also opposed to the vaccine, the person can substitute the words “the doctrines of the Catholic Church” with “my beliefs” or “the Natural Law as I understand it” or something similar.

If an employer takes punitive action against you for refusing the vaccine, we strongly urge you to obtain legal assistance in civil law. If your employer is a public entity of the Catholic Church, you should seek assistance from a canon lawyer in addition to obtaining help in civil law.



Saint Benedict in Glory by Johann Jakob Zeiller
c. 1748

CUF LINKS

Chapter News

All members and friends of CUF in the Milwaukee area are invited to join Gregory VII Chapter at 2pm on November 21, 2021. CUF's President, Philip Gray, will give a talk entitled: **Death of Conscience: What's a Catholic to Do?** Gregory VII's monthly chapter meetings are held at St. John the Evangelist Parish Hall, 8500 West Cold Spring Road, Greenfield WI 53228. Join us for the Rosary, prayed at 1:45pm before the talk.

Considering starting a CUF chapter, but not sure how to get it off the ground? Contact our office to schedule an in-person visit with CUF President, Philip Gray. He is eager to speak on CUF's mission, learn about the situation in your area and what is driving you to organize, and brainstorm with you about ways a CUF chapter could help bring about the restoration you want to see in the Church.

Information Services

CUF is seeking a full-time Director of Information Services to join our staff at the international offices in Hopedale, Ohio. The Director will engage CUF members intellectually and personally, answering questions about the Faith, assisting in formation of CUF members, and assisting in administrative duties under the direction of the President. Successful candidates must possess an unwavering Catholic Faith, a working knowledge of Catholic doctrine, strong organizational and public speaking skills, be open to some travel, and be able to

work both independently and with a team. Qualifications include a Master's degree in Theology, Philosophy, or a related field; or commensurate experience. Those with Theological research, writing, and speaking experience will be given preference. Interested applicants should submit a resumé with a detailed cover letter that introduces one's qualifications. Applications should be mailed to CUF, Attn: Therese Valentine, 85882 Water Works Road, Hopedale OH, 43976 or emailed to administrativeassistant@CUF.org

Saint Joseph Foundation

Since my last update, three newsletters ago, there have been many developments concerning our work at the Foundation. The Congregation for Clergy received a new Prefect, His Eminence, the Most Reverend Lazarus You Heung-sik from South Korea. Parish suppressions and church closures remain the largest portion of our caseload, so a new prefect of the competent dicastery is relevant. His decisions will offer a new generation of jurisprudence. Second, the Foundation is studying the COVID-19 vaccination mandates affecting Catholics in both secular and ecclesiastical spheres. The

September-October deadlines placed by mandates created a considerable flurry of activity and prompted the position paper by our President. The vaccination is a knotted subject requiring a dexterity in Catholic Doctrine. While it touches upon Dignity of Life issues (due to the use of fetal cell lines, WI-38, MRC-5, HEK 293, PER. C6, *et al.*), the mandates (vaccine, mask) also involve doctrines related to the Human Person, viz. Doctrine of Conscience. How these teachings are protected in law and how they are to be properly adjudicated is the current task at hand. -Natasha

Yakin' About

Philip was recently blessed to lead a one-day retreat hosted by the Padre Pio Prayer Group of Richardson, Texas. For copies of the day's four talks, entitled: The Virtue of Silence; Reparation; Justice in Charity; and Living Mercy please contact our office. The four-part series is available on CD and USB.

meditations, and articles with your reply card or email administrativeassistant@cuflink.org. Thank you for sharing!

Got an announcement? If your event is CUF friendly, and we have space to spare, we will gladly post it here!

We want to showcase the spiritual life of our members in *Lay Witness*! Submit your original prayers,