News
Opinion



by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

August 27, 2021
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

In two columns, NCR political columnist Michael Sean Winters points out what he says is foolish advice from the National Catholic Bioethics Center in regards to the COVID-19 vaccine. And two health care ethicists say that there may be a moral obligation — grounded in the Gospel's call to love our neighbor — to be vaccinated for COVID-19 unless one has a medical contraindication.

While I don't agree with those who object to vaccines because of their connection to abortion, I am reluctant to reject to their right to make a conscientious judgement.

I find the appeal to church authority particularly weak when we remember the death of Franz Jägerstätter who rejected those church authorities who argued for the legitimacy of serving in Hitler's army.

If we only respect conscience when we agree with its conclusion, we are no different than those bishops who uphold conscience only when it agrees with church teaching.

ALEXANDER LARKIN

San Jose, California



***

In the early 1950s, when I was a young schoolboy, we were required to be vaccinated against polio with the newly introduced Salk vaccine. Our parents were not given a choice and, I would argue, none thought twice about inoculating their children against a disease which had claimed, on average, 2,000 lives a year. That mortality statistic pales in comparison to our loss of more than 600,000 of our fellow citizens and more than two million people worldwide in the space of 18 months.

Our pathological polarization, not entirely created by Donald Trump but certainly exacerbated by him and his enablers, has resulted in too many people acting as if their personal freedom would be compromised but the threat of contracting COVID-

19 was less important than their assertion of what they perceive to be their rights. It is also decidedly unfortunate that certain conservative Catholic organizations as well as similarly inclined prelates have bought into the canard about personal freedom supplanting not only common sense but the overarching necessity of our Christian mandate to love our neighbors as ourselves.

When we consider the membership of organizations like the National Catholic Bioethics Center and their reliance upon funding from conservative sources, we see the posturing that is involved to curry favor with people whose primary interests are themselves and their own financial concerns.

When the majority of members of the U.S. bishops' conference begin arguing for the well-being of their flocks as opposed to the financial well-being of their benefactors than their own credibility will once again encourage the people in the pews to look to their own diocese as well as the domestic church generally as a beacon for guidance in confusing and perilous times.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

Advertisement

***

In Michael Sean Winters' opinion, NCR intentionally misrepresents both the position of the church and the intent of National Catholic Bioethics Center.

The church (or at least the pope, who on this topic is, by definition, not infallible by the way) has allowed the faithful to get vaccinated in good conscience. It seems he personally supports the vaccine. Good for him.

He also, as a good Catholic, supports individual discernment among his flock. It would be nice if you would recognize the latter point, which is obviously the intent of the National Catholic Bioethics Center. Is it too much to ask of NCR to realize this point? There are many faithful not affiliated with either the National Catholic Bioethics Center, or libertarianism, or the "culture wars" that you seem intent on inflaming, who are struggling with the vaccination choice, for reasons of faith, and

for other science-based reasons.

RICH HANSEN

Millcreek, Utah

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts and ideas, reactions and responses to letters@ncronline.org. The editor will collect them, curate them and publish a sampling in Letters to the Editor online or in our print edition.

We cannot publish everything. We will do our best to represent the full range of letters received. Here are the rules:

- Letters to the editor should be submitted to letters@ncronline.org.
- Letters to the editor should be limited to 250 words.
- Letters must include your name, street address, city, state and zip code. We will publish your name and city, state, but not your full address.
- If the letter refers to a specific article published at ncronline.org, please send in the headline or the link of the article.
- Please include a daytime telephone number where we can reach you. We will not publish your phone number. It may be used for verification.
- We can't guarantee publication of all letters, but you can be assured that your submission will receive careful consideration.
- Published letters may be edited for length and style.
- Letters containing misinformation or misleading content without correct sourcing will not be published.

This story appears in the **Your thoughts** feature series. View the full series.