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Father Arnaud Sélégny of the Society of St. Pius X is pictured at the society's seminary in Eco

Father Arnaud Sélégny of the Society of St. Pius X is pictured at the society's seminary in Econe, Switzerland, in this May 10, 2012, file photo. Father Sélégny, secretary general of the SSPX, said that getting vaccinated against COVID-19 may be a morally prudent act. He also denounced as an "abuse of power" coercive measures to promote vaccination. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

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While denouncing as an "abuse of power" coercive measures to promote vaccination against COVID-19, a leader of the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X said getting vaccinated "may sometimes be an eminently prudent act in the moral sense of the term."

Father Arnaud Sélégny, secretary general of the SSPX, also said if hospitals or nursing homes admit only chaplains who are vaccinated, priests should comply.

"If it is impossible to approach the dying to confer on them the sacraments without being oneself vaccinated, we should prefer the salvation of our neighbor to our own health or tranquility," he wrote in an article posted Sept. 24 on the congregation's

website, fsspx.news.

"The absolute and categorical positions that are often widespread, such as that which tends to consider the vaccinated as Judas and those who refuse to do so as martyrs, or vice versa, seem at the very least excessive and sometimes mark an obvious lack of charity," wrote Father Sélégny in his article on the most common moral, social and health arguments used for and against vaccination.

For many Catholics, the key moral question with the available COVID-19 vaccines is the fact that in the manufacturing or testing process, several of them used cell lines developed decades ago from the tissue of aborted fetuses.

Responding to the question, "Is the one who benefits from a past sin committing a sin himself?" Father Sélégny quoted St. Thomas Aquinas: "It is one thing to consent or concur with someone in wickedness, another thing to use the wickedness of someone for good."

With the "tainted" COVID-19 vaccines, he said, "it is question not of an evil which one commits oneself, but of a sin committed by another: and this is why it is first necessary to reprove the past sin and not to consent to its malice."

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"In the present case, it should be remembered that, while abortion is a particularly heinous crime," he said, the manufacturing and testing of the vaccines is indirect and remote. "Thus, when there is a valid reason proportionate to the possible dangers, it is not immoral to be vaccinated with a product which has been prepared or tested with the above-mentioned fetal cells."

"The existence of a reasonable motive for consenting to be vaccinated is therefore possible," Father Sélégny wrote, citing as examples the need to prevent "the inevitable loss of one's professional activity or social responsibilities" where proof of vaccination is required or "the need to visit an elderly person to support him and not to leave him alone."

While insisting vaccination should not be mandated by a government or employer, the priest said charity "sometimes requires making sacrifices to ensure the salvation or the good of one's neighbor," so, "if a health pass is needed to circulate, it may happen that the obligation to fulfill a duty of charity prompts us to agree to be

vaccinated."