News
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by NCR Staff

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San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone defended his decision not to get vaccinated against the coronavirus, contradicting public health officials' medical advice and Pope Francis' calls for vaccinations as an act of love. NCR readers responded to his statements. The letters have been edited for length and clarity. To join the conversation, follow the guidelines below.

The pope has well stated our Christian obligation to vaccinate in compliance with Christ's great commandment that we love one another. Should the archbishop be denied Holy Communion because of his ongoing and deliberate " sinful" conduct and especially as a public figure?

MICHAEL GILL

Sydney, Australia

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This man should be censured and relieved of his duties. He is in danger of being an asymptomatic carrier and, as such, is a wolf in sheep's clothing among the flock of humanity. None of his actions should ever be considered in light of "personal choice." His actions should be inspired only by "good for all."

ALEXANDRA HAAG

San Diego, California



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What I have long suspected has been proven true: some clerics in the upper ranks of the Catholic hierarchy are not immune from stupidity!

PHYLLIS LaMONTAGNE

Spencer, Massachusetts

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Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone: "We think of a vaccine as a shot that gives you immunity to a disease for life or at least for a very long time. And these actually don't give any immunity at all. They give protection."

I am confused by this statement from a supposedly educated person of such an elevated position and I am so glad for the clarification that followed. Because is or is not the definition of immunity the same as that of protection?

And according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, immunity is the protection from an infectious disease and a vaccine is a preparation that is used to stimulate the body's immune response against diseases. A vaccination is the act of introducing a vaccine into the body to produce protection from a specific disease.

The information is enormous so how could there be confusion?

(Sr.) DIANE MILLER, OSB

Watertown, South Dakota

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Pope Francis characterizes receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and helping others to do so as an act of love, as much for the benefit of others as for ourselves. Nevertheless, San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone revealed he refuses to be vaccinated himself. This in spite of his March 4 statement: "The increased availability of COVID-19 vaccines is already having a welcome effect in reducing the spread of this virus. I encourage everyone to be vaccinated in consultation with their physician."

Is this just another example of hypocrisy and denial of reality by the church hierarchy? When will the institutions of the church respect the wisdom of the soul of the church — the people of God? The Holy Spirit speaks to and through all of us, and the lived wisdom of the faithful must not be ignored.

The message of the Gospels is as simple as it is profound: "Love as God loves." Not to be vaccinated without a valid medical impediment is fundamentally and profoundly selfish, the antithesis of love.

We are tired of Catholic officials speaking out of both sides of their mouths. Such hypocrisy by the archbishop is a grave disservice to the message of the Gospels and the credibility of Christianity.

To Cordileone: preach the Gospel through your actions, not just words — "man up" and get your shots.

TIMOTHY M. CUNHA

San Francisco, California

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Just selfish and shameful which can cause followers to die. Moral lapse is so evident.

JOHN J. PETILLO, president of Sacred Heart University

Fairfield, Connecticut

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Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone is one of the most public examples of the harm being caused by prominent individuals who refuse to use common sense and listen to experts in this time of pandemic. There is no excuse for otherwise educated leaders, in some cases hypocritically and others out of ignorance, convincing their

followers to forsake preventive care such as vaccines.

The example set by Cordileone likely resulted in illness and perhaps death due to COVID-19 since they saw someone they trusted not take preventive measures using spurious excuses based upon nothing but ignorance. The credulous, not just within the Archdiocese of San Francisco, will look to Cordileone's example and mistakenly believe the arguments that vaccination is not necessary. When the government then mandates vaccinations, these same people will become the resistance.

According to the article, more than 70% of the population of San Francisco is vaccinated. That statistic gives us hope that many people are heeding the arguments for protection and ignoring the poor example set by Cordileone, among others. However, the influence of Catholic prelates, particularly the media savvy ones, exceeds the limits of individual dioceses and can influence people nationwide. With that in mind, Cordileone's obtuse reaction to preventing the spread of COVID-19 is particularly egregious.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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