

Prof. ROBERTO DELL'ORO - ON COVID 19 DOCUMENT

The recent document on **equitable vaccine for all**, recently issued by the Vatican COVID 19 Commission in collaboration with the Pontifical Academy for Life deserves to be recognized as an important statement.

It comes at a significant moment in the unfolding of the pandemic, when the surge in infections and deaths is finally met by the availability of a vaccine.

We might therefore hope in the possibility of overcoming a predicament that has defined much of the year that is about to pass.

The document builds on a very recent statement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, and at the same time, expands on certain dimensions of it.

The CDF statement responded directly to a doubt concerning the morality of vaccines produced with cell lines of aborted fetuses. It recognized that, given the remoteness of the connection in question, access to such vaccines does not entail any cooperation to the act that originated them, thus making vaccinations morally legitimate for Catholics.

The document of the Commission in its turn, offers a **matrix of ethical considerations, grounded on the principles of justice, solidarity and inclusiveness**, and addresses a number of issues emerging from **the entire life cycle** of vaccine production.

Three points are central.

1. First, **the insistence on making the vaccine available and accessible to all**. The key category here is “**pharmaceutical**

marginality”: if there is the possibility of treating a disease with a drug, this should be available to everyone, otherwise an injustice is being created.

2. Second: the previous statement is grounded in the idea that the **vaccine itself should be seen as a dimension of the common good**, that is, as something to which everyone should have access without discrimination, and this according to the **principle of the universal destination of goods** highlighted by Pope Francis in his latest encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.
 - 2.1. The point is relevant when it comes to the **potential commercialization of the vaccine**. For sure, since the vaccine is also the result of an invention produced by human ingenuity, **it cannot be entirely subtracted to commercial considerations. Still investments in the medical field should find their criteria in human solidarity**.
 - 2.2. Also, the document asks to overcome the logic of **vaccine nationalism**, whereby rich countries secure quantities of the vaccine beyond their needs, thus prevent other, poorer countries to have access to it.
3. A third major point concerns the **moral importance of vaccination** and the **stress on the moral responsibility to undergo vaccination**. Here the document invites Christian communities worldwide to collaborate with international and civic

organizations in promoting both the distribution and the administration of the vaccine, especially to those that are most in need.

In sum, this document provides both the Catholic church and the international community with an ethical framework to address the next phase of the pandemic, defined by the issue of vaccine distribution.

I think of it as **an act of intellectual solidarity** with which the church contributes to the universality of ethical discourse, and **a call for action on behalf of most poor and vulnerable**.