

December 5, 2014

To: Pastors, Principals

From: Most Reverend John Noonan
Bishop of Orlando

Re: Immunizations of Students Enrolling in Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Orlando

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

The Peace of the Lord be yours this day! Questions have arisen about whether or not our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Orlando will accept a religious objection to the requirement that all students in the State of Florida at both private and public schools receive minimum immunizations.

The Catholic Bishops of the Province of Miami discussed the matter of immunization during one of our meetings. We also have had the benefit of a moral analysis of this matter from the National Catholic Bioethics Center. It is the opinion of Dr. John M. Haas, President of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, that Catholic schools should not grant an exemption from vaccination on religious grounds since the Catholic Church does not teach that the use of vaccinations, even those produced in cell lines derived from tissue of aborted fetuses, is intrinsically evil. I agree with this opinion.

Dr. Haas also discussed a conscience exemption. It is my opinion that a conscience exemption should not be recognized since allowing such an exemption could endanger the safety of our children, teachers and parents. We may recognize a conscience objection when the consequence impacts only the one making the objection, but it is entirely different when the consequence puts others at risk.

All students enrolling in our Catholic schools within the Diocese of Orlando are required to submit a Certificate of Immunization along with their application as a condition precedent to enrollment.

I pray with gratitude for each one of you. May we seek what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect.