

No religious grounds to refuse the vaccination.

Bishop Jacob Freemantle

Much has been written about the need for and importance of being vaccinated against Covid-19.

As the church, we feel there is a great need to encourage all people to take the vaccination.

We encourage vaccination because it saves lives.

Faced with an epidemic of dangerous misleading myths and negative theories deliberately designed to discourage people from taking the jab, we plead with everyone to follow the science and to vaccinate.

We note with great concern that some of these theories are, to a large extent, driven from purportedly religious perspective.

This is not only polarizing and scary but, according to World Health Organization (WHO), “infodemic.”

Religious guidance on these dangerous misleading statements needs to be given by all faith movements if we are to save the human species from additional unnecessary suffering and death.

Throughout the ages, humanity has known that preserving health and life is of paramount importance.

God created all people not only to His physical image and likeness, but also in His mental image and likeness.

When He commanded us to “be fruitful and multiply,” He left it up to us to decide how to face health challenges such as pandemics.

Logic dictates that we cannot be fruitful and multiply unless we are healthy. We must use our minds, our power of thinking to decide how to preserve health. This is where scientific quest to fight pandemics, including Covid-19, comes in.

Different faiths have, directly and indirectly, referred to a need for scientific or proven healing methods, which include vaccination.

For example, in the Islamic tradition, vaccination serves to protect life, to respect the principle of preventing harm (izalat al-dharrar) and public interest (maslahat al-ummah).

Similarly, from the Bhagavad Gita (The Holy Hindu Scripture), devotees who are in *Krsna consciousness* offer food to Krsna and then eat – a process which nourishes the body spiritually.

By such action, not only are past sinful reactions in the body vanquished, but the body becomes immunized to all contamination of a material nature.

When there is an epidemic disease, a vaccine protects a person from the attack of the virus, in the case of Covid-19.

On the other hand, one who does not vaccinate continues to increase the volume of sinful actions, and this prepares the next body to resemble hogs and dogs, to suffer the resultant reactions of all sins.

The material world is full of contaminations, and one who is immunized by accepting the prasadam (mercy) of the Lord, is saved from the attack, whereas one who does not do so becomes subjected to contaminations (Bhagavad Gita 3.14).

Equally, from the Christian perspective, we read in the Gospel of Luke 14:1-6:

“On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath, they were watching him closely. Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy. And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees; ‘Is it lawful to cure people on the Sabbath, or not?’

“But they were silent. So, Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away. Then he said to them, ‘If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a Sabbath day?’ And they could not reply to this.”

Also, Mark 2:17, Jesus speaks of a need of a physician to those that are sick. On similar context, the Gospel of St Matthew 9:13 Jesus goes on to say, “But go and learn what this means.”

There are many other references to the treatment of disease in the scriptures.

Vaccination protects me and others, which is why an understanding of the law of inter-dependency is crucial for us all.

The great law of love for God and neighbour has a praxis application in this regard.

If we understand this principle, there will be no need to debate whether vaccination should be mandatory or a free choice.

The grace of God continues to bestow us with the gift of scientific progress. This includes the development of vaccines.

The progress of Covid-19 pandemic needs to be flattened. Thanks to God that He has answered our prayers by giving us the scientists who were able to develop a vaccine so quickly.

As a result, Covid-19 vaccines are not experimental. They have gone through the required stages of clinical trials. As we have seen in our country, extensive testing and scientific monitoring have indicated beyond any doubt that these vaccines are not only safe but also effective.

For this reason, we encourage all people to get vaccinated because:

- Covid-19 vaccines can prevent you from getting and spreading the virus
- Covid-19 vaccines are proven to reduce the likelihood of serious complications for those who have been vaccinated
- Thirdly, and also very important, is that a vaccinated person protects those around him or her.

Granted, there is a limited number of cases where there has been a negative reaction to the vaccination. We must be thankful that our health professionals have so far been open in dealing with all those exceptional cases in South Africa.

People of God, one last most thing to note in all our daily life for as long as this Covid-19 is with us: We must strictly adhere to regulations:

- Keep the numbers of the gatherings as specified.
- Keep to the limited duration of meeting.
- Keep wearing a mask, sanitizing, and social distance.

Please encourage everyone to get vaccinated. It is a good thing to do!

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