

Press Release - Wednesday 24 February 2021 - Immediate

Attn: Newsdesks, Photodesks and Religious Affairs Correspondents

Bishops encourage support of vaccine programmes against Covid-19

- **Council for Healthcare of the Bishops' Conference urges everyone to support the vaccination programmes currently in place in the Republic and in Northern Ireland**
- **As a matter of priority, vaccines should be made available to carers and to priest-chaplains to nursing care facilities and who preside at funerals**

Last December the Irish Catholic Bishops in a statement said that “safe and effective vaccination is an essential aspect of the prevention of disease”. They encouraged Catholics to support the programme of vaccination “not only for their own good, but for the protection of life and the health of those who are vulnerable and for the common good of humanity”. The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith made a similar call to all Catholics in its Note on the morality of Covid-19 vaccines (21 December 2020). The Council for Healthcare of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference wishes to reiterate that message and urges everyone to support the vaccination programmes currently in place in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland.

The development and provision of the vaccines is already providing reassurance for those who are most vulnerable to the virus and will help us to return to normality in terms of work, education, religious practice, and sporting and leisure activities as soon as possible.

We note that many people both North and South have already received the vaccine and we particularly welcome the fact that all residents and staff of nursing care facilities have been vaccinated at this stage. At present the group prioritised in the Republic of Ireland to receive the vaccine in the coming weeks are those over 70 years of age while in Northern Ireland it is those over 65 years of age along with others who are clinically vulnerable. We encourage all parishes and Church personnel to promote this programme and to encourage elderly parishioners, relatives and neighbours to avail of the opportunity to protect their health and the health of the

whole community.

In Northern Ireland the main carers in the home for those who are elderly or disabled can now book a vaccination online at one of the 7 trust centres. An appointment can be made at <https://covid-19.hscni.net/get-vaccinated> or, if you cannot access the internet, by telephone at 0300 200 7813. The phone line is open Monday to Friday from 8.30 am to 5.30 pm. We call for the Department of Health and public health authorities to make vaccines available to carers in the Republic of Ireland as a matter of priority and to priests who are chaplains to nursing care facilities and who preside at funerals.

Trustworthy and updated information on vaccines is available on <https://www2.hse.ie/covid-19-vaccine/> in the Republic of Ireland and <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/northern-ireland-covid-19-vaccination-programme> in Northern Ireland.