

**THE CHRISTIAN COALITION'S RESPONSE TO THE
COVID-19 VACCINATION MANDATE: "VACCINATION OR JOB TERMINATION"**

We, the Christian Coalition of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, hereby express our love and concern for all Vincentians as the COVID-19 virus continues to create challenges and complications for all of us. We pray, in particular, for families who have lost loved ones from the COVID-19 corona virus. We pray most earnestly for the safety and protection of every Vincentian. May the Holy Spirit keep us physically, emotionally, and spiritually strong as we face the complexities of the circumstances before us. We also pray for wisdom and strength for our government officials and spiritual leaders who must make difficult decisions for the health and safety of our communities. We acknowledge and value the contributions vaccines have made globally over the years and we thank God for such. We value the efforts of our national leaders in navigating this very turbulent season and we value each citizen of this great nation as we make serious decisions about our health.

We respect and support those who have decided to be vaccinated and we equally respect and support those who have chosen not to be vaccinated. We are all citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines invariably created by God with equal dignity whether vaccinated or not.

We pray that every person will continue to follow the protocols established by the Ministry of Health (mask wearing, physical distancing, sanitizing, frequent and proper hand washing) as we forge forward together in these challenging times living in a pandemic.

One of the current challenges posed by the pandemic is the threatened imposition of COVID-19 vaccination mandates by public and private-sector employers, and governmental authorities. **In this very challenging and difficult time, the church wishes to be clear about the morality of mandates that require people to be vaccinated or face the termination of their employment and possible loss of accrued benefits.**

God as creator of humanity has embedded in us through our **God-informed conscience** to discern carefully, right from wrong, as well as, in the pursuit of the common good. A society that fails to respect the rights of conscience ignores a key element in determining the common good for any nation. **The foundational instrument of international human rights, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, asserts that: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."**

We, therefore, urge all to exercise charity one towards another regarding the COVID-19 vaccination mandates. Solid facts are helpful. Name-calling and shaming are not. We strongly believe that in threatening people who have a difference of opinion in taking or not taking the vaccine with loss of livelihood, is Un-Christ like and therefore undesirable. Unfortunately, our society is badly divided and wounded. **We have a duty to be compassionate, merciful, and empathetic towards others. We must never lose sight of the marvelous God-given dignity of every human person. The Church must be a source of love and respect for both those who are in moral distress about the COVID-19 vaccine mandates and those frustrated by resistance to these vaccines.**

The Church affirms that the God-informed moral conscience is God speaking to us. Each human has in his or her heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of humankind and according to it, he or she will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a human being. The conscience is a delicate instrument that must be respected. In fact the Bible asserts that “*what so ever does not proceed from faith is sin.*” [whatever is done with doubt is sinful] (Roman 14:23 [Amp])

We are hereby called to reflect on the gravity of the violation involved in coercing a person to do something that he or she believes to be wrong. Thus, we must note that religious and civil authorities have a duty to respect the consciences of persons as a civil right. Each person is bound to follow his or her God-given conscience and should not be forced to act in a manner contrary to it.

We would like to make it abundantly clear that we do not support mandatory vaccination and urge that our nation exercises love and mercy, and do not add the extra burden of unemployment to those whose God-given conscience restrain them from taking the Covid-19 vaccine.

As servants of God, we are hereby requesting that the government and private sector (all employers) exercise patience and seek more consultation and coloboration. We are also requesting that each citizen of our great nation considers seriously the gravity of the situation before us and do all within our power and conviction to adhere to the protocols established by the Ministry of Health: wearing of facial masks, physical distancing, hand sanitizing and proper hand washing. We are all God's children. May we unite and trust that **OUR FAITH [IN GOD] WILL SEE US THROUGH.**