

*Unedited response from the Minnesota Department of Health
after reviewing the claims made in Fr. Robert Altier's sermon.*

[1] Event 201, October 18, 2019 Global Pandemic Exercise

<https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/event201/about>

Note: nothing concerning about the date of this exercise in that it took place shortly before the recognition of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19 virus) circulating in Wuhan, China. Exercises using disease scenarios have been taking place for decades and occur at the local, state, national and international levels. Minnesota and every state in the U.S. was required to develop and participate in exercises following the 9/11 and anthrax attacks of 2001.

The fictional coronavirus that was used to cause a pandemic in this exercise was used because it is a virus that could be in the same family as other new coronaviruses, SARS and MERS. Both SARS and MERS are caused by viruses in the same family, the coronavirus family, as COVID-19.

[2] Claim: SARS-CoV-2 was man-made in a lab in North Carolina. False.

This false rumor was circulating in the spring of 2020 and suggested that the virus was created in a lab of a researcher at University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. The researcher has been studying the family of coronaviruses (of which SARS-CoV-2 is in) and the lab was one of the first labs in the U.S. to get a sample of SARS-CoV-2 earlier this year to study.

See: <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article241996426.html>

[3] Claim: People are getting bacterial infections from wearing masks. False. There is no evidence that wearing a mask could cause someone to get an infection. When we wear scarfs or face coverings in the winter, there is no risk of getting a bacterial infection.

See: <https://apnews.com/afs:Content:9072351115>

[4] Claim: 2 candidate vaccines are using cells from aborted babies. Maybe true, he didn't mention which ones. However:

The Archbishop will be aware that the Vatican issued a statement (in 2017, but not translated into English until 2019) supporting the use of vaccines made using fetal cells. The Vatican statement clarifies that the use of such vaccines is moral and that individuals have a moral obligation to use them for the safety of others, and especially for vulnerable people such as pregnant women and immunosuppressed persons who cannot be safely vaccinated. *[Note from the Archbishop: The moral issues involved in this area are complicated: the Catholic perspective is presented in the materials cited above from the National Catholic Bioethics Center and the Catholic Medical Association.]*

[5] Claim: inflated deaths due to COVID-19. False. Misunderstanding of how cause of death is reported by doctors/coroners, and CDC indicating if death was due to COVID-19 as underlying or main cause of death. See: <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/09/01/fauci-debunks-theories-of-low-cdc-coronavirus-death-toll-there-are-180000-plus-deaths-in-us.html> and <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-covid-19-deaths-are-counted/>

[6] Claim: Moderna's vaccine is designed to change the RNA in your body so the very cells in your body change. False. Moderna's vaccine is allowing targeted cells in the body to turn on certain proteins to prevent or fight a disease.