ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Archbishop



Post Office Box 1979 Chicago, Illinois 60690-1979

February 5, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning a most serious matter that negatively impacts the Church in the United States directly, and that strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced on January 20 that almost all employers, including Catholic employers, will be forced to offer their employees health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be forced to include those "services" in the health policies they write. And almost all individuals will be forced to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In so ruling, the Administration has seemingly ignored the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. As a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics must be prepared either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens because of their religious beliefs. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in this important effort to regain our religious freedom. Our parents and grandparents did not come to these shores to help build America's cities and towns, its infrastructure and institutions, its enterprise and culture, only to have their posterity stripped of their God given rights. All that has been built up over so many years in our Catholic institutions should not be taken away by the stroke of an administrator's pen. This order reduces the Church to a private club, destroying her public mission in society. In generations past, the Church has always been able to count on the faithful to stand up and protect her sacred rights and duties. I hope and trust she can count on this generation of Catholics to do the same.

Therefore, I would ask of you two things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be restored. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. Second, I would also recommend visiting www.usceb.org/conscience to learn more about this severe assault on

religious liberty, and how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse the Administration's decision.

A letter similar to this is being sent to their people by diocesan bishops around the country. I thank you for your consideration of this unprecedented challenge to religious liberty. You and your families are in my prayers; please keep me in yours.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.

Francical Myrom

Archbishop of Chicago

Most Reverend Francis Kane Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago Most Reverend John Manz Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

Most Reverend Joseph Perry Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago Most Reverend George Rassas Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

Most Reverend Alberto Rojas Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago Most Reverend Andrew Wypych Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Archbishop



February 5, 2012

Estimados hermanos y hermanas en Cristo,

Les escribo por razón de un asunto serio y alarmante que afecta directa y negativamente a la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos, y que atenta contra el derecho fundamental a la libertad religiosa de todos los ciudadanos de cualquier confesión religiosa.

El Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos de los Estados Unidos anunció el 20 de enero que la práctica totalidad de los empleadores, incluyendo las instituciones católicas, serán obligados a ofrecer a sus empleados cobertura médica y de salud que incluya la esterilización, drogas que inducen abortos y anticonceptivos. Casi todos las entidades que ofrecen seguro médico a sus empleados serán forzados a incluir esos "servicios" en sus pólizas de seguro médico. Y prácticamente todas las personas estarán obligadas a comprar esa cobertura como parte de su póliza.

Con esta decisión, la Administración ha hecho a un lado la Primera Enmienda de la Constitución de los Estados Unidos, denegando a los católicos la primera y más fundamental libertad de nuestra Nación, la libertad religiosa. Como resultado, y a menos que la regulación sea anulada, nosotros los católicos nos veremos obligados o a violar nuestra conciencia o a dejar de ofrecer seguro médico y de salud a nuestros empleados (y a sufrir sanciones económicas por ello). La única concesión que hizo la Administración fue dar a nuestras instituciones un año para acatar la orden legislativa.

No podemos —y no lo haremos— cumplir con esta ley injusta. No se puede hacer a las personas de fe ciudadanos de segunda clase. Ya se han unido a nosotros hermanas y hermanos de todas las confesiones religiosas y muchas otras personas de buena voluntad en este importante esfuerzo para reclamar nuestra libertad religiosa. Nuestros padres y abuelos no vinieron a esta tierra para que después de ayudar a construir las ciudades y pueblos de los Estados Unidos, su infraestructura y sus instituciones, sus iniciativas y su cultura, luego se denegara a sus descendientes los derechos que Dios les da. Todo lo construido en tantos años por nuestras instituciones católicas no puede ser eliminado de un plumazo por un administrador. Esta orden reduce la Iglesia a un club privado, destruyendo su misión publica en la sociedad. En generaciones pasadas, la Iglesia siempre ha contado con los fieles para alzarse y proteger sus sagrados derechos y obligaciones. Espero y confío que pueda contar con esta generación de católicos para hacer lo mismo.

Y, por tanto, pediría de ustedes dos cosas. La primera, que como comunidad de fe debemos comprometernos a orar y ayunar para que la sabiduría y la justicia prevalezcan, y la libertad religiosa sea restaurada. Sin Dios, nada podemos; con Dios, nada es imposible. En segundo lugar, recomendaría que visitaran la página web www.usccb.org/conscience, para informarse mejor sobre este severo asalto a la libertad religiosa, y sobre cómo contactar al Congreso en apoyo a la legislación que revocaría la decisión de la administración.

Una carta similar a ésta ha sido enviada por los obispos diocesanos a su feligresía en todo el país. Agradezco la consideración que tengan hacia este desafío sin precedentes a la libertad religiosa. Usted y sus familias están en mis oraciones, por favor téngame en las suyas.

Sinceramente suyo en Cristo:

Cardenal Francis George, O.M.I. Arzobispo de Chicago

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Reverendísimo Francis Kane Obispo Auxiliar de Chicago Reverendísimo John Manz Obispo Auxiliar de Chicago

Reverendisimo Joseph Perry Obispo Auxiliar de Chicago Reverendísimo George Rassas Obispo Auxiliar de Chicago

Reverendísimo Alberto Rojas Obispo Auxiliar de Chicago

Reverendísimo Andrew Wypych Obispo Auxiliar de Chicago

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Archbishop



Post Office Box 1979 Chicago, Illinois 60690-1979

> 312-534-8230 Fax: 312-534-6379

5 lutego 2012 r.

Drodzy Bracia i Siostry w Chrystusie,

Piszę do Was w sprawie najwyższej wagi, która w sposób bezpośredni wywiera negatywny wpływ na Kościół w Stanach Zjednoczonych i która uderza w podstawowe prawo wszystkich obywateli do wolności religijnej bez względu na wyznanie.

20 stycznia br. Departament d/s Zdrowia i Usług dla Ludności U.S. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) ogłosił, że prawie wszyscy pracodawcy, w tym również pracodawcy katoliccy, będą zmuszeni do zapewnienia swoim pracownikom pakietu ubezpieczeń zdrowotnych pokrywających koszty sterylizacji, środków wczesnoporonnych (aborcyjnych) oraz środków antykoncepcyjnych. Niemal wszystkie firmy ubezpieczeniowe będą zmuszone do włączenia tych "usług" w zakres swoich polis ubezpieczeniowych. I niemal każda osoba indywidualna będzie zmuszona do wykupienia takiego ubezpieczenia, jako części składowej swojej polisy.

Wydając zarządzenie odmawiające katolikom pierwszego i najbardziej podstawowego prawa naszego narodu—prawa do wolności religijnej—obecna Administracja najwyraźniej zignorowała Pierwszą Poprawkę do Konstytucji Stanów Zjednoczonych. W rezultacie—o ile prawo to nie zostanie obalone—katoliccy pracodawcy muszą być gotowi albo do zadawania gwałtu swoim sumieniom albo do zrezygnowania z ubezpieczeń zdrowotnych zapewnianych do tej pory pracownikom swoich firm (i do poniesienia surowych konsekwencji finansowych tego kroku). Jedynym ustępstwem ze strony obecnej Administracji było zaoferowanie naszym instytucjom okresu jednego roku na podporządkowanie się tym warunkom.

Nie możemy—i nie podporządkujemy się—temu niesprawiedliwemu prawu. Ludzie wiary nie mogą stać się obywatelami drugiej kategorii z powodu swoich przekonań religijnych. Nasi bracia i siostry wszystkich wyznań oraz wielu ludzi dobrej woli przyłączyło się już do nas w tych zmaganiach o odzyskanie naszej wolności religijnej. Nie po to nasi ojcowie i dziadowie przybywali do wybrzeży tego kraju, nie po to uczestniczyli w budowaniu miast i miasteczek Ameryki, jej instytucji i infrastruktury, jej przedsiębiorczości i kultury, żeby ich potomkowie pozwolili teraz na ograbienie się z praw danych im przez samego Boga. To wszystko, co w przeciągu długich lat zostało wypracowane w naszych katolickich instytucjach nie może teraz zostać zlikwidowane jednym pociągnięciem pióra administratora. To zarządzenie niszczące misję Kościoła, jaką spełnia on w społeczeństwie, redukuje rolę Kościoła do prywatnego klubu. Przez pokolenia Kościół mógł zawsze liczyć na nieugiętą postawę swych wiernych w obronie

ich świętych i niepodważalnych praw i obowiązków. Ufam, że i obecnie Kościół może liczyć na taką samą postawę katolików.

Dlatego też proszę Was o zrobienie dwóch rzeczy. Po pierwsze, jako wspólnota wiernych musimy zacząć modlić się i podjąć post w intencji zwycięstwa sprawiedliwości i o to, by w naszym kraju przywrócona została wolność religijna. Bez Boga nie jesteśmy w stanie nic uczynić; z Bogiem nie ma nic niemożliwego. Po drugie, zachęcam również do odwiedzenia witryny internetowej www.usccb.org/conscience, żeby zdobyć więcej informacji na temat tego bardzo poważnego ataku na wolność religijną oraz żeby dowiedzieć się, jak można skontaktować się z Kongresem, aby wyrazić swoje poparcie dla ustawodawstwa, które odwoła decyzję Administracji.

Biskupi całego kraju wysyłają obecnie do wiernych w swoich diecezjach listy podobne w treści do tego, który teraz czytacie. Dziękuję Wam za gotowość do przyjęcia tego bezprecedensowego wyzwania w obronie wolności religijnej. Modlę się za Was i Wasze rodziny i proszę—pamiętajcie o mnie w swoich modlitwach.

Szczerze oddany w Chrystusie,

Francis Kardynał George, O.M.I.

Arcybiskup Chicago

Biskup Francis Kane Biskup Pomocniczy Chicago

Biskup Joseph Perry Biskup Pomocniczy Chicago

Biskup Alberto Rojas Biskup Pomocniczy Chicago Biskup John Manz Biskup Pomocniczy Chicago

Biskup George Rassas Biskup Pomocniczy Chicago

Biskup Andrew Wypych Biskup Pomocniczy Chicago



Diocese of Belleville Office of the Bishop

February 7, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning a most serious matter that has had a negative impact on the Church in the United States directly, and that strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced on January 20 that almost all employers, including Catholic employers, will be forced to offer their employees health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be forced to include those "services" in the health policies they write. And almost all individuals will be forced to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In so ruling, the Administration has seemingly ignored the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. As a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics must be prepared either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens because of their religious beliefs. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in this important effort to regain our religious freedom. Our parents and grandparents did not come to these shores to help build

America's cities and towns, its infrastructure and institutions, its enterprise and culture, only to have their posterity stripped of their God given rights. All that has been built up over so many years in our Catholic institutions should not be taken away by the stroke of an administrator's pen. This order reduces the Church to a private club, destroying her public mission in society. In generations past, the Church has always been able to count on the faithful to stand up and protect her sacred rights and duties. I hope and trust she can count on this generation of Catholics to do the same.

Therefore, I would ask of you two things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be restored. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. Second, I would also recommend visiting www.usccb.org/conscience to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty, and how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse the Administration's decision.

A letter similar to this is being sent to their people by Diocesan Bishops around the country. I thank you for your consideration of this unprecedented challenge to religious liberty. Know that you and your families are in my prayers as I gather with my brother bishops from Region VII and our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, during our *ad limina apostolorum* visits to the Holy See. Please pray that we will always be faithful to our ministry as Successors of the Apostles.

Prayerfully yours in Christ,

+ Bound Tonton

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton Bishop of Belleville

P.S. This letter is to be inserted in the bulletins of all the Masses this week, February 11 & 12, 2012. It should also be read from the pulpit.



425 Summit Street Joliet, Illinois 60435 www.dioceseofjoliet.org

January 31, 2012

Dear Friends in Christ,

On January 20th an agency of the federal government created a **serious threat to the freedom of religion** guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. As Americans and Christians, we must take steps to counter this threat.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a directive that all private health care insurance programs must include several reproductive services for women. These services must be provided without any co-pay or deductible. Among the services are FDA-approved prescription contraceptives (some of which can cause early abortion), sterilization procedures and related education and counseling. The directive applies to religious employers, even if the services in question violate their moral principles. It also places an unnecessary burden of conscience on other employers, Catholic and otherwise, who consider these services immoral.

The directive does provide an exemption for some religious employers, but the terms of exemption are very narrow. The employer must employ primarily members of its own faith and serve primarily members of its own faith. Certainly most Catholic hospitals would not qualify for an exemption and perhaps many Catholic universities. Catholic Charities would not qualify. It could be argued that Catholic dioceses, parishes and schools likewise do not quality, since Christ clearly sent his followers to proclaim the Gospel to everyone, to invite everyone into his Kingdom and to serve all who are in need. The Church doesn't exist just to take care of its own.

Now, it is no secret that many Catholics dissent from the Church's longstanding teaching on artificial contraception, elective sterilization and abortion. However, pursuing old arguments on these issues will sidetrack us from the real one at hand. The Health and Human Services directive is a violent breach of the wall of separation between church and state. For the government to force a religious body to pursue a course of action that contradicts its beliefs, particularly where no public interest is at stake, is completely unacceptable.

Throughout the history of this country, religious groups, certainly the Catholic Church, have made good use of religious liberty by contributing enormously to the common good. We have run hospitals and nursing homes that cared for everyone, especially the poor. We built universities and schools that educated millions of people who went on to develop this nation. Every day we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, fight for the oppressed and in many other ways give hope to the downtrodden—all done in the name of God, all done because of our faith.

Now our ability to carry out many of these apostolates is at stake, and many of our dedicated employees are potentially at risk of losing their medical insurance.

Your help is greatly needed, both as Christians and as Americans. First, please pray that this grave threat to religious liberty be stopped. Surely, if the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church, God can manage a cabinet department. Second, support whatever efforts I may ask you to support in the future, such as legislative or judicial remedies. Even now, you can contact the President, the Secretary of Health of Human Services, and your members of Congress. Third, be courageous in your conviction. Take action of your own. For additional information about this issue, visit the special link on our diocesan Web site (www.dioceseofioliet.org).

The United States is a great country. It was founded by people who sought freedom, initially, religious freedom. The first right enshrined in the Bill of Rights is the free exercise of religion. We are justifiably proud that in this country people of virtually every faith on earth are able to pursue their religious objectives in peace and friendship. Our federal government should help preserve and promote that heritage. Let us work together at this moment to assure that it does.

God bless all of you, whom I am privileged to shepherd in the name of Christ.

Most Reverend R. Daniel Conlon

Bishop of Joliet



Diocese of Rockford

555 Colman Center Drive P.O. Box 7044 Rockford, Illinois 61125

(815) 399-4300 Fax (815) 399-4769

January 28-29, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning an alarming and serious matter that negatively impacts the Church in the United States directly, and that strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith. The federal government, which claims to be "of, by, and for the people," has just dealt a heavy blow to almost a quarter of those people—the Catholic population—and to the millions more who are served by the Catholic faithful.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that almost all employers, including Catholic employers, will be forced to offer their employees' health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be forced to include those "services" in the health policies they write. And almost all individuals will be forced to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In so ruling, the Administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. And as a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in this important effort to regain our religious freedom. Our parents and grandparents did not come to these shores to help build America's cities and towns, its infrastructure and institutions, its enterprise and culture, only to have their posterity stripped of their God given rights. In generations past, the Church has always been able to count on the faithful to stand up and protect her sacred rights and duties. I hope and trust she can count on this generation of Catholics to do the same. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less.

And therefore, I would ask of you two things. <u>First</u>, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be restored. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. <u>Second</u>, I would also recommend visiting <u>www.usccb.org/conscience</u>, to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty, and how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse the Administration's decision.

With every good wish and prayer, I remain

Cordially yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Thomas G. Doran, J.C.D., D.D.

Bishop of Rockford



Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

Catholic Pastoral Center • 1615 West Washington Street • P.O. Box 3187 • Springfield, Illinois 62708-3187 www.dio.org 217-698-8500 FAX 217-698-0802

Office of the Bishop

January 26, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

I write to you concerning an alarming and serious matter that negatively impacts the Church in the United States directly, and that strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that almost all employers, including Catholic employers, will be forced to offer their employees health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be forced to include those "services" in the health policies they write and almost all individuals will be forced to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In so ruling, the Administration of President Barack Obama has disregarded the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. As a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics and other people of faith will be compelled either to violate our consciences or to drop employees' health coverage (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in this important effort to regain our religious freedom. In generations past, the Church has been able to count on the faithful to stand up and protect her sacred rights and duties. I hope and trust she can count on this generation of Catholics to do the same. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less.

This action by our federal government comes on the heels of our state government having forced Catholic Charities out of foster care and adoption services because of our religious beliefs. Therefore, I would ask of you two things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be restored. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. Second, I would also recommend visiting www.usccb.org/conscience, to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty, and how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse the Administration's decision.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

+ Thomas John Paprocki

MOST REV. DANGE, R. JENEY, C.S.C. OFFICE OF THE BREICH DIOCESE OF PROBIA



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
419 N.E. MADISON AVENUE
PROBLE, LLENOIS 61603
PROBLE: 309 671 1550
FAX: 309 671 1576

January 24, 2012

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the history of the United States, Friday, January 20, 2012 will certainly stand out as a moment of enormous peril for religious liberty. On that day the Obama administration announced regulations that would require Catholic institutions to offer insurance programs providing abortifacients, sterilization, and contraceptive services. If these regulations are put into effect, they could close down every Catholic school, hospital, and the other public ministries of our Church, which is perhaps their underlying intention. What is perfectly clear is that this is a bigoted and blatant attack on the First Amendment rights of every Catholic believer. Under no circumstances, however, will our Church ever abandon our unshakable commitment to the Gospel of Life.

I therefore call upon all the faithful of this Diocese to vigorously oppose this unprecedented governmental assault upon the moral convictions of our Faith. Under the Constitution, no president has the authority to require our cooperation with what we consider to be intrinsic evil and mortal sin. We must therefore oppose by every means at our disposal this gross infringement upon the rights of Catholic citizens to freely practice our religion. This country once fought a revolution to guarantee freedom, but the time has clearly arrived to strongly reassert our fundamental human rights. I am honestly horrified that the nation I have always loved has come to this hateful and radical step in religious intolerance. I hope and pray that all people of good will would support the faith based resistance of us their Catholic neighbors.

While it is primarily the laity who should take the leading role in political and legal action, as your Bishop, it is my clear responsibility to summon our local Church into spiritual and temporal combat in defense of Catholic Christianity. Have faith! Have courage! Fight boldly for what you believe! I strongly urge you not to be intimidated by extremist politicians or the malice of the cultural secularists arrayed against us. Always remember that the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world (I John 4:4).

Until these grave issues are favorably resolved, I ask that every parish, school, hospital, Newman Center, and religious house in this Diocese insert the Prayer to Saint Michael

January 24, 2012 Page two

the Archangel into the Sunday General Intercessions just before their concluding prayer. It is God's invincible Archangel who commands the heavenly hosts, and it is the enemies of God who will ultimately be defeated. This prayer should be announced as: a Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel for the freedom of the Catholic Church in America.

May God guide and protect his Holy Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

* Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.

BISHOP OF PEORIA

A Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel for the Freedom of the Catholic Church in America

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host—by the Divine Power of God—cast into hell, satan and all the evil spirits, who roam throughout the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Amen.