



DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH

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Office of
THE BISHOP

January 26, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning an alarming matter that negatively impacts the Church in the United States and strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith. The federal government, which is meant to be “of, by, and for the people,” has just enacted a grave injustice 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 recently announced 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 such so called “services” in the health policies they write. And almost all individuals will be *forced* to buy that coverage as a part of their policies. That means we will have no choice but to cover the cost for health insurance in order to provide practices that we, as Catholics, consider immoral and cannot choose in good conscience.

In so ruling, the Administration has violated 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 denied the right to follow our moral consciences, as well as the ability to offer health coverage for our employees. The Administration has given our institutions one year to comply.

We cannot simply do nothing in the face of this unjust law. People of faith should not be made second class citizens. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in an imperative 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 know she can count on this generation of Catholics to do the same. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less.

Therefore, I would ask of you two things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and action so that justice may prevail and religious liberty be restored. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. Second, please visit 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.

With gratitude for your attention to this most serious matter and with every prayerful wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
Bishop of Palm Beach