



Office of the Bishop

January 31, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning a serious matter that negatively impacts the Church in the United States, 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 employers, including Catholic employers, will be required to offer their employees' health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Health insurers will be required by law to include those "services" in the health policies they write. Individuals will be compelled to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In so ruling, the Administration has, in effect, put aside the First Amendment to the Constitution, denying everyone our Nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of conscience protection and religious liberty. 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 comply with this unjust law. I join Cardinal-Designate Timothy Dolan, Chair of the U.S. Bishop's Conference, and Bishop William Lori, Chair of the Bishop's Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, in sending this letter to all our faithful, alerting you to this serious injustice. We are 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 the 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. We need the vigorous help of the lay faithful to reverse this action which affects the Church, business owners, and all employees needing health care benefits.

I ask you to do 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. Second, 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.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Be assured of my affection and prayers.

In Christ and Mary,

Most Reverend Robert W. Finn
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