



February 1, 2012

Dear Friends,

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 we profess to be “of, by, and for the people,” has just dealt a heavy blow to almost a quarter of those people—the Catholic population of the United States—and to the millions more who are served by the Catholic Church.

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 those “benefits” 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 this 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), which is also unconscionable. The Administration’s sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

We cannot 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 and this generation’s immigrants 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. For these reasons, I would ask two things of you. *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 and ask you to 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.

Please join me in taking this action as soon as you can, indeed in the very near future. I pray God’s blessings upon you, your families and your loved ones, even as we renew our pursuit of the God-given gifts of freedom that we always pursue.

With every best wish and kind regard, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Patrick J. McGrath
Bishop of San Jose