



DIOCESE OF DALLAS

January 26, 2012

Office of the Bishop

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning an alarming and serious matter that negatively impacts the Catholic Church in the United States and 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. The Administration’s sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

In so ruling, the Administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This action by the Administration denies us as Catholics our nation’s first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. Unless this rule is overturned, we must be prepared either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). My brother bishops and I cannot—will not—comply with this unjust law. 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. I hope I can now count on you, the faithful of the Diocese of Dallas in demanding that the rights of the Church and her people are protected.

I 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.

Thank you for your help in this critical matter. Together we can reverse this egregious attack on our religious freedom.

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend Kevin J. Farrell, D.D.
Bishop of Dallas