



2 February 2012

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

You may have heard about regulations the federal agency Health and Human Services announced last week. These rules raise grave concerns for me and my brother Catholic bishops. Under them, 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.

These proposed changes prompt us to voice opposition. To begin with, we find these rules morally disturbing and contrary to God’s law. Perhaps as disturbing, by forcing Catholics to comply, the regulations violate religious freedom. 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. It is a meaningless gesture. We can never submit to rules that violate our religious conscience.

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, all things are possible. Second, I would also recommend visiting www.usccb.org/conscience, to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty, and to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse this decision.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is continuing to formulate an action plan for the days and weeks ahead. I will keep you apprised of those developments.

Yours in Christ,

+ Donald J. Kettler

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Bishop

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Some give by going to the Missions - Some go by giving to the Missions - Without both, there are no Missions.

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