



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON  
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SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503-1279

January 26, 2012

Dear Friends,

I write to you concerning an alarming and serious matter that negatively impacts the Church in the United States and in the Diocese of Scranton. This matter 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.

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. As a result, 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.

Simply put, as Catholics, 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 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.

Therefore, I ask you to commit to two things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer 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 recommend visiting the USCCB website at: [www.usccb.org/conscience](http://www.usccb.org/conscience), to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty, including how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse the Administration’s decision. As we move forward in our efforts to preserve religious liberty, all additional information about this issue will be brought to your attention via emails such as this, as well as postings on our diocesan website, publications in *The Catholic Light* and inserts in your parish bulletin.

Thank you for your support of religious liberty. Let us remain united in prayer and in our defense of human dignity.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

† *Joseph C. Bambera*

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.  
Bishop of Scranton