



Archdiocese of New Orleans

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January 26, 2012

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

As you may be aware, I am currently in Rome for our regular Ad Limina visit to meet with Vatican officials and Pope Benedict XVI. However, an issue has arisen at home that I believe requires our immediate attention and action.

On Friday, January 21, the US Department of Health and Human Services issued a ruling that mandates that employers, even Catholic employers and organizations, provide health care coverage for birth control, sterilizations and even abortifacients. This is an unprecedented attack on our religious liberty, which is a founding principle of our nation. This ruling is an example of government violating our rights to make choices based on our morals and Church teaching. As I visit with church officials and the Holy Father here in Rome, they too are asking about this issue and expressing grave concern.

I join my brother bishops in expressing our disappointment and call on you as the Catholic faithful to take action. I have already sent a letter to members of Congress expressing my concern and disappointment. This is a critical time and one that will call for us to engage in public dialogue. We cannot stand by and allow this to move forward without speaking out.

I ask for your continued prayers for our nation and that the dignity of human life and religious freedom may be protected. 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.

I will keep you informed. We must be able to live the message of Christ in the United States and follow our conscience. We are not demanding that others live our Christian values but we should have the right to do so.

Wishing you God's blessings, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond
Archbishop of New Orleans

Please make this letter available in the most effective way to the people on the weekend of January 28-29, 2012