ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Archbishop

Post Office Box 1979
Chicago, Illinois 60690-1979

February 5, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning a most 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 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced on January 20 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 seemingly ignored 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 must be prepared 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.

We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens because of their religious beliefs. 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. All that has been built up over so many years in our Catholic institutions should not be taken away by the stroke of an administrator's pen. This order reduces the Church to a private club, destroying her public mission in society. 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.

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, 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.

A letter similar to this is being sent to their people by diocesan bishops around the country. I thank you for your consideration of this unprecedented challenge to religious liberty. You and your families are in my prayers; please keep me in yours.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago

Most Reverend Francis Kane
Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

Most Reverend John Manz
Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

Most Reverend Joseph Perry
Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

Most Reverend George Rassas
Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

Most Reverend Alberto Rojas
Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

Most Reverend Andrew Wypych
Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago