

Good News

Bringing the light of Christ to Missouri.



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In This Issue:

**Catholic Church
Campaign Against
Abortion Drug Mandate
Under Way**

**Missouri Bishops
Voice Opposition to
Contraceptive, Abortion
Drug Mandate**

**Even Jesus Wouldn't
Qualify for New
Religious Exemption**

**Congress Shall Make
No Law Respecting an
Establishment of Reli-
gion, or Prohibiting the
Free Exercise Thereof ...**



**"Despotism may govern
without faith, but liberty
cannot. Religion is much
more necessary in the
republic than in the
monarchy ..."**

**Alexis de Tocqueville,
Democracy in America,
1835**

Catholic Church Campaign Against Abortion Drug Mandate Under Way

By the time you read this Good News, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will likely have finalized a regulation regarding "preventive services" mandated under the federal health care reform law.

This rule, unless modified, will require health plans to cover abortion drugs, contraceptives and sterilization procedures.

In a recent letter to Congress, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, archbishop of Galveston-Houston and chairman of the pro-life activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), observed that the HHS rule mandates coverage for "surgical sterilization; all prescription contraceptives approved by FDA, including drugs like Ella (ulipristal) that can cause abortions in the early weeks of pregnancy ..."

The HHS rule includes a religious and conscience exemption, but it is so narrow that it is almost worthless. Catholic Charities agencies, for example, would have to fire all their non-Catholic staff and serve only Catholics in order to qualify for the "religious" exemption. Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, for example, helps more than 200,000 persons, but more than 75 percent of them are not Catholic.

Cardinal DiNardo deplored the action

taken by HHS: "This effort to corral religion exclusively into the sanctuaries of houses of worship betrays a complete ignorance of the role of religion in American life, and of Congress' long tradition of far more helpful laws on religious freedom."

Fortunately, rules promulgated by federal departments can be overturned by new federal law. The USCCB is urging Congress to enact the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (H.R. 1179 and S. 1467).

S. 1467 is sponsored by Missouri's own U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt.

The Missouri Catholic Conference has joined with the USCCB in a nationwide campaign that seeks to repeal the contraceptive/abortion drug mandate. MCC Citizens' Network members have received several action alerts on this matter.

At this time, the most important step that Missouri Catholics can take is to thank Sen. Blunt for sponsoring S. 1467, urge Sen. Claire McCaskill to support the Blunt bill, and urge their congressperson to support H.R. 1179. (For contact information on legislators, go to the MCC's website at MOcatholic.org.)

Missouri Bishops Voice Opposition to Contraceptive, Abortion Drug Mandate

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

We, the Catholic bishops of Missouri, express our strong opposition to the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) interim final rule that mandates all health plans cover contraceptives and sterilization procedures.

This mandate violates religious liberty and rights of conscience, and would undermine Missouri law. It forces health plans to offer coverage for practices that many people of faith find morally objectionable. The mandate would even require health plans to offer Ella, an emergency contraception abortion drug that can be given up to five days after sexual intercourse and can destroy human life at the earliest stages of development.

The Catholic Church affirms human life and families. Human life is sacred at all stages of development and abortion is therefore a grave evil, because it results in the death of an innocent unborn child. Yet by the terms of the mandate found in this interim final rule, health plans would have to offer Ella and other emergency contraceptives. While a fact sheet on the HHS website addressing the mandate claims that the FDA recommendations regarding contraceptives "do not include abortifacient drugs," the manufacturer's insert for Ella warns that its use is "contraindicated during an existing or suspected pregnancy." This insert belies the claims of the HHS fact sheet.

Requiring Catholic individuals and institutions to pay for and provide abortion drugs, contraceptives and sterilization procedures contrary to Catholic teaching is an affront to the religious liberty upon which our nation was founded. With these mandates, the federal government seeks to impose a "reproductive" ideology completely at odds with the religious faith of Catholics and others.

The Catholic Church teaches that the purposeful interruption of the life-creating capacity of the conjugal act is contrary to the law of God and the natural law. These laws provide that a man and woman joined in matrimony are called to cooperate in the creative work of God, which includes the transmission of new human life. Catholic teaching, therefore, finds morally objectionable all forms of artificial contraception or sterilization.

In his executive order of March 24, 2010, clarifying aspects of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, President Obama assured Americans that federal funds would not be used to pay for abortion and that "longstanding Federal laws to protect conscience remain intact." If this mandate is adopted, that promise will be broken.

We strongly urge that the mandate in question not be adopted in the final regulation. If HHS insists on going forward with this mandate, then we request you consider how the state of Missouri has addressed this issue. Missouri law requires health plans offering pharmaceutical benefits to also offer contraceptive medications, but allows individuals and entities operated pursuant to "moral, ethical or religious tenets that are contrary to the use of the provision of contraceptives" to "opt out" (Section 376.1199.4 RSMo).

The religious exemption in the interim final rule is far too narrow to provide adequate conscience protection for individuals and institutions with moral, ethical or religious objections, and would undermine Missouri's law and the conscience rights of Missouri citizens. At the very least, the federal rule should provide conscience protection similar to what Missouri legislators have put in place.

We thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these grave matters.

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF MISSOURI

Even Jesus Wouldn't Qualify for New Religious Exemption

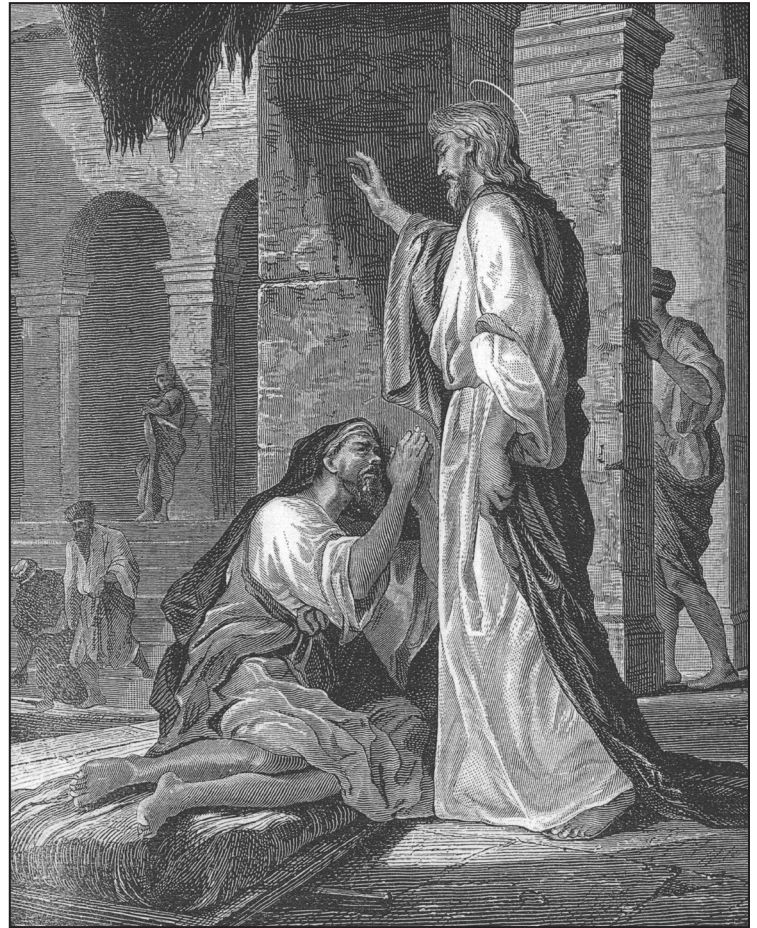
The religious exemption in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) contraceptive and sterilization mandate is so narrow that even Jesus would not qualify. His ministry after all was to all people, Jews and gentiles alike. Catholic Charities, which provides a significant portion of the social services in this country to the underprivileged of all faiths, would fail to meet this standard, nor would Catholic hospitals, universities or colleges. Individuals and private businesses owned by people of faith would be shut out too.

Missouri residents currently have the right to opt out of purchasing a health plan that covers contraceptive medications, including emergency contraceptive abortion drugs, and Missouri has no mandate requiring health plans to cover sterilization procedures. If the HHS mandate goes into effect, however, Missouri residents will lose this right. Premiums will go in part to pay for medications and procedures, such as the emergency contraception drug Ella, which can cause a chemical abortion.

If that weren't enough, the HHS seeks to redefine what is means to be religious. The religious exemption included in the mandate allows religious employers to opt out, but only if they primarily employ and serve persons "who share the religious tenets of the organization," and only if the purpose of the organization is "the inculcation of religious values." Any faith-based ministry that seeks to serve others wouldn't be religious enough to qualify.

When our founding fathers formed this nation, they wisely included in the Bill of Rights the guarantee that "Congress shall make no law respecting an Establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Yet, HHS stands ready to tell organizations of faith that they are not religious enough to qualify for a religious exemption to a health care mandate. Seriously?

This country has a long history of our government cooperating with religious groups to ensure their vitality and to foster among the citizens the morality and virtues necessary for democracy to survive. We as a country are about to take a gigantic step backward. If government has the authority to determine who is religious and who isn't, what is to stop it from telling us what we can and



cannot believe or say? Even those who disagree with the church's teaching on contraception should be concerned.

Separation of church and state properly understood stands for the proposition that the government: (1) will not establish a national religion, and (2) will not prohibit people from practicing their faith according to their conscience. Do those who oppose Catholic teaching in this

area really want to sacrifice the church's ministry to the poor in exchange for expanding "reproductive health rights"? Obviously, this mandate seeks to promote a broader agenda, one that is not friendly to people of faith.

The right to practice religious faith is a natural, God-given right, not a right granted to us by the government. When the right to practice religion in America becomes a license granted by government, we are no

longer a democratic society, but a democratic totalitarian society. Is this the direction we are headed?

This country has a long history of our government cooperating with religious groups to ensure their vitality and to foster among the citizens the morality and virtues necessary for democracy to survive.

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*Congress Shall Make No Law Respecting
an Establishment of Religion, or
Prohibiting the Free Exercise Thereof ...*

“ ... the Establishment Clause [of the First Amendment]
does not compel the government to purge from the public
sphere all that in any way partakes of the religious. Such
absolutism is not only inconsistent with our national tradi-
tions, but would also tend to promote the kind of social
conflict the Establishment Clause seeks to avoid.”

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer,
Van Orden v. Perry (2005) (concurring opinion)