



Archdiocese of Newark
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

April 18, 2013

My Brother Bishops and Priests of the Archdiocese of Newark,

I am writing you this brief letter to inform you of the status of our on-going opposition to the unjust and ill-advised attempts to impose a morally repugnant healthcare regime upon Catholic citizens and other people of goodwill in the United States by the federal government. The proposed implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) continues to mandate coverage of abortion causing drugs, sterilizations, contraceptives, and related counseling services in "qualifying" health plans. An extremely narrow "exemption" is given for parishes. An unacceptable "accommodation" is offered to other religiously sponsored organizations such as Catholic hospitals, universities, and social service organizations. These accommodations would still require that all employees of said institution would be automatically enrolled in insurance regimes which cover abortion-inducing drugs, sterilizations and contraceptives. Catholic employers and employees in the "non-religious" workforce are not offered exemptions or accommodations. They would be forced to pay for these unjust and immoral "services."

Whatever good the ACA can accomplish, it cannot be "purchased" at the expense of fundamental moral truths and religious liberties. We cannot and will not accept such a price. Our witness to the sanctity of human life, the meaning and purpose of the marital act, the rights of religious liberty and the proper role of the Catholic lay apostolate cannot be sacrificed no matter what "goods" the government may be offering. We must never follow the easier way which can lead to contraception, abortion and many other immoral actions simply to be popular or "with it." Accommodation to moral evil is never a proper choice.

While it is beyond the scope of this letter to go into great detail, I wish to share with you *some* of the objections to the proposed rules under the ACA. A more detailed discussion can be found in the USCCB, Office of the General Counsel Comments to the Department of Health and Human Services of March 20, 2013¹.

First, pregnancy is not a "disease" or a "punishment." It ought not to be treated as such. The anti-life and contraceptive mentality underlying these rules is contrary to the natural and civil law. Current Federal law forbids the government from discriminating against health care plans that do not cover abortions.

Second, some of these drugs and procedures have side-effects that are decidedly unhealthy such as increased chances of stroke, blood clots, heart disease and high blood pressure.

Third, the government still is unjustly limiting the religious exemption to a narrow definition that would, in effect, reduce religious liberty to merely the right to worship. However, Christianity, like most religions, is meant to be an entire way of life

¹<http://www.usccb.org/about/general-counsel/rulemaking/upload/2013-NPRM-Comments-3-20-final.pdf>

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and our activities in the world are part of our apostolate to love God and others in all things. It is against our faith to mandate that we cannot live our faith in some areas of our lives or employment.

Fourth, Catholics (and others who accept the natural law or who have religious convictions about medical ethics) ought not to be excluded by the government from some areas of business (i.e. health insurance) or forced to pay or receive coverage for morally objectionable procedures and drugs. All should have the right to purchase health care that corresponds to their beliefs and no one ought to be forced to provide or purchase healthcare that they find morally objectionable.

Fifth, these provisions violate the spirit and the letter of numerous Federal laws including the Hyde/Weldon Amendments and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. It also violates the Administration's own assurances before and after the passing of the ACA that it would not force abortion coverage upon those unwilling to sacrifice the unborn on the altar of "choice."

While there are many more objections to the proposed implementation of this health care regime, I would like to conclude with one more statement of principle. If we were to accept the "compromises" offered by the Administration today, we would be sacrificing the principle of the right to live our lives in accordance with moral truth as we have discerned it to be. What if future proposed rules would require the administering of lethal overdoses (euthanasia) or surgical abortions or discrimination against the handicapped? We would have no legal or moral ground on which to stand having yielded to the temptation to compromise moral truth for the sake of worldly acceptance. For example, to say to our lay faithful who are called to live a "unity of life" and to sanctify the world through their work, that they should accept being forced to purchase for their employees healthcare that includes abortion inducing drugs would be to abandon the entire concept of the lay apostolate. It would be the pinnacle of arrogant clericalism to say that pastors and bishops do not have to violate their consciences but the lay faithful must.

We are called to pray for those in government. We must do so daily. I am hoping and praying that a more earnest reflection by those entrusted with the care of the common good, will lead them to embrace the broader view of religious liberty and respect for the individual conscience that is both the tradition and the hallmark of the American commitment to ordered liberty.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely in the Lord,



✠Most Reverend John J. Myers
Archbishop of Newark