

## 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time 2012

Brothers and sisters: As God is faithful,  
our word to you is not "yes" and "no."

The Bishop has asked us to read this announcement at all Masses: "As many of you know, the president is trying to force virtually all private health care plans to cover sterilization, certain abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. This will directly affect the vast majority of faith-based organizations, including Catholic hospitals, universities, and charities, as well as individual Catholics and Catholic-owned businesses. As Bishop Loverde has said, "We cannot—and will not—comply with this unjust law." The Administration's February 10<sup>th</sup> "accommodation" does not remove this threat to religious liberty and conscience rights. To this end I ask you to support the "Respect for Rights of Conscience Act," recently introduced in Congress. You will find an insert in today's bulletin explaining this in greater detail. I urge you to take action by contacting your Members of Congress. Also, we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that religious liberty may be restored."

Dear brothers and sisters, this message from our bishop makes it quite clear that the church is not about to surrender on this challenge to her religious freedom. Too much is at stake in what may appear to many, even many Catholics to be a minor issue. However, what is really at stake here is not only the freedom of the church in regards to this particular HHS mandate, but ultimately the freedom of the church to carry out her mission of teaching and governing her institutions in accordance with her teaching and the consciences of her people.

The tactics of the supporters of this mandate to force Catholic institutions to act contrary to the teachings and consciences of the Church administration and other Catholics are deplorable. Their aim is clearly to divide the Catholic Church and render its influence in our society powerless. Their latest strategy is to publicize all kinds of polls that show that Catholics

in huge numbers do not obey the law of the church when it comes to contraception. Unfortunately this is true, but it is not new news. Polls have been showing that unfortunate fact for many years. Nonetheless, the fact that a great percentage of Catholics violate the church's teachings and use contraception has nothing whatsoever to do with the issue at hand, which is the Church's religious freedom to act in accordance with her moral teachings. The administration wants to change the subject, but it will not work. Nor does the fact that so many Catholics have chosen to live contrary to this moral norm prove anything about the truth of the church's norm. The church's teaching would remain true even if 100% of lay Catholics today chose to reject it.

However, the fact that the enemies of the Catholic Church have chosen to try to make this a debate about contraception rather than an issue of religious freedom is itself very interesting indeed. For 50 years, since introduction of mass contraception by means of the pill, the promoters of population control and sexual libertinism have had the Church and her rejection of contraception as morally permissible in their crosshairs. It has always been an objective of the advocates of birth control and sexual liberation to pressure the Church to change her teaching, and to force the Church to violate her own teaching by forcing her to provide birth control devices, and abortion eventually, in her insurance. Now, for the first time under the present administration, these enemies of the Church and her teaching have found a sympathetic ear in this administration and been given a

gift in this HHS mandate. Their plot will not succeed, however, without a terrible blow being delivered to religious freedom and severe damage to this country that the present administration simply does not understand.

While the immediate issue is religious freedom, the long term issue is the freedom of the Church to teach her moral doctrine when it contradicts the current cultural values and the aims of those who control our public square. These advocates of the contraceptive culture see the Catholic Church as the last major witness against and threat to the contraceptive culture itself. The Church indeed does see this secular culture of abortion and contraception as a terrible threat to the future of societies, and that is why her witness has to be silenced or at least rendered powerless. The two “sacraments” of the reigning secular culture after all are contraception and abortion, and they must be protected and promoted at whatever cost to religious liberty and conscience.

For years the Church has been shouting a warning from the roof tops - but her message is not heard because it's blocked by the secular media - that the contraceptive culture is a *deadly* threat to cultures and even to the survival of nations. The results of the contraceptive mentality and the culture it has produced are now manifest after 50 years of the western world reversing the moral law of the ages banning contraception as contrary to the law of God, the natural law, and the law of nations. The Catholic Church, nevertheless, has stood fast on this moral teaching in the face of great opposition and great ridicule over those 50 years. As Paul said in today's second reading, “*As God is faithful, our word to you is not ‘yes’ and ‘no.’*” For over 2000 years, the

Church has taught “no” on contraception, that contraception is contrary to the law of God and harmful to marriages and to society and human culture, and she will never say a “yes” to what she knows is against God’s law and so harmful to the her children and the future of this world.

A little History: until just 80 years ago, the whole Christian world, along with the Muslim world and Jewish world, was actually united on this teaching until one after another Protestant denominations began to say “yes” and reverse the teaching of the previous 20 centuries on this moral issue. In 1930, the Anglican Church reversed this 2000 year old teaching for its members under great pressure from birth control advocates. When that momentous decision was embraced by a Council of Protestant denominations in this country in 1931, a Protestant editor of the Washing Post that same year wrote this scathing dissent from the decision of this Protestant gathering to abandon the moral tradition of Christianity on this issue:

**It is impossible to reconcile the doctrine of the divine institution of marriage with any modernistic plan for the mechanical regulation of or suppression of human life.** The Church must either reject the plain teachings of the Bible or reject schemes for the ‘scientific’ production of human souls. **Carried to its logical conclusion, the committee's report, if carried into effect, would sound the death knell of marriage as a holy institution by establishing degrading practices which would encourage indiscriminate immorality.** The suggestion that the use of legalized contraceptives would be "careful and restrained" is preposterous.”

That Post editorial by a devout Methodist layman has proven very prophetic indeed. Who can doubt that marriage is no longer honored as a sacred institution by the great majority of our society in this modern contraceptive culture? Divorce really exploded after this official embracing

of contraception and its impact on society and the stability of marriage. Today a dramatic and increasing number of young people in Europe and here in American are bypassing marriage altogether. And did not his prediction that it would “encourage indiscriminate immorality” come true in spades with the sexual revolution begun in the 1960s, not caused exclusively by the contraceptive culture but certainly fueled by easy access to the pill by everyone, married or not.

But contraception, and the contraceptive culture it spawned, turned out to be even far more deadly than anyone imagined. This culture and practice is quite literally slowly killing whole nations across the globe, as, one after another, they can no longer sustain a birth rate that is even at a replacement level. Indeed, all the nations of Europe in the next few decades will be begin to actually lose population in a kind of death spiral that will cut their populations drastically before the turn of the next century, and we will not be far behind. And that massive decline in births has tremendous implications not only for economies built upon mass consumption, but also on the ability of nations to defend themselves – young people mount the defense of nations - and the ability of nations to sustain social programs like pensions and health insurance that depend upon a larger body of workers than those who simply depend upon the working population’s mounting taxes to pay their social benefits.

All of these social consequences weigh upon the Church’s motherly concern, for like a good mother, she deeply loves also her erring children. It’s

not simply that those who are caught up in the contraceptive culture harm their souls by violating God's law on this matter, but the fact that they are also blindly promoting the culture of death, that is, the deadly consequences of this immoral practice on the well-being and even the existence of their future society. The Church will take any amount of abuse to be able to teach the truth, when so much is at stake for her children and for their country's future.

Finally, this health care mandate is particularly disturbing by what it suggests about the unborn child. If preventing conception is a matter of "health Care" what does that say about the dignity of the child. Pregnancy is being redefined as a health care matter, and the child must then be considered a kind of disease when unwanted. The disease must be prevented by contraception, and if that fails the conceived child must be destroyed by abortion like cancer that needs to be wiped out.

The Church always defends the glory of motherhood and the gift of life in the human child by her teaching. That teaching created a culture of life for centuries. Today it is being undone, and we are all the poorer for that fact and threatened in our very existence as a society and a nation. May God bless the efforts of our bishops and their spiritual children, starting with a victory for her religious freedom in the year ahead. Then we can begin the dialogue with our country on the deadly consequences of the culture that has embraced sterility and death rather than life, reversing the command of Moses centuries ago, "Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live." Dt.30:19