



DIOCESE OF TRENTON
Office of the Bishop

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ in the Diocese of Trenton:

As your Bishop, I write to you concerning an alarming matter that negatively impacts the Catholic Church in the United States directly, and that strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith. The federal government, which claims to be “of, by, and for the people,” has just dealt a heavy blow to almost a quarter of those people—the Catholic population—and to the millions more who are served by the Catholic faithful.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced last week 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.

As a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled to violate our consciences or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so).

We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens. 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. 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. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less.

This is not an attempt by the Church to interfere with anyone’s politics. It is, rather, an attempt to lift up and live our Catholic faith the way that our nation and our constitution have always guaranteed us the freedom and the right to do. Please join me and all of those harmed by this legislation in prayer and in an all-out effort to have our freedom restored. History cautions us repeatedly that once we walk down such a dangerous path, we will get lost in the process. For more information, please go to www.usccb.org/conscience.

Respectfully yours in Christ,
Most Reverend David M. O’Connell, C.M.
Bishop of Trenton