



## DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR

### OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

January 26, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I join my brother bishops throughout the nation in writing to all faithful Catholics concerning an alarming and 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 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. This blatant disregard for our religious values is difficult to reconcile with the current Administration’s earlier assurance that it would provide for “robust” conscience protection for religious groups in health care reform. 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 cast aside 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. And as a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled and must be prepared either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees and suffer the penalties for doing so. The present 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. 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. 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.

And therefore, I ask all the faithful of the Diocese of Superior to do two things: 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, all things are possible; and secondly, I strongly encourage all of us to visit [www.usccb.org/conscience](http://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. For your faithfulness and support –

I remain gratefully yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Peter F. Christensen  
Bishop of Superior