



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write to you expressing my profound concern over the recent disturbing decision in Washington that represents a real threat to all Americans' right to religious freedom. The first amendment in the Bill of Rights affirms this liberty when it states that there be no law that prohibits the free exercise of religion in this great land. The recent U.S. Department of Health and Human Services mandate forces Americans to make a choice between their deeply held religious beliefs and access to health care coverage. This is an affront to the rights of Catholics and a dangerous precedent against religious freedom.

In solidarity with the bishops of the United States, I am calling upon you, the faithful of the Archdiocese of San Antonio to be heard on this critical matter of faith and freedom. As stated in a letter being distributed by Catholic Bishops in churches throughout the country, our resolve is clear: "We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law."

We cannot be silent in the face of this unjust edict. The bishop's letter continues that the HHS Mandate "will require employers, including Catholic employers, 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 either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply. 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 would ask of you two things. First, as a community of faith 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, nothing is impossible. Second, I would also recommend visiting [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." A link to these resources is available on the archdiocesan website, [archsa.org](http://archsa.org), as well as a copy of this letter that you may print and distribute.

Jesus told the people to "repay unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what is God's." With this mandate, government is effectively preventing us from giving to God what is His, namely our conscience. Let us pray that this nation will always affirm its people's rights and responsibilities. May we hope to preserve the legacy of this great nation, built on the foundation of "Liberty and Justice for all."

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MS,Ps  
Archbishop of San Antonio

Most Reverend Oscar Cantu  
Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio