

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.  
Religious Freedom  
23.V.2012



To the Clergy and Faithful of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA

As you are well aware, twelve lawsuits have been filed on behalf of forty-three different Catholic institutions nationwide to protect one of the most cherished freedoms recognized by the US Constitution, freedom of religion. While the context has been the unprecedented attempt by the Federal Government to define what constitutes a religious institution and forcing institutions and individuals to pay for services, which violate their consciences, the issue is clearly the freedom of religion.

Consequently, the issue is not about whether people have access to certain services, but it is about whether the Government may force religious institutions and individuals to facilitate and fund services in violation of their religious beliefs. The HHS mandate that all employers provide abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization, and contraceptives includes only a narrow exemption for certain organizations that the government deems sufficiently “religious.” The exemption applies only if the government determines that all four of the following criteria are met: the inculcation of religious values is the purpose of the organization; the organization primarily employs persons who share the religious tenets of the organization; the organization primarily serves persons who share the religious tenets of the organization; *and* the organization falls within a certain tax code provision defining a narrow subset of religious non-profits.

The Conference of Catholic Bishops has been engaged in conversations in the hopes of obtaining an exemption or an accommodation, but nothing really substantial has been offered. The Bishops’ door is always open, but thus far there have been few visits.

Father John Jenkins, CSC, the President of Notre Dame University, one of the plaintiffs in the suit, has offered a clear explanation of the University’s participation in the suit:

This filing *is* about the freedom of a religious organization to live its mission, and its significance goes well beyond any debate about contraceptives. For if we concede that the Government can decide which religious organizations are sufficiently religious to be awarded the freedom to follow the principles that define their mission, then we have begun to

walk down a path that ultimately leads to the undermining of those institutions. For if one Presidential Administration can override our religious purpose and use religious organizations to advance policies that undercut our values, then surely another Administration will do the same for another very different set of policies, each time invoking some concept of popular will or the public good, with the result these religious organizations become mere tools for the exercise of government power, morally subservient to the state, and not free from its infringements. If that happens, it will be the end of genuinely religious organizations in all but name.

For additional information about this issue and the Church's efforts to defend religious freedom, you can visit [www.preservereligiousfreedom.org](http://www.preservereligiousfreedom.org).

Please remember that the Church did not choose this fight or its timing. As has so often been the case, we have been forced to define and defend a truth in response to an attack. As a community of faith, we believe that religious freedom is a gift from Almighty God. Denying or crippling it, then, is not acceptable. It demeans our humanity.

Join me in praying for the successful outcome of this effort and the restoration of our rights.

Sincerely in Christ,

(Most Reverend) Timothy P. Broglio  
Archbishop for the Military Services