



Anglican Province of America

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Pastoral Letter to Anglican Province of America Clergy from the House of Bishops

We feel compelled to comment in a non-political way on the recent pronouncement from the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) concerning the requirement of religious institutions to provide contraceptive services under the new federally mandated healthcare regulations. The Bishops of the Anglican Province of America join their voices with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America and all those who adamantly protest the recent decision by the United States Department of HHS, and call upon all faithful Anglican Christians to contact their elected representatives today to voice their concern in the face of this threat to the sanctity of the Church's conscience. In this ruling by HHS, religious hospitals, educational institutions, and other organizations, or the insurance companies that provide coverage for them, will be required to pay for the full cost of contraceptives (including some abortion-inducing drugs) and sterilizations for their employees, regardless of the religious convictions of the employers. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. This freedom is transgressed when a religious institution or its insurance company is required to pay for services that directly violate religious convictions. Providing such services should not be regarded as mandated medical care. We, the House of Bishops of the Anglican Province of America, join with other Christians and call upon HHS Secretary Sebelius and the Obama Administration to rescind this unjust ruling and to respect the religious freedom guaranteed all Americans by the First Amendment.

We stand with our evangelical brethren who have signed the Manhattan Declaration. One of the authors, Chuck Colson, says, "...we fully and ungrudgingly render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But under no circumstances will we render to Caesar what is God's." We cannot help but think of the words attributed to German Pastor Martin Niemoeller, who, reflecting on the Nazi terror, asserted:

"First, they came for the socialists and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the Trade Unionists and I did not speak out—because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me."

Let us, as our Prayer Book instructs us, "...bless (and pray for) all in authority over us," that the Lord may "so rule their hearts and strengthen their hands, that they may punish wickedness and vice, and maintain [His] true religion and virtue." (BCP, p 590)

God bless and keep you - and God bless America!

Faithfully in Christ,

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