

February 1, 2012

Dear People of the Diocese of Stockton,

On Friday, January 20, 2012, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) ruled that virtually all private health plans will be required to include sterilization and contraceptives, including abortion inducing drugs. A very restricted "religious exemption" is granted to religious groups only if they are serving people of the same belief in a very narrow setting such as a parish and employ people of their own faith. However, the Catholic Church in her health and social services reaches out to all those in need. In effect, the HHS ruling is presuming to define how the Catholic Church, or any religious institution, is to carry out its ministry as an expression of its faith. Essentially it is saying that freedom of religion pertains only to freedom of worship and religious teaching but not to the practice of religious faith in the charitable, social and health institutions of the Church. Some have pointed out the irony that under this definition Jesus' miracles and care for those around him would not qualify as religious.

This ruling represents an alarming intrusion of government into the affairs of the Catholic Church and other faith communities. It would require us to pay for and provide in our insurance coverage what the Church teaches to be morally wrong and a violation of Catholic teaching. This ruling, left unchanged, would put the Church into the untenable position of being required to violate her conscientious beliefs when she provides needed health insurance for her employees.

The conditions of the mandate are unconstitutional and violate the First Amendment because the government is overreaching its power in legislating which Church ministries will be exempted and which ones will not. It is outside the power of government to define religion in any way whatsoever. It also sets up a religious test to see whether our ministries are serving Catholics or non-Catholics.

If the government can intrude into the workings of the Catholic Church it can intrude into any religious organization in matters that are internal to the religious organization.

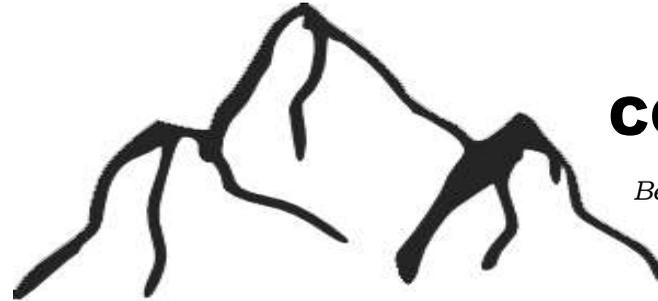
The Administration considers the mandate to be final. We have been given until August 1, 2013 to comply. WHAT CAN WE DO?

We must explore and pursue every option to repeal or reverse this unjust mandate through persuasion, advocacy, litigation and other means to protect religious liberty for all. We must especially convince Congress of the need for legislative action to overturn this injustice. You can do your part by contacting your federal legislators to begin this essential process.

I ask you to keep informed by visiting www.usccb.org/conscience. I ask you to pray that wisdom and justice prevail in our "one nation under God with liberty and justice for all."
Sincerely Yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire
Bishop of Stockton



THE MONO COUNTY CATHOLIC

Before the mountains were born, the earth and the world brought forth, from eternity to eternity you are God. Psalm 90:2

February 5, 2012

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Is not man's life on earth a drudgery? Are not his days those of a hireling? He is a slave who longs for the shade, a hireling who waits for his wages. So I have been assigned months of misery, and troubled nights have been told off for me.

Job 7:1-3



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Rev. Paul Boudreau, pastor

CONFESSIONS

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated at St. Joseph Church in Mammoth Lakes from 5:30 to 5:45 on Saturday afternoons, 7:30 to 7:45 on Sunday mornings, y en español a las tardes del domingo de 5:00 a 5:15; and upon request before mass at Our Savior of the Mountains mission in Lee Vining and Infant of Prague mission in Bridgeport. The "Act of Contrition" is on page 190 of the missalette.

SUNDAY MASS SCHEDULE

**Mammoth Lakes: St. Joseph Church –
Saturday Vigil 6:00 PM
Sunday Mass: 8:00 AM
La Misa en Español: 5:30 PM**
**Lee Vining:
Our Savior of the Mountains Mission -
Sunday Mass 10:00 AM
Bridgeport: Infant of Prague Mission -
Sunday Mass 12:00 Noon**

FIRST READING: Job 7:1–4, 6–7

I have been assigned months of misery, and troubled nights have been allotted to me. My life is like the wind; I shall not see happiness again.

Job encountered the great cosmic conflict. Although he was a good and just man, Job experienced tragedy and complete ruin. Everything he loved in the world had been taken away from him: all his property, his children, and his health. What he had left was a disagreeable wife and contentious friends, none of whom were any consolation to him. No wonder he was depressed.

The Book of Job was the first to question the OT theology of divine retribution: reward for good and punishment for evil. The protagonist Job observed correctly that good people sometimes suffer while the wicked often prosper. The only solution he comes up with, apart from Mrs. Job’s “curse God and die,” was that suffering tests one’s fidelity, which will be rewarded in time. But it didn’t hold up. Some good people obviously die in misery and some wicked people die in relative comfort.

A later work, Ecclesiastes, observed more cynically that the concerns of life were a vain chase after wind and one might as well just eat, drink, and be merry for death was always the end of it for all. Then the Book of Wisdom proposed for the first time in the OT that perhaps there was more to life than the bookends of birth and death. Perhaps the souls of the just only “seem” to die but in reality were in the hands of God. That kind of got the ball rolling on a theology of life after death, which was well in place by the time Jesus came along. (2Mac 12:43–45, Acts 23:8)

**SECOND READING:
1st Corinthians 9:16–10, 22–23**

All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.

One of the great themes of the Pauline epistles is the complete subjugation of all the distinctions that divide people to that oneness that unites all people in Christ. “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female,” he writes in Gal 3:28, “for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

To that end, Paul, unlike the church leaders in Jerusalem, had no problems with the pagan religions that permeated the Greek and Roman societies where he was preaching the gospel. Paul pretty much considered the contemporary practices of religion as insignificant in regards to the gospel. He praised the Greek pantheistic worshipers of Athens in his sermon at the Areopagus and used one of their temples as a launching pad for his proclamation of Jesus. (See Acts 17:22–23) He refused to prohibit participation in the pagan religious practices forbidden by the Council of Jerusalem. (Compare Acts 15:19–21 and Gal 2:6–10) He felt free to join the Jews in their temple worship (see Acts 21:26) and allowed the Greek believers to participate in theirs. (See 1Cor 8:4–13) He also admonished Peter that “we ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.” (Gal 2:15–16)

GOSPEL: Mark 1:29–39

He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Because the Old Testament passages selected for the first reading on Sundays “have been chosen to correspond to the Gospel passages,” (*Introduction to the Lectionary*, #106) we can perhaps see here an attempt by Mark to address that nagging question posed by the Book of Job: Why, if there’s a good God, do people suffer? The answer may lie in what people believe about themselves.

In the synagogue scene that takes place just before this one, Jesus shocks the people with his teaching. It’s something completely new that they’ve never heard before. What do you suppose it was? Mark doesn’t say. But he does say that Jesus took the opportunity to violate the Sabbath and cure

a demoniac. That demon, by the way, also knew Jesus. Why do you suppose all these demons knew Jesus? In the Book of Job, God and Satan relate on unusually cordial terms. Is that shocking? Check it out in Job 1:6-12.

The gospel stories recall two things about Galilee: that it was “heathen” (Mt 4:15) and that it was doubtful that anything good could come from there. (Jn 1:46) Perhaps Jesus went first to this “land overshadowed by death” (Mt 4:16) to set the record straight. The religious leadership there had “taken away the key of knowledge...and hindered those who were entering.” (Lk 11:52) The religion of law, the system of rewards for good and punishments for evil, locked down the people and filled them with demons because they knew they were sinners. They expected punishment. The Lord’s shocking good news is that the era of the Law is over; sins are forgiven. All people are welcome to enter God’s kingdom. The only thing preventing them is their own decisions about what they believe.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE FIFTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME
Our commitment to daily prayer using the weekday Mass readings as our guide

MONDAY 2/6
First Kings 8:1-7, 9-13
Mark 6:53-56

TUESDAY 2/7
First Kings 8:22-23, 27-30
Mark 7:1-13

WEDNESDAY 2/8
First Kings 10:1-10
Mark 7:14-23

THURSDAY 2/9
First Kings 11:4-13
Mark 7:24-30

FRIDAY 2/10
First Kings 11:29-32; 12:19
Mark 7:31-37

SATURDAY 2/11
1 Kings 12:26-32; 13:33-34
Mark 8:1-10

PRAYERS

Our prayers are requested for Bonnie Zwart, Mark & Mary Anne Bewsher, Tina Quan, James Zvetina, Pat Glynn, Bobbie Engstrom, Diane Evans, Raquel Rodriguez, John Gracey, Bob Tomko, Jr., Virginia Reyes, Elizabeth Cauzza, Kay Reilly, Mary Jo Ferreira, Julie Rogers, Antonio Salinas, Josefina Flores, Jim Rothe, John Wallis, James Patrick Hawkins, Beatrice Tomko, David Russell, Ted Wiedemann, Sue Ann Logar and for the repose of the soul of Andrew Bourne.

DAILY MASS

Weekday Mass is celebrated Monday through Saturday in St. Joseph's Rectory in Mammoth Lakes beginning at 7 AM. The door is open; just come in; don't ring the bell.