

The Epistle

February 2012

A Pastoral Letter from His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl

Dear Friends,

January 30, 2012

On January 20, 2012, the United States Department of Health and Human Services with the approval of President Barack Obama issued a new federal mandate making coverage of abortifacient drugs, sterilization and all FDA-approved contraceptives obligatory for virtually all employers, including faith-based institutions.

What is at the center of the concern of Catholic bishops and others about this action by the Obama administration? How can it affect the institutions of the Archdiocese of Washington?

The new mandate is the first federal regulation in our nation's history to require all faith-based institutions to pay for coverage of abortifacient drugs, sterilization and contraceptives. People were already free to use such widely available products and procedures. Up until this mandate, employers could choose whether or not to cover them and individuals could choose whether or not to seek employers that pay for them. Now nearly all those who provide insurance must include abortifacients, sterilization and contraceptives. Virtually all Catholic institutions and individuals will have to pay for that coverage. Being forced to provide these services violates both our faith conviction and our freedom.

In upholding the HHS regulation, the administration has ignored the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and has denied Catholics the most fundamental freedom, religious liberty. Despite the Church's appeal for a broader religious exemption, which was echoed by many other faiths, the administration refused to modify the regulation's current exemption that is limited to religious groups that hire and serve people primarily of their own faith. Most churches and church-run institutions do not qualify for the exemption because of their very openness to serving the common good of society and all people regardless of creed.

Even those who may disagree with the Church's teaching on the sanctity of human life, such as the editorial boards of *The Washington Post* and the *New York Daily News*, have stated that the government has no business forcing religious institutions to sponsor and pay for procedures and drugs which violate their beliefs.

What will happen if this mandate stands? Our schools, hospitals and charitable organizations will be placed in the untenable position of choosing between violating civil law and abandoning our religious beliefs.

For example, the mandate will allow a Catholic school one of three options: 1) violate its beliefs by providing coverage for medications and procedures we believe are immoral, 2) cease providing insurance coverage for all of its employees and face ongoing and ultimately ruinous fines, or 3) attempt to qualify for the exemption by hiring and serving only Catholics. A Catholic school simply cannot effectively teach Catholic doctrine while providing insurance to its teachers – and in the case of Catholic universities, to its students as well – that violates its own beliefs. Nor should it have to deny its employees access to affordable health care, a basic human right. Nor could it afford to pay crippling fines. Nor should it be forced to close its doors to non-Catholics.

There can no longer be any doubt that religious liberty in our country is in jeopardy. Only weeks ago, the Obama administration unsuccessfully argued to the Supreme Court that the government has the right to interfere in a church's choice of its ministers. Thankfully, the Court unanimously rejected this radical position. Undeterred, the government has advanced on another front.

Catholics across America are already fighting this mandate. Catholic journalists of all backgrounds have widely criticized the HHS rules as unjust, and leaders of major Catholic organizations — such as the Catholic Health Association, Catholic Relief Services, and Catholic Charities USA — have also spoken out against them. In the meantime, the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty is actively exploring options for litigation and legislative proposals to remedy this injustice.

This is the time to speak up. This is the time for all our voices to be heard. Therefore, I ask of you two things. First, as a community of faith we need to commit ourselves to prayer that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be preserved. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. Second, I ask you to visit www.usccb.org/conscience and www.mdcathcon.org to learn more about this assault on religious liberty and to find the resources to support legislation that would reverse the effects of the administration's decision.

With gratitude for your collaboration in this very important matter and with every good wish, I am

Faithfully in Christ,
Donald Cardinal Wuerl
Archbishop of Washington

Rite of Christian
Initiation of Adults
(RCIA)

RCIA is the official term to be used for adult catechism classes. All adults interested in becoming a Catholic must enter this process.

Classes are held on Tuesday 7:00pm.



Thanksgiving Sunday

Thanksgiving Sunday is when a special offering is collected, over and above our weekly giving, to give thanks to God for all the many blessings He has bestowed upon us.

The next Thanksgiving Sunday will be on Feb. 26.

Weekday Mass Schedule
Suspended

Our normal weekday Mass schedule has been suspended until further notice. However, Holy Days of Obligation will be celebrated at 6:30pm.

Please check our web site for updates.

Please provide us with your
e-mail address

In an effort to keep you up to date with the current events at St. Luke's, we are asking you to provide us with your e-mail address. Please send an e-mail to Fr. Lewis providing your name.

Fr. Lewis' e-mail address is:

fmarklewis@gmail.com

Your Sacrificial Offering

Pledges

Please keep your giving current.

We need your support.

“Where your heart is there will your treasure be also”

Please give generously!

You can now stay current with your pledges, (offerings, and donations), by using PayPal on our website. Just click on the PayPal emblem and complete the form- it's easy!

2012 envelopes are available in the undercroft.

Upcoming events

Feb. 12 – Mass of Institution for The Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter and the installation of Fr. Jeffrey Steenson as its first Ordinary. The Mass will be held at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston, TX.

Feb. 22 – **Ash Wednesday** - Mass
7:00pm

Feb. 29 – Knights of Columbus Meeting
7:30pm

Catechism Class every Tuesday 7:00pm
Holy Hour Devotion Every Friday in Lent
6:00pm



Recommend Reading

The Lamb's Supper by Scott Hahn
First Comes Love by Scott Hahn
Hail, Holy Queen by Scott Hahn
The Catholic Way by His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl
The Sacraments by His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl
The Catechism of the Catholic Church **A Must!**
United States Catholic Catechism for Adults
Anglicans and the Roman Catholic Church
edited by Stephen Cavanaugh
Forgiveness: A Catholic Approach by Fr. Scott Hurd
Rome Sweet Home by Scott Hahn
The Mass by His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl and Mike Aquilina
Scripture Matters by Scott Hahn
Fatima For Today: The Urgent Marian Message of Hope by Fr. Andrew Apostoli, C.F.R.
Seek First the Kingdom: by His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl

Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church; two pages a day for the rest of your life!

Building fund

As part of the agreement with the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, we will continue to use our present Church under the terms of a leasing agreement. Our leasing agreement calls for us to rent the property for a period of three years, at which time we can purchase our property at 75% of the market value or build a new church. Either decision will require \$\$\$\$\$. Please make a donation toward our future. Make checks payable to St. Luke's, memo: building fund.

Calling All Women

Most all parishes have an Altar Guild. For much of the recent past our Altar Guild consisted of one or two women.

About a year ago, a Women's Guild was established. In addition to performing Altar Guild duties, these women also took on the responsibility of learning floral design-thus providing our Sunday Altar arrangements.

There is a great deal of work to be done. It is not necessary to be here to contribute; linens need to be washed, ironed and folded. Your help in this ministry would be greatly appreciated. **We need your help!**

Holy Hour Devotion *During Lent*

40 Day for Life will host a Holy Hour of Devotion every Friday evening in Lent at 6:00 PM. All are welcome to attend.

Protecting God's Children

The Archdiocese of Washington is committed to protecting all of God's children. It is of the utmost importance to them that we provide a safe, loving environment in which our children can play, learn and grow.

To help us provide such an environment and in order for us to be in compliance with the polices of the Archdiocese, **every adult working with children or in a leadership role, rather an employee or volunteer is required to attend a workshop on Protecting God's Children.**

Please contact Mrs. Susan Mathis for questions and registration.



Food Pantry

Our Food Pantry needs to be restocked. Please buy some extra canned goods on your next visit to the market. We are particularly low on canned: meats, vegetables, sauces, beans, and peanut butter.

Liturgical Press

Liturgical Press is a Catholic company who supplies a weekly bulletin for Catholic parishes. They have contacted us and wish to supply our bulletins. They supply these bulletins at no cost to the parish; instead they seek advertisement from businesses.

Please contact Mark Lewis if you own a business, or know of a business who might like to sponsor our parish. Your ad will appear in 52 weekly bulletins as well as on our webpage.

Car Raffle

St. Mary's, Landover Hills has invited us to join in their Annual Car Raffle. **Five** Vehicles will be raffled. This can be a major fund raiser for St. Luke's. All Ticket sales will be a 50-50 split. The seller of the winning ticket(s) will receive \$1,000! You can pick up your tickets beginning Sunday February 12. Drawing will be held on May 19, 2012.

Mardi Gras

St. Mary's, Landover Hills has invited us to join in their Mardi Gras celebration. The party will be held on February 18, 7:00-11:00PM. There will be a Buffet Dinner & Cash Bar. Tickets are \$15 per person. If you are interested in attending please see Mark Lewis. Tickets must be purchased in advanced.

2012 Archdiocesan Men's Retreat: "Guardians of the Mission"

All men of St. Luke's are invited to attend the 2012 Archdiocesan Men's retreat to be held at St. Mark's Catholic Church in Hyattsville, MD.

The day will be centered around Mass with Cardinal Wuerl. Speakers for the day will call us to be "Guardians of the Truth about Men," "Guardians of Your Heart," and "Guardians of the Kingdom." To register visit www.adw.org/conferences. The cost is \$20 and includes lunch.

The retreat will be held on March 3, 8:00-3:00.

2012 Archdiocesan Women's Retreat: "Blessed are You"

All women of St. Luke's are invited to attend the 2012 Archdiocesan Women's retreat to be held at St. Mark's Catholic Church in Hyattsville, MD.

The Day will include Mass with Cardinal Wuerl, presentations, small group discussion, adoration and confession. To register visit www.adw.org/conferences. The cost is \$20 and includes lunch.

Knights of Columbus Meeting

There will be a Knights of Columbus meeting at St. Luke's on Feb. 29, 7:30PM. The Council of Knights from St. Hugh, Greenbelt will conduct this meeting and install new members into the KofC.

All men who are practicing Catholics and are at least 18 years of age are eligible to become Knights. For more information see Mark Lewis.

RCIA Sponsorship Meeting

All persons entering the Catholic Church must attend the RCIA program. Each person in the RCIA program must have a sponsor. A sponsor is to help in the candidate's formation; acting much like a mentor. To help us understand the role of being a sponsor the Archdiocese of Washington will be hosting a workshop here at St. Luke's on Tuesday Feb. 28, 6:30-9:00PM. All members should attend, as you might wish to sponsor a candidate in the future.

Sunday Religious Education

We are pleased to announce we have now established the new Sunday school curriculum of the Archdiocese of Washington entitled: Forming Disciples for the New Evangelism. This program is for grades pre-K-8. Every child will have his/her own textbook. Older teenagers will assist the younger children. Sunday school, preK – Adult begins at 9:15AM.



Remember St. Luke's in your prayers

Almighty and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth, mercifully hear the supplications of thy servants, and grant unto this parish family all things necessary for its spiritual welfare: schools to train up thy people in thy faith and fear, ministers to labor in this portion of thy vineyard, a church restored and maintained in the beauty of holiness. Strengthen and increase the faithful; visit and relieve the sick; turn and soften the wicked; rouse the careless; recover the fallen; restore the penitent; remove all hindrances to the advancement of thy truth; and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within the fold of thy Holy Catholic Church. Through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who with thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth one God, world without end. Amen.

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Charles Sommerkamp;
Chet & Espie Stewart; Auburn Traycik;
Ginny Mcknew; Moses Alusi;
Catherine Jones; Rimisa Williams;
Juliette Scott; Larry Maske;
Lawrence McDowell;
Victor & Gloria Deigh; Malcolm Parkinson;
Angela Koker; Joyce Stewart;
Andrew Keegan; C.C. Onejeme;
La-Verne Williams; Debbie Holt;
Thomas, Lynn & Dallas Love; Robert King;
Daniel Ayala; and Jane Lawrence

Remember to Pray for the Church

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI,
Cardinal Wuerl
The Personal Ordinariate of
The Chair of St. Peter,
Our Ordinary, Fr. Steenson,
Fr. Hurd,
Msgr. Newton and Our Lady of Walsingham
Ordinariate in the UK.
Bishop Peter Elliott and the establishment of
an Ordinariate in Australia.
Finally, I ask you to keep me, your pastor, in
your prayers.

This is a very exciting and historic period in
the life of the Church!

Visit Our Website

www.stlukesparish-bladensburg.org

www.usordinariate.org