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May 21, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This letter is to inform you that the Archdiocese of St. Louis and Catholic Charities of St. Louis are taking legal action against the federal government of the United States of America. A lawsuit challenging the legality of the HHS mandate was filed in court today.

Since the mandate was finalized this past February, the Catholic Church has pursued every imaginable avenue to correct this problem without litigation. An “exception” for “religious employers” was offered by the Obama administration, but the federal government’s definition of “religious employer” only includes Catholic organizations that serve “primarily” Catholics. It fails to protect the religious liberties of those Catholic institutions that reach out to non-Catholics, like our St. Louis area Catholic hospitals and universities, and Catholic Charities of St. Louis.

Please understand that every effort has been made to dialogue in this matter and time is running out. The mandate, with its extreme requirements on sterilization, contraception, and abortion-inducing drugs, will begin taking effect in August of this year. In a few short months, our federal government will force our Catholic institutions to choose between violating the law and violating our moral convictions.

Never before has the U.S. government forced the Catholic Church to provide a product that violates our religious beliefs. Any scenario that forces us to do so is unacceptable. As your shepherd, I simply cannot stand by while our first, most-cherished freedom is eroded...that is our religious liberty!

Religious liberty is inherent to our very humanity – hard wired into us by our Creator. We must remain vigilant in the protection of religious freedom or it will be lost. Please visit our religious liberty page on the archdiocesan website at www.archstl.org/liberty for additional information.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson

Archbishop of St. Louis