



# NEWS

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **BISHOPS DECRY HHS RULE, URGE CATHOLICS TO STAND UP FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND CONSCIENCE RIGHTS IN HOMILIES AT VIGIL FOR LIFE**

WASHINGTON—Both the president of the U.S. bishops and the bishops' Pro-Life chairman called on the thousands of Catholics gathered for the National Prayer Vigil for Life to speak out for the protection of conscience rights and religious liberty.

From a human point of view, we may be tempted to surrender, when our government places conception, pregnancy and birth under the 'center for disease control,' when chemically blocking conception or aborting the baby in the womb is considered a 'right' to be subsidized by others who abhor it," said Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York and president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) at the vigil's closing Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on January 23.

His words referred to the January 20 announcement by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that nearly all employers will be forced to cover drugs and procedures that violate their conscience in their health insurance plans.

When the ability of feeding, housing, and healing the struggling of the world is curtailed and impeded if one does not also help women abort their babies, one can hardly be faulted for being tempted to the 'sin against the Holy Spirit' and just consider all as lost," Cardinal-designate Dolan said.

Addressing the opening Mass the previous evening, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, archbishop of Galveston-Houston and chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, excoriated the HHS rule.

"Never before in our US History has the Federal Government forced citizens to directly purchase what violates our beliefs. At issue here as our President of the Conference stated it this past Friday, is the survival of a cornerstone constitutionally protected freedom that ensures respect for conscience and religious liberty," said Cardinal DiNardo.

He cited the January 19 address of Pope Benedict XVI to U.S. bishops visiting Rome, in which the pope said, "it is imperative that the entire Catholic community in the United States come to realize the grave threats to the Church's public moral witness presented by a radical secularism which finds increasing expression in the political and cultural spheres. The seriousness of these threats needs to be appreciated at every level of ecclesial life."

Cardinal DiNardo said that the pope had "nailed" the issue in light of the HHS announcement and tied the issue directly to the March for Life. "His calls for courage to counter a reductive secularism which would delegitimize the Church's participation in public life and debate have targeted the issues we face in our pro-life efforts, to defend those who defend human life and to defend their religious liberty!"

The full text of both homilies is available online: [www.usccb.org/about/media-relations/resources/2012-national-prayer-vigil-for-life-homilies.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/media-relations/resources/2012-national-prayer-vigil-for-life-homilies.cfm)

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