

This past Wednesday, we received a letter from Bishop Morlino, which we are required to read at all masses in all parishes this weekend. The accompanying directive states that the letter is to be read “aloud at all Masses, either before, after, or even in place of the homily.” I’m going to read the letter in place of the homily, but begin with a brief comment about the issue.

The letter concerns a mandate in the new Health Care Bill, a mandate which requires almost all employers to provide insurance coverage which includes things that are directly contrary to Catholic teaching – things such as sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. You may recall that I spoke about this last fall – on the last Sunday of September – shortly before the deadline of the public comment time for this provision, and encouraged you to email the Health and Human Services Department in Washington. Archbishop’s Listecki’s very well-written letter was included in the bulletin on that Sunday, as well as the bishops’ alert. Apparently the public comment was unsuccessful in getting the provision changed, even though HHS received 57,000 comments opposing the mandate. On January 20th of this year, HHS decided not to make any significant change in its rule. This is what has prompted the bishop’s letter. There is a religious exemption clause included in the mandate, but the definition of “religious employers” is so narrowly defined that it includes almost no one. Catholic colleges and universities, Catholic hospitals and service organizations are not included in the exemption, and so any insurance they provide for their employees would have to include

coverage for sterilizations, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception, which are directly contrary to Catholic teaching.

The bishop's letter reads:

Read the Letter

There is a copy of the bishop's letter in today's bulletin. I encourage you to go to the bishops' website given in the letter; there's a wealth of very helpful information in understanding the issues involved – issues such as religious liberty, freedom of conscience, and suggestions on what you can do about it.

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