

February 7, 2012

Dear Fathers,

I recently celebrated Tet, the lunar New Year, with Vietnamese Catholics at Saint Anthony Parish in Wichita. In my comments to them at the end of Holy Mass, I thanked them for how their presence among us (among other things) serves to remind us of the value of freedom.

Many of them are veterans of the fight for freedom in their homeland or can count members of their families among those who paid the ultimate price for it. When the battle was lost, and they were denied fundamental human liberties in Vietnam, they left their homeland, sometimes at great peril, in search of freedom in the United States of America.

It was with shame that I had to explain to them that, on account of the mandate made by the Obama administration, requiring religious institutions, regardless of a conscientious objection, to offer contraceptive and sterilization coverage to their employees, their search for freedom in our country may have been in vain.

The mandate from the Department of Health and Human Services is an affront to every religious institution and person of conscience, Catholic or not. It does not respect the diversity that is so much a part of our national unity. It denies the religious freedom that others have fought and died for, and that is provided for in the Constitution.

I told the Vietnamese Catholics that I am not asking them to take up arms in defense of religious liberty, but rather to take up a pen (which is mightier than the sword) to write our representatives in Washington, protesting that this is not fair and that every effort must be made so that it is not enforced.

I also asked them to take up the Rosary, which is mightier than both sword and pen, begging the intercession of Mary, the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of our country, that once again, like at Lepanto, an enemy of religious liberty be defeated.

Fathers, may I ask the same of you? And may I ask you to pass on this request to the people you serve? If you like you may read this letter to them or print it in your Bulletin.

We have to remove this shame from our nation, so contrary to the freedom that countless others have fought and died for. We have to do what we can to ensure refugees from oppressive regimes, like the one in Vietnam, that their search for freedom here was not in vain.

Grateful for your help in this most important matter, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Michael O. Jackels
Bishop of Wichita