

# Catholic Review Column: True and False Freedom

In a little less than two weeks, Catholics throughout the United States will participate in a Fortnight for Freedom. This prayerful observance provides us with an occasion to reflect on those fundamental, God-given rights we cherish so dearly as Catholic Americans. Among the most prominent of these is religious liberty, a liberty which is now very much at risk both in our increasingly secular culture.

By now we are all familiar with these risks. Among the greatest is the Health and Human Services mandate which would force non-exempt religious organizations and other conscientious employers to violate deeply held convictions. Specifically the mandate would force any religious organization that serves the common good to fund or facilitate abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization, and contraception.

Our Church will not accept this unprecedented incursion. It has taken steps to defend the freedom of individuals and its own freedom to follow Catholic teaching in the workplace, a freedom which the federal law and policy has broadly accommodated for a long time. Keep in mind, we are not seeking to expand that freedom, just to maintain it against the raw use of administrative power to curtail it.

Don't be fooled by talk of exemptions for faith-based institutions. To qualify, a religious organization must hire and serve its own; in a word it must be inward-looking. But you and I know that our church from the beginning has sought to serve the common good.

For so many cultural pundits, freedom is simply one's ability to do what one wants. It's the freedom not only to preserve but to enhance one's life as one sees fit. When this notion of freedom which is indifferent to the moral law prevails, it is the strong who end up imposing their views on others - including those who are making the rules at Health and Human Services.

If we want to preserve the Church's freedom to fulfill its God-given mission and our own freedom to choose what is true and good, then we must hold and convey to

others a true, not a false notion of freedom. Happy Fortnight, everyone!

*A complete listing of Fortnight events in the Archdiocese of Baltimore can be found at [www.archbalt.org](http://www.archbalt.org).*