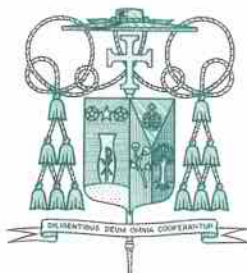


## Diocese of Beaumont

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February 2, 2012

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In my column in the January 20, 2012 issue of the *East Texas Catholic* I wrote that our religious freedom should no longer be taken for granted. That became a reality on Friday, January 21, 2012, when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a ruling that mandates that all employers, including Catholic employers and other faith-based organizations, provide health coverage for sterilizations, contraceptives, and some abortion-inducing drugs. Such an attack on religious freedom has never happened before. Religious freedom is a founding principle of our nation's Constitution and First Amendment. This ruling violates our rights to make choices based on our morals and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

I join my brother Bishops and religious leaders of all denominations in expressing our strong feelings on this ruling. This is indeed a time to act. We cannot in good conscience stand by quietly when we are being forced to take measures that violate our Catholic teaching.

I ask you to do three things without delay:

1. Pray and fast that the hearts of those who mandated this provision which attacks religious freedom will be changed.
2. Learn more about this issue by visiting the U.S. Bishops' website: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) and reading the "Urgent Action Alert" on the homepage. This will also assist you in contacting your U.S. representatives and senators.
3. Call the U.S. Capitol at 202/224-3121 to protest this unprecedented attack on conscience rights and religious liberty.

We are not imposing our values on others, but we must have the freedom to live the message of Christ and the teachings of the Church. We must speak out for the protection of conscience rights and religious liberty.

May God bless you and your families and our country.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Curtis J. Guillory".

Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D.  
Bishop of Beaumont

CJG:sed