

Perhaps the courts offer the most light. In the recent *Hosanna-Tabor* ruling, the Supreme Court unanimously defended the right of a Church to define its own ministry and services, a dramatic rebuff to the administration, apparently unheeded by the White House. Thus, our bishops' conference, many individual religious entities, and other people of good will are working with some top-notch law firms who feel so strongly about this that they will represent us *pro-bono*. In the upcoming days, you will hear much more about this encouraging and welcome development.

Given this climate, we have to prepare for tough times. Some, like *America* magazine, want us to cave-in and stop fighting, saying this is simply a policy issue; some want us to close everything down rather than comply (In an excellent article, Cardinal Francis George wrote that the administration apparently wants us to "give up for Lent" our schools, hospitals, and charitable ministries); some, like Bishop Robert Lynch wisely noted, wonder whether we might have to engage in civil disobedience and risk steep fines; some worry that we'll have to face a decision between two ethically repugnant choices: subsidizing immoral services or no longer offering insurance coverage, a road none of us wants to travel.

Brothers, we know so very well that *religious freedom* is our heritage, our legacy and our firm belief, both as loyal Catholics and Americans. There have been many threats to *religious freedom* over the decades and years, but these often came from without. This one sadly comes from within. As our ancestors did with previous threats, we will tirelessly defend the timeless and enduring truth of *religious freedom*.

I look forward to our upcoming Administrative Board Meeting and our June Plenary Assembly when we will have the chance to discuss together these important issues and our way forward in addressing them. And I renew my thanks to you for your tremendous, fraternal support and your welcome observations in this critical effort to protect our *religious freedom*.

With prayerful best wishes, I am

Fraternally in Christ,

— +  Timothy Cardinal Dolan

Timothy Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops