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January 24, 2012

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the history of the United States, Friday, January 20, 2012 will certainly stand out as a moment of enormous peril for religious liberty. On that day the Obama administration announced regulations that would require Catholic institutions to offer insurance programs providing abortifacients, sterilization, and contraceptive services. If these regulations are put into effect, they could close down every Catholic school, hospital, and the other public ministries of our Church, which is perhaps their underlying intention. What is perfectly clear is that this is a bigoted and blatant attack on the First Amendment rights of every Catholic believer. Under no circumstances, however, will our Church ever abandon our unshakable commitment to the Gospel of Life.

I therefore call upon all the faithful of this Diocese to vigorously oppose this unprecedented governmental assault upon the moral convictions of our Faith. Under the Constitution, no president has the authority to require our cooperation with what we consider to be intrinsic evil and mortal sin. We must therefore oppose by every means at our disposal this gross infringement upon the rights of Catholic citizens to freely practice our religion. This country once fought a revolution to guarantee freedom, but the time has clearly arrived to strongly reassert our fundamental human rights. I am honestly horrified that the nation I have always loved has come to this hateful and radical step in religious intolerance. I hope and pray that all people of good will would support the faith based resistance of us their Catholic neighbors.

While it is primarily the laity who should take the leading role in political and legal action, as your Bishop, it is my clear responsibility to summon our local Church into spiritual and temporal combat in defense of Catholic Christianity. Have faith! Have courage! Fight boldly for what you believe! I strongly urge you not to be intimidated by extremist politicians or the malice of the cultural secularists arrayed against us. Always remember that *the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world* (I John 4:4).

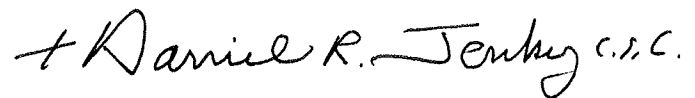
Until these grave issues are favorably resolved, I ask that every parish, school, hospital, Newman Center, and religious house in this Diocese insert the Prayer to Saint Michael

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the Archangel into the Sunday *General Intercessions* just before their concluding prayer. It is God's invincible Archangel who commands the heavenly hosts, and it is the enemies of God who will ultimately be defeated. This prayer should be announced as: *a Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel for the freedom of the Catholic Church in America.*

May God guide and protect his Holy Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel R. Jenky C.S.C." with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

✠ Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
BISHOP OF PEORIA