



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Rockford

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March 21-22, 2009

My Dear Friends in Christ,

I take this, for me, unusual manner of communicating with you this weekend because the Church in Illinois is under attack by a piece of legislation, House Bill 2354, in the State General Assembly. Deceptively titled "Reproductive Health and Access Act," this dangerous piece of legislation has now passed out of the House Human Services Committee and will shortly be debated by the full House of Representatives. The full text of this Bill is available on the internet at www.ilga.gov; type in "HB2354" in a number search on the left, then click "full text" at the top left of the page which gives a summary of the Bill.

Why should you and I be concerned about this proposed law? There are a number of reasons:

- It seeks to make abortion a fundamental right, depriving parents and all others of the right to intervene, and preventing any common-sense regulation.
- It expands public funding of abortion with your tax dollars through Medicaid, even at this critical time when the Governor says the State cannot meet all of its present financial obligations!
- It invalidates the Illinois Health Care Right of Conscience Act which protects practicing Catholic doctors, nurses, health care workers and employers.
- It commands exhaustive and explicit sex education for schools (for now public, but eventually all, it seems).

As your Bishop, I feel that you should be aware of this matter; first of all so that we all understand the immoral attack made upon the consciences of us all as Catholics by this Bill. It is not extreme to say that the Bill is a threat to our freedom of religion and conscience, not only in Illinois, but in our nation.

Listen to this language: "[I]ndividual health care professionals who object to providing certain reproductive health care based on religion or personal conscience, may refuse to provide such services only under the following conditions. . ." and those oppressive conditions include demanding that the health care professional who objects to the taking of innocent human life by abortion should provide prior written notice of his or her objection to providing such services. The State of Illinois has the duty, according to our State Constitution, to defend our freedom of religion, not to marshal individual citizens to defend their own right to that freedom against this unjust law.

March 21-22, 2009

Page 2

Our metropolitan Archbishop, Francis Cardinal George, wrote this to Chicago practicing Catholics this weekend:

“In our country we recognize conscientious objection to war, even though defending one’s country is a noble and moral act. We recognize the conscientious objection of those doctors who will not cooperate in administering the death penalty, even for terrible crimes. Why do some Illinois legislators want to take away conscientious objection to abortion?”

I urge you, with all that is in me, to work for the defeat of House Bill 2354, and I urge you to contact your state representative and let him or her know of your strong opposition. If you do not know your state representative, visit the General Assembly’s website at www.elections.illinois.gov/DistrictLocator/SelectSearchType.aspx?NavLink=1. If you have any problems, call the Catholic Conference of Illinois at 312-368-1066 or our Pro-Life Office at 815-877-5433.

I ask you all to pray for the defeat of this disturbing Bill and the ultimate defeat of those who support it. At the same time, do not forget to thank those legislators who, respecting our freedom of conscience and religion, oppose it.

All of you are always in my prayers. Remember that in defending innocent human life, the life you save may be your own.

With every good wish, I remain

Cordially yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas G. Doran". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Thomas G. Doran, D.D., J.C.D.
Bishop of Rockford