

# **OBAMACARE RULING OMINOUS; RELIGIOUS RIGHTS IN PLAY**

The U.S. Supreme Court upholding the ObamaCare legislation puts Catholic rights in jeopardy. The only way Catholic non-profits could have survived the encroachment of the federal government on their right not to buy insurance for services they deem immoral was if the entire ObamaCare legislation had been struck down. That did not happen.

The Supreme Court did not rule on the constitutionality of the right of the Obama administration to force Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, contraception, and sterilization in their insurance plans; this Health and Human Services (HHS) edict was issued after the high court accepted the ObamaCare bill. Eventually, this particular issue will reach the Supreme Court. Indeed, there are 23 lawsuits pending on this matter.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops raised objections to the ruling on three grounds: (a) in an unprecedented move, ObamaCare allows federal funds to be used in elective abortions and for plans that cover abortion (b) it does nothing to ensure conscience rights, thereby setting the stage for the HHS mandate to become operative, and (c) it does nothing to protect immigrant workers in need of healthcare.

While all three are troublesome, the most direct impact negating Catholic rights is the second objection. But there are three ways in which we may be spared this draconian HHS mandate: (a) the Obama administration could expand its definition of what constitutes a religious exemption (b) new laws could be passed guaranteeing religious liberty, and (c) the Supreme Court could eventually strike down the HHS mandate.

It is important to note that in the high court ruling, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg said that enforcing this law must not trespass on the constitutional right to religious liberty. She seemed to signal to the Obama administration that they dare not tread on Catholic rights.

If the Supreme Court decision lacks clarity, the Catholic response will be anything but ambiguous: the battle lines between the bishops and the Obama administration are now brighter than ever. Fortunately, not only do practicing Catholics overwhelmingly support the bishops, tens of millions of non-Catholics also do.

ObamaCare may have survived, but it is by no means a lock that the HHS mandate will. It is one thing to levy a tax, quite another to level the First Amendment.