

USCCB MEETING A SUCCESS

In mid-November, an election was held for the new president and vice president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in Baltimore.

Those who have been pushing the bishops to abandon their opposition to the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate, abortion and gay marriage lost big time last month. On November 13, the bishops voted unanimously to continue their fight against the Health and Human Services mandate.

The bishops invoked the name of Pope Francis, sending a message to those who are trying to hijack the pope's words to pressure the bishops to abandon their cultural concerns. "Pope Francis has reminded us," they said, that "there is only one thing which the Church quite clearly demands: the freedom to proclaim the Gospel in its entirety, even when it runs counter to the world, even when it goes against the tide."

The influence of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who ably led the USCCB for the past three years, is not over: his commanding presence helped to shape the selection of Archbishop Joseph Kurtz as the new president, and Cardinal Daniel DiNardo as the new vice president. The "Dolan Effect" was palpable, and will be felt for years.

By electing Archbishop Joseph Kurtz as president, and Cardinal Daniel DiNardo as vice president, the bishops affirmed their commitment to religious liberty, the life of the unborn, and marriage equity.

Archbishop Kurtz took to the streets of Louisville last year protesting the HHS mandate; Cardinal DiNardo, as chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, wrote letters to the U.S. senators expressing the bishops' opposition to the mandate.

On abortion, Kurtz stated in November that “the deliberate destruction of unborn children at their most vulnerable stage is a travesty.” In June, when Texas Sen. Wendy Davis filibustered a pro-life bill, DiNardo called on Governor Rick Perry to call for a special session to revive the bill.

Archbishop Kurtz, who is the previous chairman of the USCCB’s Ad Hoc Committee on the Defense of Marriage, set the agenda for the bishops in opposing gay marriage. In June, Cardinal DiNardo called the Supreme Court’s ruling allowing gay marriage a “grave injustice.”

It is plain for everyone to see that the bishops will not walk away from the fight for religious liberty, a battle thrust upon them by the Obama administration. They must also deal with the effects of public policy decisions that have done more to punish the poor, and promote inequality, than any previous administration. But with the leadership of Archbishop Kurtz, and Cardinal DiNardo, the ratification of the “Dolan Effect” is assured, and so, too, is progress. This bodes well for everyone. Kudos to the USCCB for affirming tradition and holding the line.