



Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 1, 2012 B

- RELIGIOUS LIBERTY is important for us as a nation and church.**
- CHARLES CARROLL, the only Catholic signer of our nation’s Declaration of Independence**

Today is the tenth of fourteen days of prayer and reflection for religious freedom. For faith-filled people who believe that faith should impact our lives in the public square, this is a very important issue. For those who favor a more secular society, this is not an important issue. The following is from *Our Sunday Visitor*.

It is a great privilege for Catholic Americans—and one not shared by Catholics in many other parts of the world—to live in a country that places freedom of religion first in its Bill of Rights, and whose Founding Fathers stressed the importance of freedom of conscience.

Privilege bears with it a responsibility, on behalf of all believers and on behalf of future generations, to protect and defend this religious liberty from being weakened or undermined.

In recent months, the bishops of the United States, joined by members of other faiths, have expressed alarm about new threats to religious liberty at both the federal and the state level. Examples they have cited include:

- A Justice Department decision to characterize the Defense of Marriage Act (a law signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996 that defined marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman) as an act of bigotry, and those who support such a law as being motivated by bias and prejudice.
- A Justice Department legal brief calling for the elimination of the “ministerial exception” that allows religious groups to choose their own ministers without government interference.
- Legislative efforts in certain states to require all adoption and foster-child agencies to give children to unmarried and/or same sex couples, and proposals that would impact the conscience rights of doctors and nurses, and even impact the administration of parishes.
- New federal rules stipulating that agencies helping migrants must provide the “full range” of reproductive

services (including abortion and contraception) for refugees.

- New federal requirements that organizations like Catholic Relief Services provide condom distribution for overseas anti-AIDS programs and other “reproductive services.”

Each one of these efforts has a direct impact on the ability of Catholic organizations and individuals to live the gospel in the public square in accordance with their faith, and most of them have received little to no coverage in the mainstream media. A great deal of attention, however, is being given to efforts by the federal Department of Health and Human Services to force Catholic organizations and companies to provide contraception, sterilization, and abortion-inducing drugs to their employees. These health-plan regulations would be the first ever attempt by the government to require religious believers to purchase a product or service that runs counter to the moral teachings of their faith.

New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, as head of the U.S. Bishops’ Conference, rightly condemned these proposed regulations: “To force American citizens to choose between violating their consciences and forgoing their health care is literally unconscionable.”

In other instances, such as with adoption and foster-care services, the Church has had to shut down its agencies rather than comply with legal requirements that contradict its teachings and values. In the case of health insurance, however, Catholic organizations and companies are given no choice other than to end all health insurance for its employees, a dramatic act that would itself violate the Church’s long-standing support of a right to health care.

While parishes themselves would be exempt from such a requirement, Catholic organizations such as hospitals, grade schools, universities, and aid organizations would still be forced to offer access to contraception and other “reproductive services” (even if the cost would somehow be borne by the insurance company itself). For many other Catholic nonprofit organizations, as well as companies owned by Catholics, there would be no exception for any reason, nor are the companies and organizations that are self-insured—which make up the vast majority—protected from this immoral mandate.

Excerpts from Archbishop Lori's opening homily for the Fortnight of Freedom

Until now, it has been entirely possible under federal law for conscientious owners to conduct private businesses in accord with one's conscience and the teachings of one's faith. Until now, federal law has also accommodated businesses which are not church organizations but which are related to the mission of the Church. Examples include Catholic publishing houses such as Our Sunday Visitor, Catholic insurers, Legatus, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic fraternal organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, just to name a few. The freedom of conscientious and like-minded individuals to conduct such businesses in accord with the teaching of the Church now hangs in the balance. On August 1st, less than six weeks from now, the Health and Human Services mandate will go into effect. This will force conscientious private employers to violate their consciences by funding and facilitating through their employee health insurance plans, reproductive "services" that are morally objectionable. As the United States Bishops recently indicated, the HHS mandate violates the personal civil rights of those who, "in their daily lives, strive constantly to act in accordance with their faith and values

In the HHS mandate, the federal government now defines a church as a body which hires mostly its own members and serves mostly its own members, and which exists primarily to advance its own teachings. In a word, so long as a church confines itself to the sacristy, then it is exempt from having to fund and facilitate in its health insurance plans government-mandated services which are contrary to its own teachings. But if a church steps beyond the narrow confines of this definition by hiring those of other faiths and by serving the common good, then the government is telling us that such institutions aren't religious enough, that they don't deserve an exemption from funding and facilitating those things which violate the very teachings which inspired churches to establish their institutions in the first place.

Friends, we must never allow the government—any government, at any time, or any party—to impose such a constrictive definition on our beloved Church or any church! Our Church was sent forth by the Lord to teach and baptize all the nations. It was commissioned by our Savior to announce that the Kingdom of God is at hand. It was sent into the world to do the corporal works of love and mercy. Don't we see this all around us—in inner-city Catholic schools, in Catholic hospitals, in the work of Catholic Charities—so critical for the well-being of local communities? "The Word of God cannot

be chained," St. Paul wrote to Timothy, and now it is up to us to defend the Church's freedom to fulfill her mission to freely manifest the love of God by organized works of education and charity. This is why the Church has engaged the Administration so earnestly, this is why we are working for legislative protection from the Congress, this is why, thankfully, so many have filed lawsuits in various parts of the country, and this is why there is a Fortnight for Freedom.

As you may know, only one Catholic signed the Declaration of Independence, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the cousin of Arch-bishop John Carroll, who laid the cornerstone of this Basilica in 1806. Like all Catholics, Charles Carroll was forbidden by Maryland colonial law from taking any part in political life, especially from holding office. Carroll risked his life, family, and property by supporting the revolutionary cause but he did so, and I quote, "to obtain religious as well as civil liberty." He added: "God grant that this religious liberty may be preserved in these states to the end of time, and that all who believe in the religion of Christ may practice the leading principle of charity, the basis of every other virtue." [END]

The following interview was in the September 2010 issue of *Columbia*, the national magazine for the Knights of Columbus.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton (1737-1832), the last signer of the U.S. Declaration of Independence to pass away, was also the only Catholic among the nation's Founding Fathers. As one of the most highly educated and highly regarded founders, Carroll was an influential figure as the principles and structure of the American republic developed. Nonetheless, his story has been largely forgotten.

In a biography titled *American Cecero: The Life of Charles Carroll* (ISI, 2010), Bradley J. Birzer helps resurrect Carroll's historical contributions. An associate professor of history and director of the Hillsdale College Program in American Studies in Hillsdale, Mich., Birzer argues that Carroll's legacy cannot be understood apart from his Catholic faith and identity.

Joshua Mercer, a member of Petoskey (Mich.) Council 923, interviewed Birzer about this forgotten Founding Father so that readers might gain an appreciation of Carroll as an influential thinker who helped establish American independence and legitimize Roman Catholicism in the United States.

Columbia: Charles Carroll is relatively unknown among American Catholics, yet he was the only Catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence. Why don't Catholics today know about this Founding Father?

Birzer: Certainly, in his own time, Carroll was well-known. John Adams even believed he would be remembered as one of the great founders, one of the greatest men of his day. Given that Adams had men such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in mind, this is not faint praise. At the time, the Carrolls (Charles and his cousin John, the first Roman Catholic bishop in America) were also regarded as the two great leaders of Roman Catholics in America.

But I think Roman Catholics are as susceptible to memory loss as any other American. So, American Catholics have unfortunately forgotten their history. A couple of excellent books on Catholic history in America exist—I think immediately of John McGreevy’s *Catholicism and American Freedom* (2003).

Columbia: Maryland started out as a Catholic colony, but it had become anti-Catholic by Charles Carroll’s lifetime. How did this happen?

Birzer: One could argue without exaggeration that, after the passage of the Toleration Act of 1649, Maryland was the most religiously tolerant place in the entire world. In 1689, after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the removal of King James from the throne in England, Protestants in Maryland in a coup d’état took over the government and overturned the Toleration Act. From 1689 until the American Revolution, anti-Catholic laws multiplied. Throughout much of the 18th century, Catholics in Maryland could not testify in a court, appear to represent oneself in court, serve in the law, vote, serve in any political or governmental office, worship freely and publicly, raise their children “in a Catholic fashion,” or hold property without fear of confiscation by the whim of the government. For better or worse, these laws were enforced only as the leaders of Maryland chose to enforce them. Sometimes, they enforced them rigorously. At other times, they ignored the laws.

Part of our melting pot belief about America seems to encourage the notion that each major religion within Christianity had its own colony. Textbooks very simply identify Maryland as the “Catholic colony,” and the story stops there. Sadly, this gives us a false impression, as of course the story changes course radically in 1689 when the tolerant government was overthrown. At that point, Marylanders identified citizenship with membership in the Church of England. Catholics, Protestants believed and argued, could not be citizens. After all, their loyalty was to the Seat of Peter and not to the English throne.

Columbia: So when Charles Carroll decided to become active in politics, he couldn’t even use his real name. Tell us about that.

Birzer: The year 1773 proved to be key not only for Carroll but for Maryland as well. At the beginning of the year, a prominent Marylander, Daniel Dulany, wrote a mock dialogue for the *Maryland Gazette* (the primary Maryland newspaper). In the dialogue, a wise and prudent “Second Citizen,” a supporter of the governor and the status quo, debates a witless “First Citizen,” a defender of the reformation of the Maryland government along republican (and what was called “Whiggish”) lines. The debate is so one-sided as to appear nothing less than absurd. Carroll, to the surprise of Dulany, wrote a response, publishing it under the name of “First Citizen.” Each side elaborated on his views over the next six months. The debate riveted all of Maryland, and the letters were read throughout the colonies, earning Carroll a strong reputation as a Whig and a patriot.

Columbia: But after a while it wasn’t much of a secret that Charles Carroll was “First Citizen.”

Birzer: Without question. While anti-Catholicism continued, to be sure, Carroll almost single-handedly proved to the Maryland population that a Catholic could be a good citizen, an intelligent citizen and a defender of liberty.

Columbia: Your book is called *American Cicero*. Why do you think this is an apt title for Charles Carroll?

Birzer: Throughout the entirety of Charles Carroll’s life, he regarded Cicero as one of his two closest friends. The other was his father. Carroll believed himself to be in constant conversation with Cicero because of Cicero’s works, which Carroll considered the second greatest set of writings in history, bested only by the Bible. In this, Carroll—in his life, his mind, and his soul—almost perfectly blended the humane with the Christian, forming a solid Christian humanism and offering it to the first 50 years of American history and culture.

One can see Cicero’s influence on Carroll in the American’s defense of the republic and traditional republicanism, in his understanding of liberty and order, and in his very humane perception of the world.

Columbia: Did other Founding Fathers hold Carroll in high esteem, or was he considered an outcast because of his Catholicism?

Birzer: Both. The Founders, as far as I can tell, greatly respect Carroll. Adams called him one of the best of his generation. Washington considered him a friend and a vital political ally. Jefferson sought him out for financial advice. Madison turned to him and the Maryland Senate Carroll created as the model of the U.S. Senate. And Hamilton thought he might be the best successor to Washington as president. Regardless, it’s

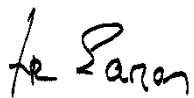
very difficult to find unadulterated praise for Carroll. For, no matter what Carroll's virtues, the other Founders always had to add "... for a Papist" when describing him.

Columbia: How can Catholics promote the life of this great Catholic American patriot?

Birzer: The best way to honor Carroll, at least from my perspective, would be to honor what he believed in. Catholics should be taking the lead in a revival of the liberal arts, republican theory and constitutional reform, and ideas of constitutional reform, and ideas of order and liberty. Our Church, after all, not only sanctified the pagan world and the classical learning of antiquity, but it also reached out to the pagan cultures of the world, baptizing them, bringing them into a universal understanding of the humane and just.

Personally, I am a huge fan of Roman Catholicism in England. After all, English Roman Catholics included King Alfred, Thomas à Becket, John of Salisbury, Thomas More, John Fischer, Cardinal Newman, G.D. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, J.R.R. Tolkien and Christopher Dawson. Throw in Evelyn Waugh and Alec Guinness and the many figures Joseph Pearce has so brilliantly written about in *Literary Converts* (Ignatius, 2000), and the jaw simply drops. And why not? It seems to be a perfect combination—the Catholic traditions of education and justice mixed with the humanism, common law rights and constitutionalism of the English. For Carroll, the American Revolution reformed, purified and returned the inherited English constitution and liberties to first principles. This was our inheritance and this is our greatness. It's a beautiful burden to carry to the modern and postmodern world.

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Sean". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.