

## **In action against birth-control mandate**

Mar 15, 2012

### **Editor:**

Eighty leaders of various groups from among the 5,700 registered families in the parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church (IHM) in Brentwood met recently to formulate a plan of action to oppose the sweeping HHS mandate that violates not only their Catholic conscience but the rights of all Americans to religious freedom.

During the meeting to outline IHM's Town Hall Action Response, there was unanimous agreement on the need to act. While any governmental mandate to disobey the Church's position on contraceptives and abortion would be sufficient to cause an uprising among the Catholic faithful, as would an infringement on religious freedom in America, the recent HHS ruling is indeed that double threat. Included in IHM's plan of action are the following:

- Develop public relations effort to secular media.
- Communicate with Congressman McNerney.
- Be professional in our signs, banners, writings and speaking.
- Increase parish education, especially our youth, parish-wide education.
- Expand the parish newsletter and website.
- Establish prayer and adoration vigils focused on religious liberty.
- Participate in the March 23rd protest in Sacramento and San Francisco.
- Organize a united front among all Brentwood churches.
- Develop a petition drive among all churches: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Jewish.
- Prepare a letter to every Catholic council in the diocese about our efforts, asking them to take action as well.
- Write our sister and brother organizations, the Knights of Columbus, Italian Catholic Federation, Cursillo and Guadalampianos.
- Support the Bishop of Oakland and the Catholic Conference of Bishops and endorse a more out-front approach.
- Request that Bishop Cordileone pen a comprehensive letter to the diocese on proper Catholic voting.

As the various leaders of Catholic groups such as the Knights of Columbus, Italian Catholic Federation, Cursillo, Hispanic Guadalampianos and Fil-Am community were discussing various action steps, the atmosphere of seriousness and commitment to the purpose brought to mind the determination of historic Americans to promote and defend the freedoms for which so many Americans have already made great sacrifices.

Anyone walking among the sub-groups of eight to 10 attendees would have overheard repeated

comments along two main themes: First, that while Catholic consciences were at stake, the biggest issue was religious freedom for all our countrymen; and second, that this is one of those occasions in life when one cannot simply sit on the sidelines and do nothing.

Outsiders might have been surprised at the depth of emotion and level of commitment apparent at that meeting, even to the point of remarking, "I didn't know that many Catholic lay people were so concerned," for indeed, those leaders represented a small fraction of the parish membership. But even those who might at times fail to fully live up to their vows or principles can be stirred to action when their beliefs and freedoms are challenged.

**Deacon Ron Horan, Brentwood**