

**Bishop Richard Pates Remarks**  
**Independence Celebration Walk and Picnic**  
**Iowa State Capitol Grounds**  
**July 1, 2012**

In recent months, I have been to the Ivory Coast, to Venezuela and Cuba. I can tell you from these trips and others, that we are truly blessed to have the religious liberty that we do. We have the right to worship safely and freely, a right many people across the world struggle to obtain. This right is perhaps best appreciated by immigrants, such as Barbara Decker's parents and the new citizens who recently graduated from Mercy College.

As we hear time and time again in the Gospels, and today underlined in our reflection by Laura Wenman, we are called to do more than simply worship God on Sundays. We are called to go out into the world and LIVE our faith. We do this by serving millions through hospitals, schools, universities and countless Catholic charities that help the poor, disabled, and homeless. We touch all areas of human want and need. Each of our speakers today has shown so clearly how our Catholic institutions in Southwest Iowa, putting faith into practice, serve thousands of people in our state.

The mandate imposed by the U.S. Health and Human Services Department requires our Catholic hospitals, schools, charities and other institutions to provide services that directly contradict our faith. The government has defined a religious institutions so narrowly, that our Catholic schools, hospitals and charities don't meet the definition and therefore don't meet the criteria for an exemption. As a result, they'll be expected to provide services that we in good conscience cannot provide.

Furthermore, what is even more troubling, HHS claims the authority

to define what is and what is not a "religious institution." Acceptance of this infringement of religious liberty would be a huge step backward for our country and our constitution. It has the potential to marginalize all faith-based schools, hospitals and social service agencies by creating a legal barrier between faith and works.

We cannot let that happen.

What can we do, here in the heartland?

First, stay informed by texting the word FREEDOM to 377-377, as Tom Chapman told us.

Second, I encourage you to pray. Pray that our leaders have a change of heart. Pray that they change the rules so that we can freely continue to help the common good by taking care of the most vulnerable among us, and by educating your children.

Third, I encourage you to contact your elected officials and tell them how important it is to the very core of our faith that we be able to live our faith in every moment. This is our duty as good Catholics and true Americans, to be ever vigilant in protecting the liberties our founders struggled to obtain. Let us truly appreciate our freedoms by celebrating in gratitude and praying with thankfulness during this Fortnight for Freedom. Amen!