

THE POPE JOHN PAUL II 2012 BIOETHICS LECTURE

Mandates, Decrees, and Bioethics Liberty

**Alan E. Sears, President, CEO, and General Counsel,
Alliance Defending Freedom**

I am truly honored to be here tonight, honored to address in the name of the Blessed John Paul the II – you, my fellow followers of Christ in this age of much uncertainty, about some of the defining issues of our time: the sanctity of life, bioethical issues, marriage, and the struggle to preserve freedom of conscience and religious liberty.

The 19th century Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky once wisely said: *“If God is dead all things are permitted.”*

My friends, we live in age where a political and legal battle wages about the law and the meaning of life: what it is, when it begins, and what our responsibilities are to nurture and protect it - - or to extinguish or prevent it.

These issues have become more and more prevalent, weighing on the consciences not just of doctors and scientists, teachers and pastors, judges and politicians, priests and Bishops, but on each and every one of us who takes God, our faith, and loving our neighbor, seriously.

Unfortunately, nowadays, there is a deviant trend that has gripped society – a culture of death – as Pope John Paul II so accurately coined it – one that not only refuses to take God seriously, but is determined to make him irrelevant and extinct from society. Dominating the national discourse, this atheistic worldview not only denies the existence of God and his relevance to the world, but is hostile to all people and things Christian.

This is contrary to America's founding and its rich Judeo-Christian heritage. Our founding fathers believed in a free republic based on a Christian ethos, one in which man is created in the image and likeness of his Creator. And in this *Imago Dei*, man irrefutably knows and understands the uniqueness of his life, its intrinsic worth and dignity. This applies not only to himself, but to his neighbor, who is also created in God's image. That is why people may smile at a stranger, open the door for someone carrying a heavy package, offer a bus seat to an elderly person, or maybe even stop and help someone whose mobile home is on fire, just as a friend of mine did a few weeks ago driving home from a vacation up in the hills of Arizona. Even though this wasn't his mobile home, my friend immediately spun the wheel, drove down to the burning house, leapt from his vehicle, and thru the smoke began banging on doors, warning the people who lived nearby of the pending danger.

Although most of us do not get to do something this heroic, we somehow desire to help those we see in need. Somewhere along the line, we learned the Biblical Golden Rule: "*Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.*" (Luke 6:31) This is a command from Jesus Himself, a commandment based on the crucial idea, spelled out in the very first chapter of Genesis, that as human beings we are made in the very image of God. And, in imprinting that image on us, God places a deep, abiding, and inherent value on our existence, making our lives sacred.

This sacred nature comes from God and is preserved by Him. He has mercifully bestowed every single one of us with a unique essence, a spirit, a soul. And somewhere deep inside, we all know this. We recognize each other's intrinsic value, and that is why we help each other. I am "my brother's keeper." And he is mine.

It is this intuitive grasp of our unique individual value and how we are responsible for one another that drives everything in our American legal system: our base understanding of God-given rights and individual freedom, our enthusiasm for democracy, our focus on "one person-one vote," on trials by jury, and on innocence until proof of guilt.

From the dawn of the nation, from the Pilgrims' first steps on the beach, to the hallowed

scribbling of Thomas Jefferson's pen, to the brutal sacrifices of Valley Forge, to the epic debates that gave birth to our Constitution, everything in the American soul, in our political and legal DNA, has affirmed the value of life and how it must be protected from the moment of conception until death from now until eternity.

For two centuries, this conviction dominated the nation's point-of-view and its laws, shaping our understanding of the country, its place in the world, and our role as citizens in this glorious republic. But what was so naturally understood and believed two centuries ago, even up until a few decades ago, is being denied and distorted, much of this being done through the judicial branch, resulting in a civil Society our Founding Fathers would not recognize today.

Over the last few decades, as we have abandoned natural law and much regard for human dignity, destructive ideas have taken shape -- ideas such as people have no inherent worth. Rather, that your value derives from the quality and impact of your life; that religious faith and conscience is something that is just best kept to yourself; and that we look out for the other guy not because God inspires and prods our actions, or because we see something of Him in one another, but because we are just, dare I say, inexplicably "nice." Hence, giving birth to a new politically correct generation that prides itself on being "good" for "goodness sake."

These dangerous ideas have morphed into a so-called "clash of rights" that plays out in our culture each and every day.

So we opt to be "nice" and eradicate God from society. The results have been devastating. Because if God is dead it is okay to kill millions of innocent children in the womb. It is okay to create test-tube babies and abort babies who are not the gender their parents wished for or who have deformities. It's okay to exterminate all Down syndrome children. It is okay to "selectively reduce" the number of fetuses in the womb after in-vitro fertilization. It is okay to prematurely deny the elderly or disabled life simply because it is more convenient and less costly to do so. It is okay for men to marry men, or women to marry women, and then adopt children or use a third party to

provide semen or a womb. It is okay to trample religious freedom and deny people their right to freely express their faith in public, in schools, or at work.

But as Christians, you and I know this is not okay. And that the death of God was reported prematurely. And we know we have a responsibility to stand up for God's Truth, lighting the path for others to follow, regardless of the consequences and how difficult it may be. As then Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict, wrote in 2004:

The Church teaches that abortion is a grave sin ... Evangelium Vitae... states that there is a grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection ... In the case of an intrinsically unjust law ... it is therefore never licit to obey it... Christians have a 'grave obligation of conscience not to cooperate ... [and] cooperation can never be justified either by invoking respect for the freedom of others or by appealing to the fact that civil law permits it or requires it.

Alliance Defending Freedom has been waging this battle – and standing with those who stand – since our founding in 1993. Little did our founders know at the time, that the pressing need we saw then to defend religious freedom, sanctity of life, and marriage, was just the tip of the iceberg. We had no idea that within two decades, America would be faced with some of the most challenging threats to religious liberty and the family in our nation's history – or that these threats would come directly from our own government, the very institution established to protect this liberty from such threats.

Under the guise of wanting to ensure all Americans receive what they call “healthcare,” the Obama administration has implemented “Obamacare,” or as one commentator calls it, “Obamacide” -- one of the most egregious pieces of government action ever – and has issued its mandates and decrees –that violate the conscience of people of faith and good will by forcing employers to provide “free” contraceptive and abortifacient drugs in the “healthcare” coverage of their employees.

And just a quick comment for those who think this Administration has provided a “safe harbor” for some, or has allowed an “accommodation” – most of our clients are self-insured. The

phony claim that the cost of these grave offences is being passed from the employer to the insurers is simply untrue – and most actions taken in the courts so far seem more dedicated to getting past election day before the full load is dumped than any “solution.”

We represent a Catholic family in Colorado, the Newlands, who for fifty years have owned and operated a very successful heating and air conditioning business, *Hercules Industries*. Not long ago, the city of Denver was set to issue a proclamation honoring the Newlands and their company for their exemplary contributions to the community. They helped with the city’s historic preservation, they provided charitable assistance for those affected by this summer’s wildfires, and most noteworthy, and they provided their employees with jobs with outstanding benefits and support. In the eyes of Denver officials, *Hercules Industries* was the model family-owned company, until, that is, the Newlands filed – and for now have won – a lawsuit against the Obama administration.

As sincere Catholics, the Newlands’ faith is integral to how they conduct their life and their business. They understand each life is sacred at every stage of development. So, when the Obamacare mandate was announced, they found themselves compelled to pay for abortion pills, contraception, and sterilization procedures for their employees through their “health” insurance provisions.

If they chose not to do so, they would face crippling fines of \$100 per day, per employee. This fine of millions a year would quickly put them or any company out of business. So it was truly a choice: *“Your faith or your business – and the livelihood of hundreds of others with it.”*

Knowing they could not cooperate directly with evil – and they could not comply with such a dictatorial decree, a decree opposed to everything they hold dear, they contacted Alliance Defending Freedom and we filed a lawsuit on their behalf, challenging the mandate as a violation of their religious freedom. Soon after, thanks be to God, a federal judge held that the abortion pill mandate could not be forced upon *Hercules Industries*, pending the outcome of their lawsuit which may be ultimately resolved by the Supreme Court.

It was the first major legal victory against the Obamacare decree – and so far the only decision on the merits in any case. And when word of that victory reached Denver City Hall, officials reneged on their decision to publicly honor *Hercules Industries*, even though the lawsuit had nothing to do with why officials wanted to honor the Newlands in the first place.

The Newlands continue to generously contribute to their community. The only thing the lawsuit has revealed is why the Newlands do the things they do – not out any natural desire to be “nice,” but as a loving expression of their faith in Jesus Christ. And this is what the city of Denver refused to celebrate.

Denver officials would not recognize the Newlands unless they agreed to divorce their service from their faith – the very thing that inspired them to achieve this honor to begin with. Unless they subordinated their God to Big Brother, this exemplary family business would not be lauded. But as noted, the Obama administration left the Newlands no viable choice. It is “all or none.”

And we’ve also sued on behalf of other employers – religious and private – and yesterday on behalf of Tyndale House Bible publishers – who Health and Human Services says is not a religious employer.

The Obama Administration has now filed an appeal of their loss in the *Hercules* case – contradicting its campaign claims of “unwavering” support for religious freedom. And it has not stopped there. The Administration continues to assault the values and freedoms of Americans. In August [2012], the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit upheld an Obama administration policy that authorizes funding for even more research projects that involve destroying human embryos.

The court ruled this way despite a federal law that prohibits taxpayer funding for “*research in which a human embryo is destroyed or subjected to risk of harm or death.*” The court’s ruling upholds the Administration’s death sentence upon countless human lives at taxpayer’s expense, putting your tax dollars “at work” in ways you never imagined.

In a nation that insists on given even our most brutal, hardened criminals – even murderous terrorists – unlimited access to taxpayer-funded appeals for years *ad nauseam* to forestall their punishment, these helpless, young, and most importantly, important lives are extinguished without the blink of an eye.

But the Obama administration has its reasons for doing this. In these perilous times, and with so much at stake in implementing the Obamacare abortion mandate, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius let her guard down, telling a congressional subcommittee earlier this year that free abortion pills and sterilizations are critical to America’s financial bottom line. As she crudely put it: “*The reduction in pregnancies compensates for the cost of contraception.*” The president echoed these comments in early October in a speech at George Mason University. In other words, cutting down on the number of human beings born in the United States will help reimburse employers and insurers for having to comply with the “free” abortion pill hand out and more.

It appears some officials have suddenly become fiscally responsible and want to balance the budget, only if it means getting rid of some unwanted fetuses. To be clear, expediting abortion and expanding embryo destruction are not just an endorsement of random, mass killing – they are an explicit denial of the *Imago Dei* – a deliberate rejection of the idea that every human life is sacred at every phase.

When we reject the idea and the truth that God is bigger than government – a principle that is fundamental to religious freedom – we also reject the idea that every individual is made in the image of God and is worthy of our nurture and protection. The government, rather than God, becomes the arbiter of which lives are worth defending, and which are worth saving.

Pope John Paul II, during his visit to Denver, Colorado in 1993 for World Youth Day, had already diagnosed the profound danger of a government afflicted with delusions of its own deity. He warned tens of thousands of cheering youth:

In our own century, as at no other time in history, the 'culture of death' has assumed a social and institutional form of legality to justify the most horrible crimes against humanity ... massive taking of lives of human beings even before they are born. In much of contemporary thinking, any reference to a 'law' guaranteed by the Creator is absent ... no longer is anything considered intrinsically 'good' or 'universally binding.' Naturally, the weakest members of society are the most at risk. The unborn, the children, the sick, the handicapped, the old, the poor, and unemployed, the immigrant and the refugee..."

He said that almost twenty years ago – and the danger, the challenges – and our responsibility in the face of those challenges – are greater today than ever. Those who take this responsibility seriously are increasingly finding themselves on a collision course – and the “clash of so-called rights” – with a legal and medical establishment more and more callous not only toward life, but conscience – conscience, what John Paul II quoting from *Guadium et Spes* calls “*the most secret core and sanctuary of man.*”

As he preached in Poland in 1995:

To be a person of conscience means first of all, obeying one's conscience in every situation and not silencing its inner voice, even if it is sometimes severe and demanding ... in the spirit of St. Paul's words: Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.' (Romans 12:21) To be a person of conscience means working to build up the kingdom of God the kingdom of Truth and life, of justice, love and peace – in our families, [our businesses], in the communities in which we live, and throughout our [nation]. It also means courageously assuming responsibility for public affairs; it means being concerned for the common good and not closing our eyes to the misery and needs of our neighbor, in the spirit of [the] Gospel ... 'Bear one another's burdens.' (Galatians 6:2)

But not all agree with his words. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi who claims to be a “devout Catholic” who “honors and loves her faith” told *The Washington Post*, that Catholics have “*this conscience thing*” about the taking of innocent human life.

Yes we do. And we are proud of it.

Unfortunately, Pelosi's “*conscience thing*” is an oxymoron. Ironically, it is the very lack of conscience, a complete denial and rejection of conscience which embodies this present mindset that

deems life disposable. Today, this mindset has seized too many of our nation's leaders, and sadly, too many self-professed "devout Catholics" and other so-called "Christian" leaders.

It is a mindset Christians are called to stand against – in love and in truth – to stand against and to radically seek to transform – John 15:5.

At Alliance Defending Freedom, we take this call seriously. Our attorneys are working tirelessly across the nation, to safeguard your liberties and the liberties of those who make this stand. Our lawyers have engaged in legal efforts to preserve what would seem, on face value, to be among the most fundamental and protected of all our freedoms as citizens of this republic: the freedom to think through and decide critical issues for ourselves, in light of our faith and our religious convictions – and to freely act on them. Or, as we often say, "*the right to hear, to speak, and to live the Truth.*"

Our attorneys are in the legal fray, but our faith communities and our healthcare professionals are in thick of the daily battle.

Pope John Paul II affirmed the rights of healthcare workers to refuse any work that violates their conscience and religious beliefs. In his encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, he asserted this fundamental freedom. He said:

The opportunity to refuse to take part in _... acts against life should be guaranteed to physicians [and] health care personnel ... Those who have recourse to conscientious objection must be protected not only from legal penalties but also from any negative effects on the legal, disciplinary, financial, and professional plane.

And yet, at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, 13 nurses were represented in a pre-surgical ward were threatened with the loss of their jobs if they refused to help with elective abortions.

In New York City, a Catholic nurse, who we represent and who is esteemed by her own hospital administrators as among the best they've ever had, was coerced into assisting with an abortion and was told she could lose her nursing license and her career unless she helped end the life

of a healthy child in the womb.

In Wisconsin, a pre-eminent Catholic anesthesiologist at a leading university hospital, another one of our clients, risked her job and career to fight clandestine plans by her administrators to provide late-term, second trimester abortions.

Again, the infamous Obama mantra clamors: *“Your conscience or your job?”*

In Montana and Washington, pharmacists we represent were told they were required, by law, to sell abortion pills in violation of their conscience – even though the same pills were available at other stores. In some cases, just a few steps away. *“Your conscience or your business?”*

When fourth-year nursing students, including a young Catholic nurse, sought to apply for the women’s health nurse residency program at Vanderbilt University, they found a rude surprise on page 15 of the application – a requirement that the students participate in an abortion as part of their “training.” *“Your conscience or your education?”*

Each of these medical professionals – and many, many like them all over the country – find themselves ostracized and threatened with legal action simply because their personal faith calls them to recognize the premium God puts on the value of life. Their opponents care more about the freedom to end lives – and securing profits, or “reducing costs,” or eliminating the “unwanted” – than they do for Americans who want to follow the dictates of their conscience. They were willing to decimate the liberty of others so they can more easily terminate the lives of innocent children.

They did not succeed.

Alliance Defending Freedom represented each of the people I mentioned – and by God’s grace – we won all of these cases that are now completed – and we fight on in the others – to preserve their freedom.

However, this agenda, this “clash of rights,” is part of a greater assault.

Then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger identified it, just before he was elected Pope, as a *“dictatorship of relativism”* as the world shifts its views back and forth from one moral fad to the next, it insists

people of faith are not allowed to live according to the Gospel. This tyrannical agenda requires everyone to adhere to its extreme atheistic philosophy. Or as John Paul II profoundly noted in *Centesimus Annus*: “... a democracy without values easily turns into ... totalitarianism.”

Sadly, as in the examples I have mentioned, more and more Christians who refuse to comply with the government’s anti-life agenda, are being excoriated of their “rights.”

This is also true when it comes to issues such as the Administration’s push for a redefinition of marriage and the open practice of homosexual behavior – and their accompanying legal agenda where Christians, including our military chaplains, find themselves under increasing pressure to violate their freedom of conscience or face the wrath of the government.

For example, a young mother, Christian photographer, and private businessperson, was assessed thousands of dollars by the New Mexico Human Rights Commission for politely declining to use her artistic talents as a photographer to celebrate a lesbian commitment ceremony.

Of this case, columnist George Will writes:

Ponder this: in jurisdictions ... which ban discrimination on the basis of political affiliation or ideology, would a photographer, even a Jewish photographer, be compelled to record a Nazi Party ceremony? This case demonstrates how advocates of tolerance become tyrannical.

Or an honors counseling student at Eastern Michigan University who was kicked out of the Masters’ program and denied her degree because – when faced with a potential client wanting to improve their same-sex relationship – she dared follow standard procedure and asked the person be referred to another counselor.

Or a public university professor who was discharged for truthfully answering a question on the Catholic teaching on marriage and homosexual behavior in a Catholic doctrine class.

But regardless of these attacks, our ministry, our allies, our church and its ministries, concerned individuals all over America, are praying faithfully, moving strategically, striving tirelessly to defend the sanctity of life, marriage, and religious freedom.

This “*clash of rights*” puts us – this first Friday – in direct opposition to the Obama administration that -- through executive action, bureaucratic bullying, decrees for so-called “czars,” lawsuits, and legal mandates – seems almost fixated on erasing the words, “*life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*” from the Declaration of Independence and eradicating the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, like the president, in his speeches, removed the Creator as their source.

An administration whose appointee to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission says, “*when sexual liberty conflicts with religious liberty: sex wins...*” As well as other redefinitions of liberty that undermine the fundamental commitment to preserve life and religious freedom, which are, and always have been, the hallmark of our laws, our culture, and our nation’s character for more than 200 years.

Few things affirm America’s character more eloquently than something shared with me by Reverend Deacon Davis when he invited me to speak to you today. Reverend Davis told me of his nephew, Brian Bill, a Navy SEAL, who gave his life for us last year while serving in Afghanistan.

A few years ago, Brian had written a remarkable note to those at home. He asked them not to worry about what might happen to him, lest, in doing so, they forfeit the very life and freedom he was fighting to give them. He wrote:

The truth is I want you to live a life of fun and excitement. I want you to travel and to go to music festivals and art shows and all of that fun stuff. I want you to live a life of freedom and spontaneity. That is why I work where I work. This is why I love what I do.

“*Greater love has no one than this,*” Jesus told us, “*that he lay down his life for his friends.*” (John 15:13)

As you can see from those few lines, Brian laid down his life a long, long time before any enemy action took it away from him. What can you and I do, in the face of such love and sacrifice? Brian’s uncle has a good idea. He told me, after sharing these words of Brian’s that:

Together, even those of us who have grown long in tooth can offer our teamwork and

resolve... to assure our families that we will never allow any government to tell us the limits of love.”

Together we must stand; together we must never allow any government to tell us the limits of love. This is the same message that Pope John Paul II imparted to us 20 years ago in Denver. In the Holy Father’s concluding remarks that day, he challenged the youth – and all of us – to valiantly fight this battle, knowing Christ is on our side:

Do not be afraid to go out on the streets and into public places ... this is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is a time to preach it from the rooftops... you must feel the full urgency of the task ... Woe to you, if you do not succeed in defending life. The church needs... to make the Gospel of Life penetrate the fabric of society, transforming people’s hearts and the structures of society in order to create a civilization of true justice and love.

The Pope’s timeless message honors the God Who created us in His own image, *Imago Dei*, the God who endowed us with the extraordinary gift of freedom and that inner voice of conscience.

We know and understand in the very depths of our souls that freedom and life can never really exist apart from one another. They are two wings of the same eagle meant to soar to new heights. As we protect life, as we protect marriage, we defend freedom. And, God and His mercy are not dead. Don’t let radical cultural elites, or Hollywood to tell you otherwise.

In fact, He is very much alive just as He was more than 2,000 years ago ministering to the poor and sick, all the while preparing His apostles for the arduous task ahead.

Those twelve humble men took a stand. They fought for truth and freedom and made a difference. If it was not for those men of conscience, we would not be here today. Christ wants us to continue their legacy, His legacy.

Edmund Burke is supposed to have famously said, *“The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”* My fellow Believers, we cannot stand idly by. We cannot “do nothing.” Our freedom, our liberty depends on it.

As we fight for freedom – whether it is on a battlefield, in a voting booth, in a classroom, in a

professional journal, in a pulpit, or a courtroom – we are fighting for life – and for marriage as the source of life – and freedom, opposing government efforts to limit love.

We have a lot at stake in this battle.

As we have seen, this Administration is waging a war on everything our Founding Fathers held dear, trying to destroy the heart of America – its rich heritage of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness so many fought so hard to attain and preserve for future generations.

Indeed, this administration has turned the purpose of government on its head. No longer is its purpose to protect and defend our religious liberty. Rather, it is now becoming a tyrannical tool used to undermine our freedoms and eradicate our conscience.

Through dictatorial decrees, we are now mandated to reject our faith and make a pact with the Devil. In this brave new world, we must participate in the destruction of life through “healthcare” and accept a redefinition of marriage and new family structures that pervert the *Imago Dei* and the *Holy Family* we are called to emulate.

But my friends, we cannot cooperate with evil.

We must fight to preserve each and every other person’s opportunity – including those who oppose us – to live out the unique destiny God created us for, that divine plan and gratuitous gift of life, that awe-inspiring chance to know and love God personally, intimately, and eternally.

Christ laid down His life so that you and I can live freely. Like Christ, Brian Bill also laid down his life so that you and I may live in freedom. We must now stand with Christ, with Brian, with those 12 apostles, and with all those who sacrificed their lives so that freedom may reign. If we do not, their sacrifices will have been in vain.

Be encouraged, 1,500 pastors and churches will stand up to the IRS unconstitutional mandate and preach this Sunday, October 7th [2012]..

Ronald Reagan wisely warned:

Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it

to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.

My friends, it is now the time to take a stand.

It is the time to pray.

It is the time to act.

It is the time to defend.

May God bless you, and may He bless our nation with life and freedom, as we do what He calls us to do.