

“Then they came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” Often times in the Gospels we see the Scribes opposing Jesus. Eventually this opposition turns into outright persecution when the Scribes unite with the Pharisees and the Sadducees in order to plot a way to silence Jesus by killing him.

It is not as if the Scribes started out as evil men with evil intentions; seeking to thwart God and murder the Messiah. They were the people tasked with producing copies of the Torah, the Old Testament. Through their arduous copying of the Scriptures, they came to know and love the Scriptures and they became revered as teachers and authorities of the Law.

Because of their knowledge of the Law, they often were entered the bureaucracy of Ancient Israel and thus they were given great responsibilities within the affairs of the kingdom - drawing up legal documents, writing letters for people, serving as accountants, serving as lawyers, acting as judges, and serving in many other administrative capacities.

Through these capacities they became powerful, and it was then that they began to gradually lose sight of the fact that they were supposed to live lives of service, and instead they sought to guard and protect what they had. They began seeking to remake the Kingdom of Israel according to their image and likeness; ceasing to care about God’s plan for his people, preferring rather to advance their own plans and designs.

How far they had fallen and how corrupt their teachings had become became apparent when God raised up a true prophet for his people, fulfilling the prophecy of Moses in today’s first reading, “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him.” When a prophet was called and sent by God to speak with his voice, to speak into the lives of the people and the nation of Israel, to truly teach with authority; it revealed the emptiness of the Scribes’ teachings and the emptiness of the vision they had for their country.

These prophets were able to speak with authority because they knew God; they heard his voice speaking into their own lives and the lives of their fellow countrymen and women. These prophets spoke the truth regarding God, the truth about their country, the truth about the people of God – and in the face of the cronyism, lies, half truths, twisted words, and twisted prophecies, woven by the Scribes to preserve their power and authority, the truth always wins. Though the privileged and comfortable in Ancient Israel did, according to ancient tradition, manage to murder each and every prophet sent by God; from Amos to Zephaniah, from Isaiah to St. John the Baptist.

God is still calling forth prophets and sending them to his people; and the Scribes of today continue to rise up and oppose them. Like the prophets of old, the Prophets of today boldly speak the truth. The Prophets of today still call the people of God to return to the way of life he has shown us, to return to that which is truth, beauty, and goodness, to follow his plan for this world.

While the Scribes of today distort the truth, using their knowledge and positions of power in government, universities, and newsrooms to twist the meaning words like “life,” “choice,” “freedom,” and “marriage”, to craft laws that advance their own agendas, to remake the world in their own image and likeness, and punish those who would dare disagree with their terrifying vision for this world.

The Prophets of today still call good “good” and evil “evil” while the Scribes of our time celebrate the fact that they call good “evil” and evil “good”. The Prophets of today remind us that our rights comes from God – the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and that it is our government’s job to protect these rights. The Scribes of today advance the lie that it is the government which provides our rights, yet if that is the case, they can and will take those rights away.

The Prophets of today humbly admit their need for God and our dependence upon him in our lives, and encourage others to do so. The Scribes of today rub our noses in human weakness while ignoring their own hypocrisy.

The Prophets of our time bear names like Blessed Theresa of Calcutta, Blessed Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Archbishop Nienstedt. While the Scribes of our time bear the names of powerful universities, newspapers, and political dynasties.

The Prophets of our time are not brought before the magistrates of Rome or Ancient Israel like the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees did to Jesus Christ and the prophets; rather, the Scribes of our times put today's Prophets on trial in the court of public opinion eschewing reasoned and informed debate preferring instead to resort to name calling, slander, and acidic commentary.

Dark is the day when our Archbishop asks that the following letter be read from every pulpit or inserted into every bulletin in this diocese, as bishops are doing across this country:



*Archdiocese of Saint Paul  
and Minneapolis*

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

MOST REVEREND JOHN C. NIENSTEDT

January 26, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning an alarming and serious matter that negatively impacts the Church in the United States directly, and that strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith. The federal government, which claims to be "of, by, and for the people," has just dealt a heavy blow to almost a quarter of those people—the Catholic population—and to the millions more who are served by the Catholic faithful.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that almost all employers, *including Catholic employers*, will be *forced* to offer their employees' health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be *forced* to include those "services" in the health policies they write. And almost all individuals will be *forced* to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In so ruling, the Administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. And as a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

People of faith cannot be made second class citizens. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in this important effort to regain our religious freedom. In generations past, the Church has always been able to count on the faithful to stand up and protect her sacred rights and duties. I hope and trust she can count on this generation of Catholics to do the same. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less.

And therefore, I would ask of you two things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be restored. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. Second, I would also recommend visiting [www.usccb.org/conscience](http://www.usccb.org/conscience), to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty, and how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse the Administration's decision.

With every good wish, I remain

Cordially yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John C. Nienstedt".

The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt  
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

/dkt

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Dark is the day when we have to fight for our religious freedom in this country.

Despite the efforts of the Scribes, whether in the time of Christ, the time of the prophets or today, the truth always wins - the truth about marriage, the truth about sin, the truth about life, the truth about God, the truth about human dignity – the truth always wins even though it often

comes out bruised, battered, beaten, and bloodied – the truth spoken by God always prevails because it speaks into the depths of our heart, it resonant in our soul where the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Truth - resides in us who are baptized. Let us always seek to follow the voice of God speaking into our lives and the life of our great country. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.