

# No one should be denied care

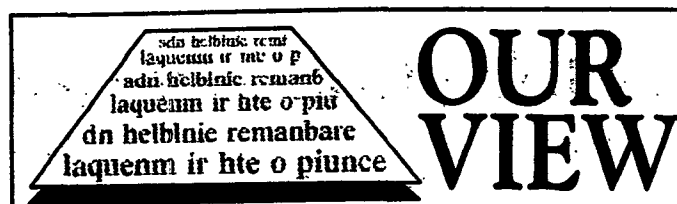
Mary is fighting for her life against cancer, but worries that the battle will win her a lifetime of debt.

Much of the treatment she needs to combat a recurrence of her illness is not covered by insurance because — since she underwent her last series of treatments — her husband changed jobs and insurance companies.

"I had no idea I'd have to go back (for treatment) within six months," Mary explained. When she later submitted several bills for follow-up testing, her insurance company refused to pay, pointing out that the illness had originally been diagnosed while she was covered by another company.

Nothing can awaken you faster to the incredible cost of health care than receiving a few bills your insurance company won't pay. Mary's chemotherapy costs \$1,300 per treatment. Faced with major surgery recently, the former Rochesterian couldn't find out whether the cost would be covered until after the surgery took place — when she learned it was not.

Worry over mounting debts and the stress on her husband and young children make Mary hesitant to keep appointments with doctors. "If I don't see somebody, I could die, but I wonder why bother to see somebody if you can't pay?" she said. "You're lying awake at night worrying how you'll get through the



next week."

A bigoted, but lingering stereotype portrays those who lack access to adequate health care as a few "dope-crazed, minority derelicts on the corner," according to Emily Friedman, a health-policy analyst who spoke at the 75th annual Catholic Health Assembly in June.

In fact, as many as 37 million Americans — an estimated 2.5 million of them New York state residents — are falling through the cracks of the health-care system. Many are not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid, which covers only 38 percent of Americans living below the federal poverty level. Those who are employed often work for companies that don't provide health-insurance benefits, and they may not be able to afford to purchase such benefits themselves.

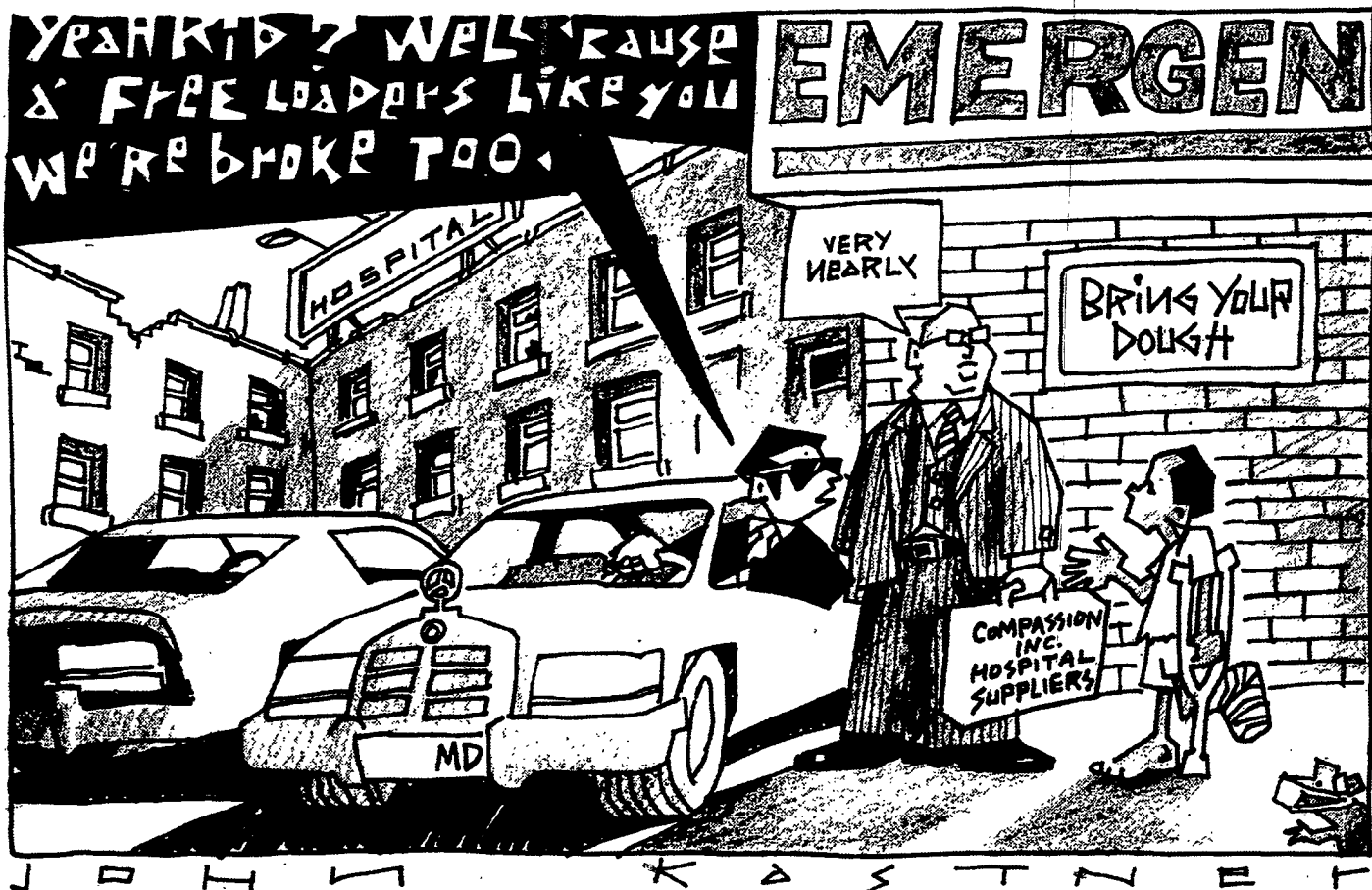
Still others, like Mary, are cut off by insurance companies' zealous efforts to control payments in the face of rising health-care costs. Too often, those most in need of health care — diabetics, epileptics, those afflicted with multiple sclerosis, cancer or other recurring illnesses — find that care almost impossible to obtain.

In contrast to the millions of Americans cut off from basic health care, ethicist Thomas Shannon has pointed out, hospitals spend billions on elaborate life-saving technology that too often cannot cure disease, but merely prolongs dying.

"About one half of the health-care dollar is spent on the last six to eight weeks of a person's life. Is that a good use of that money?" Shannon asked.

Simply put, the answer is no. We ought lay to rest the dated argument that national health care is a first foothold for communism, and define a standard of basic health care for all citizens. Such a standard should be defined as a human right that no one — from a "dope-crazed, minority derelict" to a middle-class mom like Mary — can be denied.

— The Editors



## 'Idolatrous' article on Mary was offensive, reader says

To the editor:

"New Focus directs Marian Devotions" (CC: May 24) has forced me to take a public stand on my own position with regard to Mary having suffered time and again from pronouncements from clergy, post-Vatican II, that have resulted in a spiritual upheaval within me that I will not describe here.

This is my position on the concept "Mary, Mother of God." The concept is heretical. God is indivisible. To claim that Mary is the Mother of God is to claim that

she gave birth to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus (Yahweh saves) was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary provided a human body that would allow God entry into the events of man in a way that was "natural" to man. She had no more help in bringing Jesus up than any other religious mother with an imperfect understanding of God's plan for redemption. She did not even understand the nature of His ministry. There is a story in Mark, never linked together in homilies to my knowledge,

which is this:

"He went home again, and once more such a crowd collected that they could not even have a meal. When his relatives heard of this, they set out to take charge of him, concerned that he was out of his mind (2:20-21). His mother and brothers now arrived and, standing outside, sent in a message asking for him. 'Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.' He replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking around at those sitting in a circle about him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.'" (3:31-35).

It disturbs me that Marian devotions have so infiltrated the practice of spiritual life in the Church that the rights of those who accord Mary no special role in their

spiritual lives are continually affronted. It disturbs me that May, the month in which we, as the "Church" should have been preparing for the coming of the Holy Spirit, was spent reciting the rosary and carrying a feature on Mary in the *Courier*. Not only that, the article itself reflected a peculiar type of idolatry that I personally find offensive. . . .

I do not wish to infringe on the right of individuals to practice their beliefs. I ask that the Church respect my freedom to worship, in its public prayers, in accordance with Church teaching. When the concept "Mother of God" is part of Mass, the most precious of public worship, the Church is desecrating my freedom of worship, by injecting a notion that I consider idolatrous.

Elizabeth T. Rivkin  
Geneva

## Write to diocesan office in order to get EWTN shown in Rochester

To the editor:

This letter is in response to Father Cuddy's recent article regarding the Eternal Word Television Network, which is the world's first 24-hour Catholic cable network which is free to cable systems. The network strives to present Christ and His Church as they truly are.

I frequently have the opportunity to view EWTN in the Canandaigua area. I am deeply impressed with the high caliber of programs that are shown and also deeply saddened that our Rochester area is deprived of this excellent network.

In my opinion, EWTN is one of the most powerful tools for evangelization and our diocese is not benefiting from it. Think too what a blessing it would be for the elderly and shut-ins; what a wonderful teaching aid taped programs could be for CCD and adult education.

I ask myself, how can we rationalize or justify NOT making every effort possible to have this excellent Christian programming brought into the Rochester area?

What appears to be needed is a petition campaign at the parish level accompanied by information regarding the quality of programming offered. EWTN was one of the options listed this year on Greater Rochester Cable's programming survey. Why not begin preparation NOW of material which will be needed to carry out parish-wide petition campaigns?

This network will not be carried locally without sufficient demand from viewers. Our Catholic people should be made aware of the availability and quality of EWTN programming and encouraged to petition for it.

We are already bombarded with an overabundance of secular television. EWTN gives sound values which strengthen Christian virtues and family life. Readers who share this view are urged to write to the diocesan communications office to let your interests be known.

Ann Kirchoff  
Pittsford

## Priest is Rochester's loss, Ogdensburg's gain

To the editor:

On May 26, 1990, over 75 persons from the Southern Tier traveled to Ogdensburg, N.Y., to witness the priestly ordination of Father John J. Cosmic.

Many people in the Diocese of Rochester know Father John as he served as parish deacon at St. Mary Our Mother Church in Horseheads for several years prior to entering the seminary at Cromwell, Conn.

As an inactive member of St. Mary Our Mother Parish Reflection Team (a committee formed to discuss, among other things, the shortage of priests in our diocese), I found it most difficult to attend the ordination of Father John in a diocese other than Rochester, N.Y. I am not aware of the reasons that John Cosmic was turned down

in his desire to become a priest in the Diocese of Rochester, nor do I know why he was discouraged by the diocese. It seems very strange that one diocese would say no and another an emphatic yes. Do we not live in an age of the "Universal Church?" The Diocese of Ogdensburg has been blessed and enriched with the ordination of Father John J. Cosmic — a loving, caring and devoted man.

Richard Pirozzolo  
Horseheads

EDITOR'S NOTE: Diocesan officials declined to provide details regarding Father Cosmic's application for ordination in the Diocese of Rochester, citing it as a personnel matter.