

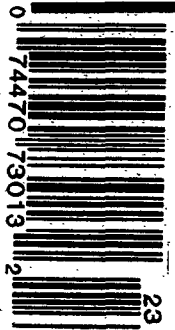
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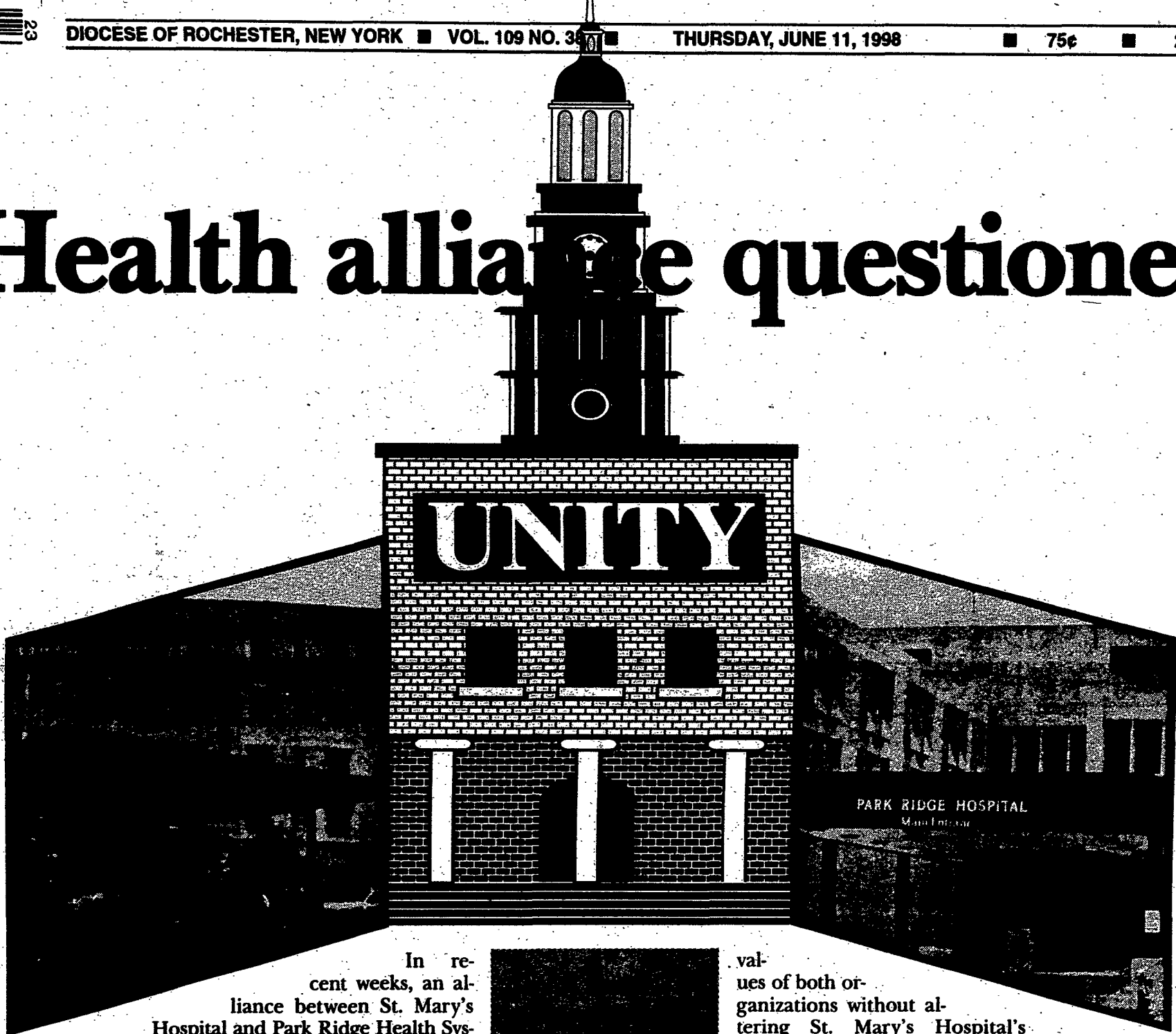
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# Catholic Courier

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## Health alliance questioned



In recent weeks, an alliance between St. Mary's Hospital and Park Ridge Health System has drawn attention from pro-choice activists who believe the alliance will adversely affect the availability of abortion and contraceptive services in the Rochester area.

For example, a June 1 article in the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* outlined many pro-choice observers' concerns over the alliance, which is called the Unity Health System.

In addition, the article raised points that have led to confusion among some Catholics about the ethical nature of the alliance.

To what: What challenges does the alliance present to St. Mary's commitment to Catholic Church teaching?

Unity is a holding company to which belong St. Mary's Hospital, operated by the Daughters of Charity, and Park Ridge Health System. Under the agreement, the two hospitals share many services, but continue to operate as separate entities. Thus, Unity does not represent a formal merger of the two.

Unity officially formed in 1997, and in the wake of recent press attention, both the diocese and the Daughters of Charity have issued statements reaffirming their support for the alliance.

"This collaborative effort respects the missions and

values of both organizations without altering St. Mary's Hospital's adherence to the (U.S. Bishops') Ethical and Religious Directives (for Catholic Health Care Services)," wrote Donald A.

Brennan, president of the Daughters of Charity National Health System in a June 5 letter to Unity officials.

A June 8 diocesan statement noted its approval of the alliance between the hospitals. The diocese said its approval was based upon the fact that the Daughters of Charity had approved Unity, and that the alliance was reviewed by both moral, ethical and canon law experts for the Daughters of Charity and the diocese.

The statement also points out that "(n)o abortions will be performed (at either hospital)." However, sterilizations will continue to be provided at Park Ridge.

"The diocese does not approve of this practice," the statement noted.

### Ethical questions

In an era when physicians regularly perform procedures - ranging from abortion to sterilization - that violate church teaching, the increasing number of alliances between Catholic and secular health-care institutions is bound to raise ethical questions.

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