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The future of the Affordable Health Care Act

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NCR Today

This year, we are seeing the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (also known as "Obamacare") across the country. This rollout is critically important for the future of our nation, particularly for those who are sick and lack access to affordable health care. Despite the bishops' confused understanding of the American ideal of religious liberty, Catholics should be working to ensure this law is successful and that improvements are introduced where needed so those who need the protections of adequate health care coverage will have it available to them.

There is an interesting article in liberal magazine *The New Republic* that analyzes the GOP's obsession with "Obamacare" and what it suggests about the future of the Republican Party. It provides a political analysis of the current strategy of those who oppose the bill and how successful or unsuccessful that strategy might be.

Brad Dayspring, Republican National Committee spokesman, is cited as indicating that the implementation of "Obamacare" is expected to be a disaster, and Republicans intend to highlight every piece of bad news regarding the implementation of the act.

So what can we expect from the implementation of "Obamacare"? Noam Scheiber suggests opinions have hardened for or against the legislation, and whatever happens likely won't make much difference in the overall support for the bill.

As Scheiber sees it, the problem with the Republican strategy is that 78 percent of people won't be using "Obamacare," per se, because they get their insurance from Medicare, Medicaid or employee-based health insurance. It will be unlikely, therefore, that the majority of Americans will become highly motivated to act against legislation that doesn't really impact them. Additionally, those who do get insurance through "Obamacare" are likely to be pleased because they didn't have any insurance before.

Interestingly, the news from California, the first state to implement "Obamacare," has been good. Insurance companies have offered premiums at much lower rates than expected. Competition seems to be healthy. Disaster does not seem to be occurring,

The only group of individuals who will actually suffer a bit because of this legislation is the young and wealthy who are being forced to pay into a program they may not need. Yet that is the whole point of universal health care. The legislation makes it possible for those who need health insurance to get it at an affordable cost, with subsidies where necessary. It will not work unless all members of the community participate. The Catholic concept of solidarity applies here and will require those affected to see themselves as helping to further a greater good.

Consider Social Security. All workers are required to pay into Social Security to ensure that older, retired Americans will continue to receive their benefits. Younger workers expect to receive their benefits years from now. The health care law operates on the same principle. All of us, including those who are young and healthy, will one day need health services. Helping others now is what should bind us together as a nation.

My impression is that America's younger generation is up to the challenge. They understand the need to be a part of the greater community. They have shown themselves to be responsive to John F. Kennedy's call decades ago: "Ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country."

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