

Magliano correctly invokes subsidiarity

Inviting Catholics to support health care reform, Tony Magliano (CR, Dec. 10) correctly invoked the principle of subsidiarity.

Catholic social teaching has developed the idea that matters ought to be handled by the least centralized competent authority. But the idea has a positive aspect, by which a higher, centralized component, in a subsidiary role, should provide assistance to the individual. The central government can do this by addressing problems that cannot be solved on the local level – as in the case of the health of all residents of the United States, which is a matter of both individual well-being and public health.

Both aspects of subsidiarity are well expressed in the 1986 U.S. Bishops' "Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy."