Opinion



Massimo Faggioli, pictured in 2015 (CNS/Western Catholic Reporter/Glen Argan)



by Michael Sean Winters

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January 23, 2018

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At Commonweal, Massimo Faggioli looks at the controversy surrounding Fr. Romanus Cessario's reprehensible defense of the kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara. Among many intelligent observations, Faggioli says this:

> From my point of view as a historian and theologian focusing on the past century, there is a big problem in terms of how to understand tradition. The original sin of the post-Vatican II era is that Catholic liberal-progressive theologians in the U.S. largely consigned Catholic tradition to a past that is forever past. This opened the way for conservative-traditionalist theologians to, if you will, "kidnap" the tradition, re-baptizing it in an anti-historical, anti-liberal fashion, with the language growing ever more extremist as time has passed.

There is a challenge there for those of us on the left to engage in some self-criticism. Too many progressive Catholic academics either do not know the tradition or do not care to engage it. Either way, they cease to contribute to Catholic thought in any meaningful way. The left needs to become more discerning and discriminating, more demanding of its intellectual "leaders," or it will simply become irrelevant. Kudos to Faggioli for recognizing this illness, naming it and calling it out.

This blog is never shy about criticizing the bishops' conference, so it is a special joy to commend them for the amicus curiae brief they filed last week in support of the right to organize. The brief is not what I would have written, but it is vital that the Catholic Church be on record supporting the working men and women of this country as we always have been. This is not just a matter of lowercase "t" tradition either: It is magisterial teaching and explicit magisterial teaching.

The new civil rights division at the Department of Health & Human Services has drawn out the worst, most obtuse, moral stupidity from the organized political left in some time. Look at the misrepresentations in The Washington Post account. The new division cannot permit discrimination against people. It can enforce extant laws protecting nurses and doctors who do not wish to perform certain procedures like abortions. There was a time when I admired the ACLU. Not anymore. This animus they are stirring up against Catholic health care is no better than the anti-immigrant

animus the president stirs up. That's right, ACLU — you and Donald Trump have more in common than not.

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By way of contrast, look at the utterly non-hysterical response to the new civil rights division from Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul Sr. Carol Keehan, CEO of the Catholic Health Association. Kudos to Sister Carol.

Two stories about Puerto Rico electricity situation: The Ledger reports that a team of volunteers went from Lakeland, Florida, to the town of Manati to help reconstruct the power grid, but they found obstruction at every turn. On the other hand, the residents of the town of San Sebastian took matters into their own hands, ignored the impossibly corrupt public utility company and are restoring their own power. NPR has the story.

[Michael Sean Winters writes about the nexus between religion and politics.]

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