Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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I hate Dana Milbank of the Washington Post. Not really. But, he beat me to the idea of penning a mock acceptance speech for President Donald Trump winning the Nobel Peace Prize. Warning: do not, repeat DO NOT drink coffee while reading this or you will spit it out laughing. Just splendid satire.

At Commonweal, Santiago Ramos has an extraordinarily elegant essay on Stephen Hawking and his wrestling (and non-wrestling) with metaphysical questions. I am a fan of efforts to combat scientism, and make sure science is honored but also required to stay in its lane. Ramos' commentary is an exemplary example of such efforts, almost Wieseltierian in its reach. Bravo.

In keeping with the theme of politics and poverty, America magazine has an essay from San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy on how Pope Francis brings "a new lens to poverty, peace and the planet." The essay is a modified version of a talk McElroy gave recently at the University of Notre Dame. Not only does McElroy display his expected intellectual and pastoral gifts, but he also shows a willingness to take on the critics of Francis, something I encourage more bishops to do. He writes:

> *This new lens reflects in a fundamental way the experience of the church in Latin America. Critics of Pope Francis point to this as a limitation, a bias that prevents the pope from seeing the central issues of economic justice, war and peace and the environment in the context of the universal church. But St. John Paul II certainly enriched key aspects of Catholic social teaching from a perspective profoundly rooted in the experience of the Eastern European church under communism. Contemporary critics of Pope Francis voice no objection to that regional and historical perspective.*

Speaking of John Paul II, at the Napa Institute website, the schedule for this summer's conference on the late pontiff still has many "speaker pending" slots. I am looking at my personal calendar, and I am not doing anything in July. I would be delighted to come and give a talk on, say, "How George Weigel distorted the teaching and legacy of Pope John Paul II."

Starbucks caves to the anti-Semites. Politico has the story. I send up the red flares again: Anti-Semitism is on the rise and liberals are the ones spreading it. It is shocking and scary. More on this next week as we celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel.

The U.S. bishops' conference announces "Religious Freedom Week." What happened to the Fortnight for Freedom? Next year can it be a weekend? Two days for freedom?

From NPR's Morning Edition, a look at a "Tea Party Liberal" in West Virginia, congressional candidate Richard Ojeda. The money quote: "He's unscripted and unpolished, such as when he tries to explain why national Democrats have done so poorly in West Virginia. 'They've lost power because they sucked,' Ojeda says bluntly."

A new chapel at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Des Plaines, Illinois, is dedicated. Fr. Esequiel Sanchez told Chicago Catholic, "We get 10,000 people on a weekend." I am not sure how pure those 10,000 are, but they help rebut the presumption that the church is going to be smaller in the future.

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The Sisters of the Good Shepherd National Advocacy Center is hosting a major conference on May 15 on human trafficking at the U.S. Capitol. The conference is entitled "Shine the Light" and those interested in attending can find out more information here. This issue is one of the few that unites left and right and, more importantly, addresses a crisis that is such a moral stain on modernity.

Why the left loses elections: Rachel Laser uses the sacking of Jesuit Fr. Patrick Conroy as House chaplain to argue that we should eliminate the position of chaplain altogether. Clueless.

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

Editor's note: Don't miss out on Michael Sean Winters' latest: Sign up to receive free newsletters, and we'll notify you when he publishes new Distinctly Catholic columns.