Opinion



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The Brooklyn Diocese will help pay $27.5 million to four men abused by a lay religion teacher in what is one of the largest settlements awarded to individual sex abuse victims in the church. The abuse happened between 2003 and 2009—after the Dallas charter and norms.

At a Georgetown event on the church sexual abuse crisis, a panel of four young Catholics—including NCR Vatican correspondent Joshua McElwee—got applause when they called for church leaders to be held accountable for their role in covering up.

The sex abuse scandal has not hurt Pope Francis' overall poll numbers, though Republican Catholics are increasingly unhappy with him, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey. Still, 84 percent of U.S. Catholics have a "favorable" view of the pope (twice the percentage of those who approve of the Republican president).

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has new rules for reporters covering its annual meeting: They must submit questions in advance (rather than just topics, as previously required) and should "not … approach bishops or CCCB staff for interviews at any time, including coffee breaks and meals."

The pope leaves for his four-day trip to the Baltic states this Saturday, with stops in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Some hope the trip will confirm these nations' connection with Western Europe. The trip will coincide with Lithuania's National Day of Remembrance of the Genocide of the Jews on Sept. 23.

The woman who has accused Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh of sexual assault when they were teenagers is refusing to testify before the Senate confirmation hearing Monday unless the FBI first investigates.(ICYMI: Kavanaugh's former pastor, now CEO of Catholic Charities in DC, is standing by Kavanaugh despite the sexual assault allegation.)

While we wait for the decision about Kavanaugh, two legal-themed book reviews:

- Part 1 of Michael Sean Winter's review of "Self-Evident Truths: Contesting Equal Rights from the Revolution to the Civil War" looks at religious liberty and the role of private property rights.
- Colman McCarthy reviews "Tough Cases" and concludes "We aren't a nation of laws, we're a nation with certain people deciding laws."

A Chicago pastor went ahead and burned a rainbow flag, after saying a "prayer of exorcism" over it, despite instructions from the archdiocese not to. "It's our full right to destroy it, and we did so privately because the archdiocese was breathing on our back," the priest told NBC. No word if there are plans to burn any Bert and Ernie puppets.

Racism is a pro-life issue, two representatives from Faith in Public Life argue. And if the U.S. bishops could put together a "Novena for the Legal Protection of Human Life" during the Kavanaugh hearings, at least one should have shown up for the anti-racism event on the anniversary of the Charlotte Unite the Right rally, they say.

Soul Seeing columnist Patrick Reardon doesn't understand life, but he knows God does. "Just like the flower doesn't understand the storm that is pounding it with rain and buffeting it with wind, I am trying to bloom in the storm of life," he writes.

Religious communities and dioceses are getting help so seminarians and those in religious life can erase their student debt, so they are freer to do their ministry.

The inaugural episode of "The Commonweal Podcast" features Villanova's Massimo Faggioli and Notre Dame's Kathleen Sprows Cummings and more.

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