Opinion
News



Students from the Yeshiva School pray in front of the Tree of Life synagogue Oct. 29, two days after a mass shooting at the Pittsburgh synagogue. (CNS/EPA/Jared Wickerham)



by Michael Sean Winters

View Author Profile

Follow on Twitter at @michaelswinters

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

November 8, 2018
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

At The New York Times, Peter Baker argues persuasively that the partisan fights coming in the wake of the split decision on Tuesday might suit President Donald Trump to a T. Democrats will need to break out of their bubble to have any hope of doing better in some of the country's more rural regions, without which the presidency and the Senate will likely be out of reach for them.

How prominent are discussions like this one about Catholic masculinity? In this video, John Sablan seems to conjure a series of nonexistent bugaboos, and his guest, Jared Zimmerer, who now leads Bishop Robert Barron's Word on Fire Institute, agrees. More stereotypes in fewer minutes than I thought possible. The discussion is not just retrograde, it is weird.

Speaking of stereotypical responses, is anyone surprised that some militia groups have headed to the border, convinced by our president that there is an imminent threat to the nation's security from the desperate refugees making their way north from Honduras? Does anyone think this will end well? Maybe, now that the election is over, Trump will stop warning about the caravan, but do not bet on it.

From Texas and Politico, did Beto blow it? After securing the nomination, he did not reach out to the center but, instead, doubled down on appeals to his base, taking ever more radical positions on particular issues. The diagnosis was flawed: Dems do not need to motivate their base. Donald Trump has done that for them. Dems like Beto O'Rourke, who did many things right, as the article shows, need to stop adopting flavor-of-the-month slogans like "Abolish ICE!" that leave them open for attacks that will scare centrist voters into the open arms of the GOP.

At The Washington Post, Yair Rosenberg explains that we shouldn't too easily universalize a tragedy like the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. The murderer did not hate religion; he hated Jews. Yes, attacks such as these are an assault on the decency of our entire society, but goyim should watch their pronouns: The object of anti-Semitism is not an amorphous "us" — it is Jews. Relatedly,

Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik had a profoundly empathetic column about the tragedy. One of the obvious achievements of Vatican II that we all take for granted is that a Catholic bishop would have known some of the victims personally. That would not have been the case 100 years ago.

Advertisement

At Catholic World Report, Samuel Gregg of the Acton Institute overplays his hand. Many of us share his exhaustion with the emotive tenor of the times, but that doesn't mean we ignore that people do *feel* compelled to share their feelings as much as their ideas. The cold rationality he holds up as some kind of an ideal misses the relational quality of Christian truth as it is presented in the Gospels. Unsurprisingly, it is those who want a cold faith who cannot bring themselves to support our warm-blooded Latino pope.

Finally, at the website of Pennsylvanians for Fewer Guns, Nancy Grogan makes a strong case that politics, in the narrow sense, are not enough to confront the scourge of gun violence; we need to engage politics in the broad sense, listening sympathetically to those whose views differ from our own but whom we recognize as decent people. This could be said about most issues: When politics is driven by the extremes, the center is up for grabs and with it, majority control for a decade or more. If the center holds.

[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.