Opinion
News



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

March 26, 2019
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Ascension announces that CEO Anthony Tersigni will retire by the end of the year. Readers will recall the article I wrote back in November calling for Tersigni's resignation. More on this later this week.

I am not a fan of manifestos in any event, but this one published at First Things is really strange: A group of conservatives, almost all of them Catholic, denounces pre-Trump conservatism and embraces enough of the Trump agenda to make one feel nauseated. I am not sure the document's purpose. Do they want a seat at Donald Trump's table alongside the evangelicals? First Things has better things to place on its pages, no? It is a busy week, but I may return to this topic later on.

At America, Vincent Miller has an excellent essay on Catholic social teaching and why recently published essays at that journal by Arthur Brooks and Stephanie Slade miss the mark. His essay put me in mind of a line from David Schindler: A selfishness become mutual is not yet mutual generosity. Slade's libertarianism is the more easy to dismiss, but Brooks is a more consequential figure and just as wrong-headed when it comes to understanding the church's teaching.

At Slate, a look at the "Bach-lash" against Google for its attempt to introduce AI into the celebration of the anniversary of the birth of the great Johann Sebastian Bach. The attempt was ridiculous and Bach lovers quickly realized that the computers could not, in fact, replicate the genius of the master. Surprised? I recall the great philosopher Paul Weiss explaining to our class that a computer cannot place a period at the end of a sentence, only a dot, because a computer cannot know how the dot is related to the capital letter at the beginning of the sentence or, in the case of e e cummings, that it is not so related.

Advertisement

At Catholic World Report, George Weigel continues his histrionic defense of the innocence of Cardinal George Pell. At a time when the rule of law is under assault in our country, Americans should be a bit shy about questioning a jury verdict in another country which, heretofore, has no known corruption of its judicial system. I do not know if the jury was right or not. Pell is appealing his conviction. But set the shrill attacks on Australia's judicial system aside.

In The Washington Post, three researchers from the University of North Texas share the results of their study, which indicates a severe uptick in the number of hate crimes in those counties where Trump held a campaign rally. This is shocking but entirely expected. Trump is wrecking our social fabric. It is his political agenda. Where is the voice of our bishops?

Also at the Post, Dana Milbank examines the ways the Democrats seem determined to help reelect Trump, squabbling amongst themselves, introducing crackpot ideas and chasing after them like so many 5-year-old soccer players chasing the ball.

Not all Democrats have lost their minds. In New Mexico, eight Democratic members of the State Senate broke with their party to defeat a proposal that would have codified late-term abortion, akin to the recently passed law in New York.

In The New York Times, Frank Bruni talks with Yale Professor Nicholas A. Christakis about his new book *Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society*, which posits the thesis that humans are hard-wired for goodness, despite the infamous attacks on him and his wife in 2015 when the couple dared to suggest that students at the university could police themselves when it came to Halloween costumes. The

entitled (and intellectually enfeebled) children of snowplow parents who accosted Christakis have gone on to careers and grad school where, one can hope, they will learn to regret their childish and stupid outbursts. Christakis, on the other hand, has been researching human goodness.

Can someone give the editorial board at the Wall Street Journal a history lesson? This editorial frets that proposals to abolish the Electoral College would change the way the founders decreed our presidents should be elected. But on Twitter, David Frum noted that the 12th, 14th, 15th, 18th, 22nd, 23rd and 26th amendments all changed what the founders decreed in terms of how we elect our presidents. When these same editors invoke "original intent," be suspicious.

[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 and we'll let you know when he publishes new Distinctly Catholic columns.*