Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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From the Archdiocese of Chicago, a forceful statement by Cardinal Blase Cupich regarding Fr. Gary Graf, who has been reinstated as a priest in good standing and as pastor of a church when allegations of sexual abuse where deemed unfounded. Restoring a man's reputation after such a false allegation is absolutely critical if we expect our people, and our priests, to trust the procedures and policies for child protection.

At his press conference last week, Archbishop Wilton Gregory told us he would always tell the truth. I fear he broke his promise the next day. A child at St. Anthony's school asked Gregory what his favorite movie is and he replied, "I love 'The Wizard of Oz'!" Perhaps, after he is installed next month in Washington, that answer will be truthful, but we all know that the Archbishop of Atlanta's favorite movie is necessarily "Gone with the Wind."

At RealClearPolitics, Peter Berkowitz has another important essay on the need to defend freedom of speech among other democratic norms. His essay, which has weaker and stronger moments, will and should make those of us on the left squirm

because he correctly notes how far some on the left have strayed from liberalism. I see this, as Berkowitz does, especially on college campuses. Liberal democracy requires a culture of aggressive debate.

At NPR, how a Presbyterian church in North Carolina struggles to remain purplish at a time of increasing polarization. I thought the commentary about how they addressed the always controversial issue of same-sex marriage was especially instructive. But, the biggest lesson is that a church can only be a place of bridge building in these polarized times if it is very, very committed to fostering a sense of community.

Speaking of polarization, Haaretz has the best coverage of the Israeli elections where it appears Benny Gantz and his Kahol Lavan party tied Bibi Netanyahu and his Likud for total number of seats in the Knesset but, sadly, because other right-wing parties outpolled parties on the left, Netanyahu will be able to form a new government. This bodes ill for the prospects of peace and, just so, for Israel.

Twitter is usually a place for nonsense, but this thread by Bishop Danny Flores is very provocative, in a good way. The issue of translations specifying textual ambiguity, with the model of the Incarnation, is an issue worth thinking about at some length — and points to a very basic reason why Fundamentalism is bosh.

At America, Mary Hallan FioRito on perinatal hospice care as an alternative to late-term abortion. As in the case of physician-assisted suicide, if the best answer our culture has to end-of-life suffering is to kill someone, our culture is a culture of death. Hospice is a truly compassionate choice, that confers dignity on those who come there.

At the Working Class Perspectives blog, Christopher Martin asks if Democrats will be able to connect with rural voters and offers some policy ideas that might help. He is spot-on about the need to support rural schools and post offices and devise more creative ways to stimulate economic growth. I hope the candidates will read this essay.

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At the New York Times, Paul Krugman eviscerates President Trump's desire to nominate economic hucksters like Herman Cain and Stephen Moore to the Federal

Reserve. He identifies a core problem for today's Republican Party:

> *There are plenty of genuine monetary experts with conservative political leanings, some of them quite partisan. But modern Republicans have shown consistent disdain for such experts, perhaps because of a sense that anyone with real expertise or an independent reputation might occasionally be tempted to take a stand on principle.*

On the morrow of the Trump presidency, how will the GOP rebuild?

In The Washington Post, historian John Fea explains that the roots of today's astonishing support for President Trump among white evangelicals was rooted in the Reagan-era shift from keeping politics at a distance to jumping into the political fray headlong, aggrieved and focused on the Supreme Court. The Rev. Jerry Falwell paved the way. Fea is exactly correct and he could have gone further: It was on Falwell Sr.'s watch that explicit segregationism was replaced by explicit nationalism that tolerated a lot of implicit racism.

[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.*