Opinion



by Michael Sean Winters

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Pope Francis delivered a powerful address to a meeting of finance ministers from various nations, but the speech seemed to fly below the radar, so busy were members of the press corps deciding which paragraphs in former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick's emails were true and which were bunk. Here is the speech the pope gave. I will be curious to see what our friends at the Busch School of Business have to say on the subject.

For the second time in a week, a single Republican member of Congress blocked a unanimous consent motion to pass disaster aid for parts of the country hit hard by flooding, wildfires and hurricanes. These deficit hawks never worry about government spending when the Pentagon budget is on the table. And, if you don't think we still need to help the struggling people in Puerto Rico, consider this: According to El Nuevo Dia, some 30,000 houses on the island still have FEMA tarps for roofs. Eighteen months after the hurricane, and people are still living under tarps.

At The New York Times, Jenni Russell on the pathetic end of Prime Minister Theresa May's career. I have no sympathy for May, or for Leader of the Opposition Jeremy

Corbyn, both of whom tried to straddle an issue, Brexit, that could not be straddled. Russell's article was written *before* the results of the European elections came in, in which the Tories placed fifth, behind the Greens! As the results came in, I started emailing friends: If Trump wins in 2020, we all meet in Spain.

Amidst a lot of bunk being written, some of it into law, about abortion, here are two thoughtful contributions to the discussion. First, Professor Meghan Clark, of St. John's University, looks at the way we do not even know how, theologically and culturally, to discuss women's health, with a need to place women's real life experiences front and center. And, at Patheos, Rebecca Bratten Weiss looks at the dividing line between being pro-life and pro-choice, and notes the many points where the distinctions break down. I do not think we "move past" such distinctions, but we must recognize the inadequacy of the current political and moral debate. Here is a point of departure: The current debate is largely determined by the fundraising needs of *both* pro-life and pro-choice organizations.

And, if you want one of the dumbest articles about abortion, Linda Greenhouse used her prime journalistic real estate at The New York Times to demonstrate she does not understand what the Establishment Clause is about, to insult Catholics ("shackles"?), and a thoroughly misplaced fear about impending theocracy. Back in the days of Voltaire, religion was associated with ignorance. Today, I think secularism is more likely to harbor it.

The Catholic Herald never ceases to amaze, but not in a good way. Catholic University theology professor Chad Pecknold has a column there. Apparently, he recently visited some traditional friars who work at an Indian reservation in Arizona. I am trying to get my head his opening sentence: "If you want to see how socialism will work in America, visit a Native American reservation and you'll see the sad truth of it." I am reasonably certain that the Native American organization of property in a communal way predates Karl Marx by a couple of millennia, and worked just fine until gringos came and uprooted their entire civilization. But, all of that passes away in the mind of the culture warrior out to make a point, however absurd it really is. This guy is a professor? Really?

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From Brookings Bill Galston looks at some of the polling about Special Counsel Robert Mueller and his report, most of which explains why Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is so reluctant to start impeachment proceedings: Americans acknowledge the president's wrongdoing, but still do not want him impeached. This shows how effective Trump's muddying of the waters has been.

At Mother Jones, a look at how some very wealthy towns place roadblocks in the way of affordable housing. Turns out rich liberals, like rich conservatives, don't like having poor people too near them, at least not if it is going to affect real estate values. My only problem with the piece is that it almost makes developers look like the good guys. Call me skeptical.

In The Eagle-Tribune, Cardinal Sean O'Malley joined Boston Mayor Marty Walsh to dedicate a memorial to those buried in unmarked graves on an island in Boston Harbor, the final resting place of victims of the Irish famine who got sick en route and died while quarantined. So, if you hear a person of Irish descent praise President Trump's immigration policy, refer them to this piece of history.

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

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