Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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In The New York Times, Thomas Friedman asks: "Is he crazy, is he evil, is he maniacally committed to unwinding every good thing Barack Obama did, or is he just plain stupid?" His answers are not comforting, but it is a fine and bracing bit of writing.

At RNS, Mark Silk looks at the latest polling and notes how soft the president's support is and, what is more, the differential between those who say they approve of the job he is doing and those who say they are likely to vote for him in 2020, what Silk dubs the "Trump Aversion Gap." Of course, being able to capitalize on either of these points — the soft support or the aversion gap — will require the Democrats to nominate someone who does not create an even greater aversion gap.

Relatedly, as Michael Gerson explains in a typically splendid essay in The Washington Post, abortion-rights advocates seem bound and determined to make Trump's reelection far more likely by adopting their own extreme positions and successfully enforcing a rigid orthodoxy on the Democratic party. Trump criticized the extremism of the Alabama law. Is any Democrat going to criticize the extremism

of the law passed in New York? There are plenty of evangelicals and Catholics prepared to vote against Trump, but when the alternative is defending what amounts to infanticide, what's to choose?

From the diocese of Lexington, Kentucky, Bishop John Stowe issued a pastoral plan "A Community of Missionary Disciples" that seeks to apply Pope Francis' programmatic apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* to the situation of the local church. The document was also a very collaborative effort, and was not merely issued from on high. Splendid work by one of the real rising stars of the U.S. bishops' conference.

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At Sacred Heart University's "Go, Rebuild my Church" series, June-Ann Greeley looks at the some of the values expressed in the architecture of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and how those values might speak to us in our own time.

Sooner or later, the world catches up. At Politico, a report on Democrats and religiously motivated voters. Of course, as I have warned, there will be as much bad news as good as we see politicians on the left try and wrap their policies in religious drag just as those on the right have been doing for a long time. For example, Kirsten Gillibrand is defending abortion rights on the theory that Christianity holds out "free will" as a "core tenet," which is true, but only in the sense that we have it, not that it is a license to libertarianism. Is her knowledge of ideas really that superficial? Was there no one on her staff to say, "Well, that's not really on point"? I am glad the left has decided to get religion, but there are going to be some cringe-worthy moments along the way.

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

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