Opinion



by Michael Sean Winters

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Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, call your office: It turns out that there was a blatant example of religious persecution against a Christian in an Arizona courtroom. The district attorney accused Scott Warren of assisting migrants. "He gave them food, he gave them water, he gave them a place to stay. He did a bad thing," she said. Cf. Matthew 25.

William Saletan, at Slate, has long been one of the sanest voices on abortion, both in terms of assessing competing moral visions and on reasonable public policies. In this essay, he examines a range of polls all of which demonstrate that the public is far less extreme than the current Democratic Party presidential candidates on a range of issues, including the Hyde Amendment, which bars federal funds for abortion except in cases of rape, incest or to protect the mother's life.

The Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico announced a deal with the island's creditors, but I doubt the haircut is deep enough. The moral concern is that if the haircut the investors took does not go far enough, workers' pensions will not be protected, despite efforts by the island's religious and labor leaders to defend them. From Telemundo, a report on the religious leaders in Puerto

Rico standing up to protect the pensions of workers on the island as the government-established financial control board pursued a debt restructuring. In the clip, Eric LeCompte, Executive Director of JubileeUSA, speaks about the need to protect these pensions, many of which were achieved in exchange for foregoing salary increases in prior negotiations with the government. Archbishop Roberto González Nieves of San Juan has taken a leadership role in advocating for the poor and the workers in these negotiations and is, not for the first time, a real hero to the people of the island. Here is a link to the religious leaders' statement in English.

Last week, I called attention to Bishop Robert Barron's strange interest in what he deems the "Jordan Peterson phenomenon." Now, Joan Desmond at the National Catholic Register gets into the act , recounting Peterson's "rules for life" which often have roots in his interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The problem is that Desmond doesn't recognize how Pelagian these "rules" are, to say nothing of how pedestrian. This counts as "intellectual" in Barron's view? What is up with this crowd? Peterson is banal at best and repulsive at worst, a modern day Norman Vincent Peale or a revanchist misogynist, but why do these conservative Catholics find him appealing?

At the New Yorker, Sheelah Kolhatkar asks the question "Can Elizabeth Warren win it all?" After following the senator around on the stump, Kolhatkar thinks the answer might be yes. I do, too. She also pinpoints a problem Warren must overcome: For every person who likes the fact that she seems to have an answer for everything, there is someone who is suspicious of the fact that she seems to have an answer for everything. As ever, I advise the candidate and her handlers to reread Jean Bethke Elshtain's "Augustine and the Limits of Politics."

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In The Washington Post, Jenna Johnson looks at the most important voters in the country, those who voted for Obama and for Trump. Johnson goes to eastern Iowa to talk to people whose point of consistency was a desire for change. My colleague Brian Roewe looked at the voters in eastern Iowa in advance of last year's midterm elections. Problem for the Democrats? No one who works for them has much in common with these voters, and, unless they can connect with them, they will lose.

Part of the key to understanding those voters, is understanding how much they detest the culture of political correctness that seems to own the hearts, and has shrunk the brains, of the political and cultural left. From the Chronicle-Telegram, a jury ordered Oberlin College in Ohio to pay $33 million to a bakery that it falsely accused of racial profiling when, in fact, it merely confronted a student who was shoplifting. If a jury in Oberlin is fed up with political correctness, either it is time to abandon it or Armageddon is nigh.

Also in The Washington Post, architecture critic Philip Kennicott looks at the new TWA hotel at JFK airport. Housed in the renovated TWA terminal designed by Eero Saarinen, the building has long been one of my favorites and remains a clear response to those who think modern architecture was all dross. It was, and is again, beautiful.

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

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