Opinion



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

October 17, 2019
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

More important than Tuesday night's debate is how the candidates are raising money and spending it. At Politico, Beatrice Jin and Maggie Severns do the deep dive that shows how the candidates stack up. Key takeaways? Sen. Bernie Sanders has now staffed his campaign almost as strongly as Sen. Elizabeth Warren, and both have similar burn rates; Tom Steyer should have found something better to waste his $50 million on; and former Vice President Joe Biden may be facing a cash crunch that could do irreparable harm to his campaign.

Bad enough that George Weigel is publishing articles about the synod under the pseudonym of the great Xavier Rynne, but why are diocesan newspapers publishing this nonsense? To his way of thinking, his interpretation of Vatican II is the only one that matters, and St. Pope John Paul II effectively completed the implementation of that council. Yet, here we are, still with questions he finds uncomfortable so he dismisses them.

From the Public Religion Research Institute, more and more voters think the country would be better off with more women in political office. I found it interesting that the number of people who do not think we need more women declined between 2016

and 2018 by 11 percentage points. Call it the Hillary effect.

At Bloomberg, Desmond Lachman, Brad W. Setser and Antonio Weiss look at the debt deal produced by Puerto Rico's fiscal control board. They rightly note that the deal gave a big haircut to creditors but left the island with a debt that might not be sustainable. It is interesting that the hedge funds are fighting the deal tooth and nail, which tells me it is a good deal. The question is — is it enough?

Advertisement

At Working-Class Perspectives, Jack Metzgar looks at Hillary Clinton's decision to not take pollster Stan Greenberg's advice. He wanted her to emphasize the need to "level the playing field," and she opted to emphasize building "ladders of opportunity." What is the difference? Metzgar writes:

> Equality of opportunity aims to give everybody an equal chance to climb a ladder to get one of the limited number of spots on a playing field that is severely titled by race, gender, and class. Equality of condition is about getting everybody on a level playing field, not necessarily in equally desirable spots but with some substantial narrowing of the best and worst spots and with the worst spots being adequate for a decent and meaningful life.

In case you haven't noticed, Warren and Sanders are all-in on leveling the playing field, and it is astonishingly popular with voters.

In The New York Times, Elizabeth Williamson profiles White House legal counsel Pat Cipollone and notes he is a devoted Catholic. Cipollone wrote the ridiculous eight-page letter to Congress explaining why the president did not need to respond to their oversight investigations and document requests. Do you think we should tell him that lying is immoral?

The U.S. bishops' conference's Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development has released a new "Poverty USA" video that looks at the interconnected issues that make poverty so easy to fall into and so hard to get out of. I wish they had not used animated stick figures, but real people. Still, at least they are doing something.

USCCB Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development video on YouTube promoting PovertyUSA campaign

[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.*