Opinion

News



This is a file photo of St. Anthony Church in Florence, South Carolina. Former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden attended morning Mass at the church Oct. 27, and was refused Communion by the pastor, Fr. Robert Morey, over the presidential candidate's support for legal abortion. (CNS/Courtesy of The Catholic Miscellany)



by Michael Sean Winters

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The "wafer wars" are back. A South Carolina priest with a bad theological training took it upon himself to deny Communion to former Vice President Joe Biden. This convinces no one and scandalizes many. It is lousy theology and worse pastoral practice. Bishops: If your clergy do this, please reprimand them.

How bad is climate change? This article in The New York Times highlights studies that predict some 150 million people will need to relocate by 2050 because their current homes will be underneath the high tide mark. Large parts of Shanghai and Bangkok, and much of southern Vietnam, will simply disappear.

Does this seem a weird way to focus on race? Sen. Bernie Sanders announced a plan to legalize marijuana. Some of the tax revenue he expects to generate from marijuana legalization he plans to direct to minority entrepreneurs. Why connect the two?

President Donald Trump may think he can shoot someone in the middle of Fifth Avenue and his supporters would not mind, but Senate Republicans are not keen on the effort by Trump's allies to question the patriotism of Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman. And, Senate Republicans might get to decide Trump's fate before voters do. The last great demagogue in American history, Sen. Joe McCarthy, also misjudged the political tenor of the nation and hung himself politically when he attacked the Army. One big difference? McCarthy served in World War II and volunteered for combat missions whereas Trump ducked service in the Vietnam War. Bone spurs.

Michael Gerson, in The Washington Post, is a voice crying in the white evangelical wilderness. Citing new figures from Public Religion Research Institute, Gerson concludes that white evangelicals are, like Noah, "fully disrobed. And it is an embarrassing sight."

Why do Democrats lose elections? That was a Colin Jost joke some years ago on "Saturday Night Live." Turns out that all these years later, some people, like The

Washington Post's Sonia Rao, still can't bring themselves to laugh. She also takes a swipe at Dave Chappelle. He has accurately described the politically correct world as the "cancel culture." But he errs when invoking the First Amendment which only prohibits the Congress from enacting laws that prescribe free speech, an error that was also made here at NCR by Marianne Duddy-Burke. To be sure, we want our laws to have a culture surrounding them that supports their spirit and not just their letter. But one of the pathologies of the political left is to ignore that cultural need and to seek to suppress speech that is "hurtful." I am in favor of people being kind to one another, and my heart goes to the people whom SNL satirizes, but I am still willing to acknowledge what is, plainly, a pathology and to laugh at what is clearly, obviously a joke.

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In The Chicago Maroon, a look at some of the trade-offs involved in changing graduate programs and the size of the departments that constitute a university. It is an interesting debate but I hope it also helps contribute to the more searching conversation we need about the structure of modern universities. Why should tenure be dependent on publication when what matters to most students is the professor's quality as a teacher? Are there not moral concerns about an ever increasing number of doctorates and master's degrees awarded in fields like theology, when there are not really jobs to go around?

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

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