Opinion



Pete Buttigieg, in a April 2019 photo (Wikimedia Commons/Gary Riggs)



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

January 21, 2020

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

In The New York Times, Yuval Levin demonstrates anew why he is one of the nation's most valued and valuable public intellectuals, looking at the loss of trust in our institutions and, really for the first time, coming up with a diagnosis that seems accurate and not just accurate, but of sufficient gravity to explain the really dire situation our culture finds itself in.

At Politico, a report on big donors for both Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg being given special access to top campaign staff at weekend "retreats." Biden is holding his "retreat" in Des Moines and Buttigieg is hosting his in Chicago. No word on whether or not any wine caves are involved.

Also at Politico, it turns out I am not the only one who is suspicious of Buttigieg. John Harris writes:

> *The very traits that usually impress—his fluency in political language; go-getter's résumé; intense ambition carried in the vessel of a calm, well-mannered persona— are increasingly being greeted with skepticism and even derision. Notably, this is coming from his peers.*

Harris goes on to explain why Buttigieg's "teacher's pet glibness" does not matter to many people who are not his age, and makes a compelling case. His description of his own time as a new reporter in Washington is also priceless.

Relatedly, and at The Washington Post, the world's economic and governing elites are gathering in Davos and, surprise, surprise, they are nervous about the possibility of either Sen. Bernie Sanders or Sen. Elizabeth Warren becoming president. That is another good reason to vote for one of them. This article in the Post explains how Kristalina Georgieva, head of the International Monetary Fund, sees the economic future: a sluggish recovery in the worldwide economy — but Georgieva also warns that gross income inequality, matched with significant technological advances, makes this moment seem a lot like the 1920s.

In the U.K., a Catholic running for leadership of the Labour Party, Rebecca Long-Bailey, is being attacked because she is … a Catholic. Bad enough it took until the 19th century to give us the vote or let us hold office. Bad enough that the state never gave back the monasteries. How is it that a country which considers the

Queen the legal head of the Church thinks it is in any kind of position to cast aspersions on another branch of Christianity? Bigotry.

From Al-Jazeera Balkans, a video about a Muslim woman getting a vile, racist text message. She asks passersby in a park in Holland to translate it for her. Their reactions are priceless. The Netherlands is one of the least religious nations in the world, so I hope you will remember this video the next time some right-wing Christian condemns "secularism" as leading to the breakdown of morals.

Correction: Last week, in one of my links' columns, I stated that the Knights of Columbus is a 501(c)(3). I was wrong. In fact, it is a 501(c)(8). I regret the error. Also, the Politico story I linked to contained the claim that the Knights were going to help the Trump Campaign. The Knights responded immediately to that claim saying it does not engage in political activity.

[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.*

Advertisement