Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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At The Washington Post, a look at the debate between the libertarian pro-business crowd urging the president to reopen the economy and ethicists who rather easily point out how ridiculous the position is. Unsurprisingly, the smartest quote comes from Boston College's Cathleen Kaveny: "We're talking about a planned moment of rest. We're not talking about an uncontrolled crash," she said. "The economy is important because it allows people to flourish. It isn't a demigod we sacrifice human beings to."

At The New York Times, Nicholas Kristof and Stuart A. Thompson look at what happens if we were to follow the president's hope and reopen the country prematurely. It is not a pretty picture.

Want to know how economic stimulus sausage is made? What would we do without Politico? This report by John Bresnahan, Marianne Levin and Andrew Desiderio provides an extraordinarily detailed look at how the stimulus package that passed the Senate in the early hours of Thursday morning came to be. Just excellent reporting.

From our friends at The Catholic Labor Network, a look at Georgetown University's decision to work with its food service contractors to make sure the employees being laid off because of the school's closing are paid through the end of the semester, as they would have been if the university had not closed due to the virus. I am sure there was no legal responsibility on the university's part, only an ethical one, but hats off to President John DeGioia for taking this action.

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Okay, I admit it. I wish I had given up "what the coronavirus means to me" articles for Lent. But, we all need a little bit of a shot in the arm in this mess and I smiled at this article on the front page of the Chicago Tribune, about police helping Mission of Our Lady of the Angels parish, their pastor Fr. Bob Lombardo and the religious sisters keep their food pantry operating.

At Catholic Moral Theology, Villanova University's Gerald J. Beyer looks at the issue of solidarity in a time of social distancing. This concept, so central to Catholic social teaching, only emerges as a dominant strain in American political thought during times of crisis and even then, more as a Madisonian budgetary Christmas tree than as something oriented to the common good. We Americans have been trying to wiggle self-interest into a civic virtue for more than 200 years: It will never become mutual generosity.

We will take our good news where we can find it: The International Monetary Fund has announced a debt relief program for Somalia that will reduce that country's sovereign debt from over $5 billion to $557 million. Deeply involved in securing this victory were the good people at JubileeUSA, which also released a letter to IMF officials calling for aid in this time of crisis to the poorest of the poor. I wonder if the "most pro-life president" in our history is staying up at night worrying about the people for whom JubileeUSA cares?

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

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