Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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April 16, 2020
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It gives me enormous pleasure to point to a thoughtful, morally articulate article about the Catholic response to the pandemic that is splendid. At Millennial, Robert Christian points to the ways the crisis is exposing the limits of libertarianism and the throwaway culture it generates. He is hopeful without being naive and his indictment is severe. "Perhaps more Americans will come to realize that no person is an island. Everything we accomplish in life is dependent on others. And our actions — for better or worse — inevitably affect others," Christian writes. "As we sacrifice our freedom of action to 'flatten the curve,' we might come to see that sacrifices we make for the common good can save lives and protect human dignity. We might recognize that real freedom requires responsibility — that it is more than license."

File this in the file marked "Is the Reichstag on fire yet?" The U.S. Treasury Department announced it was delaying the issuance of stimulus checks so that, for the first time in history, they will have President Donald Trump's name on them. The tactic might backfire. The man built his empire on the backs of companies he drove into bankruptcy. Does a check with his name convey confidence?

Richard Cordray, at The Washington Post, worries that the economy will not simply bounce back once it reopens. All three main reasons he cites are telling, but especially the third: "the wrenching experience of the covid-19 pandemic is likely to change many consumers' behavior." People will be more cautious, less willing to take on debt or spend on extravagances and much less likely to travel. And this presumes we have enough of a handle on the virus that we can begin reopening the economy! I said to someone the other night, if there is second wave, or people are not building up immunity in six months' time, go to the liquor store, purchase all the Caymus cabernet you can and charge it!

At La Croix, Massimo Faggioli has a two-parter, here and here in which he asks if the Francis pontificate has lost its reformist steam. I will plan a response after I have read these again a couple of times.

In The New York Times, Steve Phillips makes the case for Biden to select Stacey Abrams of Georgia by comparing polling data in her failed gubernatorial race in 2018 to data in other races such as Gov. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan and Sen. Kamala Harris of California. He fails to note the way the data is affected by the nature of the contest, that is, whom these outstanding women ran against and in what year. More importantly, the undoubtedly talented Abrams has never held a position higher than minority leader of the Georgia House of Representatives. For the 77-year-old Biden to pick someone with so little experience would be criminal. Veep choices almost never help, but they can hurt, and choosing Abrams would hurt.

On Tuesday, I called attention to Michael Sandel's instructive indictment of meritocracy myths, and also in The New York Times, Thomas B. Edsall looks at some of the political consequences of elite attitudes and the resentment they engender. "The notion that Trump's provocative attitude will bring him down on Nov. 3 does not, however, take into account the resilience of his base and the animosity to elite liberalism that Trump has feasted on," Edsall rightly warns. I will repeat my core warning: if the Democrats organize their campaign around late-term abortion and transgender bathrooms, they will lose again.

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

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