Opinion



by Michael Sean Winters

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At The New Yorker, Masha Gessen recognizes the similarities between our own time and the onset of fascism in the 1920s and '30s. Hint: By the time most people ask if we are on the road to autocracy, we are already so far down the road, it might be too late to turn back.

The best way to defeat attempts at autocracy is to cultivate vibrant liberal democratic alternatives. Some of this is about ideas and values, but some of it is also about tactical ability. In The New York Times, Christine Neumann-Ortiz outlines the Republican Party's worst nightmare: an effective get-out-the-vote effort that brings Latinos to the polls. Neumann-Ortiz has a dog in the fight: eHr organization, Voces de la Frontera Action, engages in the kind of organizing that has demonstrated success in increasing voter turnout. In this case, that bias is attractive not disqualifying.

Rep. Liz Cheney did not fall far from the tree. Her belief in American exceptionalism is, like her dad's, capable of the kind of hubris that, say, results in a disastrous war in Iraq or, in this case, a failed response to the coronavirus. "We are the greatest nation that has ever existed — and great nations are not paralyzed by sickness," she affirms. Which sickness does she mean? Coronavirus or Trumpism?

In The Washington Post, E.J. Dionne Jr. highlights three recovery ideas that share particular quality, even while addressing different problems: They all marginalize the role played by the president. This could be to post-pandemic policy what secret sauce is to the Big Mac.

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Join the Catholic Labor Network today for a livestreamed memorial Mass for fallen workers at 3 p.m. EDT. All of us need to be grateful for those frontline workers who keep our hospitals going and our food supply flowing, men and women who are exposing themselves daily in order to keep the rest of us safe and fed. The celebrant for the Mass with be Fr. Sinclair Oubre and the homilist with be Fr. Clete Kiley. Register here.

Friday is May 1, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. At the Working Class Perspectives blog, Wade Rathke looks at how the pandemic has highlighted the essential nature of some work and the fragility of other kinds to economic downturns. This will be one May Day unlike any other. I encourage the church's bishops to think long and hard about how they can rekindle the bonds that once united the church and the working classes in this country of ours.

President Donald Trump has labeled reports he intends to fire Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar "fake news." I do not doubt that the president will be looking for a domestic scapegoat to blame for the administration's mishandling of the response to the coronavirus. But recruiting an HHS secretary in the middle of a pandemic might be difficult. One outside candidate? Randy Rainbow.

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

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