Opinion



by Michael Sean Winters

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"In the interest of justice." Every once in a while, a judge has to invoke this bedrock justification for overruling a result achieved through the normal channels of jurisprudence. A jury's verdict might need to be set aside if it was unduly influenced by emotion and rendered in defiance of the judge's instructions. A plea deal might be rejected because the circumstances under which is it was negotiated produced an unacceptable, yet unavoidable, result. In the nature of the thing, such judicial interventions are very, very rare. Blessings, then, on U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan who said "not so fast" to the Justice Department's request that charges against Michael Flynn be dropped. Remember, Flynn already pled guilty and Sullivan is no partisan hack, having been appointed to successive posts by three presidents: Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

It is always an honor to be attacked by Bill Donohue, the blowhard director of the Catholic League. And, it was especially an honor to be lumped with Michael O'Loughlin of America magazine, one of the truly outstanding Catholic journalists of our time. Donohue was upset without criticism of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan because of his obsequiousness toward President Donald Trump. New readers may not know that Donohue has been on NCR's radar screen for a very long time. Here is Joe Feuerherd's 2010 exposé of Donohue's excessive salary and limited gifts. And

here is John Allen's 1997 profile of the Catholic League and its director.

The Vatican announced that Pope Francis will say Mass at the tomb of St. Pope John Paul II on May 18, the 100th anniversary of the Polish pontiff's birth. I wonder if that might be a good day to also release the McCarrick report?

At Politico, a report that many on Team Biden are leaning toward selecting Sen. Kamala Harris of California as Joe Biden's running mate. Evidently, the winning argument is that with Harris on board, they could keep Steve Mnuchin as treasury secretary. That is a joke. Sort of. Harris is not known for her willingness to stand up to Wall Street or Silicon Valley.

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments this week in two cases involving the ministerial exception to employment law, that is, cases in which a former employee is suing a religious employer in civil court on grounds that would readily be available to anyone who works at a non-religious employer. In this article at Vox, Ian Millhiser demonstrates the limits of the modern, liberal imagination as he sorts through the issues.

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At the Catholic Herald, Christopher Altieri examines questions surrounding the resignation of Cincinnati Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Binzer. The central question of fact is whether or not Binzer's resignation was prompted by an investigation conducted under the terms of *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*. The larger question has to do with transparency and the need for the Vatican to give a reason why a resignation is accepted, especially when a bishop is 10 years younger than the mandatory retirement age.

From The Catholic Labor Network, the text of the homily preached by Fr. Clete Kiley at the network's Mass for the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. Kiley is a priest of the Chicago Archdiocese who is also the director of immigration policy for UniteHere, the union that represents culinary and hotel workers. Few industries have been hit harder by the economic consequences of the coronavirus and Kiley calls those and all workers to courage in the face of this horrible pandemic and the need to build a more just economy out of this tragedy.

John McWhorter is never one to shy away from an intellectual fight and I was delighted to see him take on — and take down — the 1619 project of the New York Times and its central conceit, that all historical figures must be viewed first and foremost through the lens of early 21st century, liberal (and academic liberal, not standard fare liberal) attitudes on the subject of race. As Christians, of course we are called to identify ourselves with those who have been marginalized and recognize the viciousness and perdurance of slavery and racism, but peddling distortions of history does not benefit the marginalized. It benefits university professors who have built a career peddling this nonsense. Here is the money quote:

> A smart 10-year-old could see through the willful cluelessness on which this supposedly enlightened conception of social history is based. … The illogic here is plain to anyone. Only a certain etiquette today makes enough non-blacks refrain from acknowledging that the types who promulgate tropes such as the 1619 Project are able to do so with so little self-questioning and such impatience with critique. This is a way of looking at the past familiar from Marxist ideology, training adherents Zen-style to carefully stanch reasonable disbelief in favor of slogans, to tamp down a desire to explore, discover and reason with a commitment to broad-stroked evangelism. If the 1619 Project has a defensible justification, this perspective on history is not one of them.

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

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