Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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Tomorrow, at 1:30* p.m. ET, I will be joining the Rev. Mariama White-Hammond of New Roots AME Church in Boston and Dave McGlinchey, chief of external affairs at the Woods Hole Research Center, for a webinar sponsored by Woods Hole Research Center at which we will discuss the role of religious communities in the struggle to ameliorate climate change. Everything they do at the center is first rate, and I remember the first time I heard Rev. Mariama: I turned to the person sitting next to me and said, "I would follow that woman into battle." You do need to register here.

There have been some extraordinary statements from Catholic leaders over the weekend regarding the killing of George Floyd. From Boston, Cardinal Sean O'Malley reminded us that the use of force must always be exercised morally, or else the rule of law is itself undermined, and that this killing, reflective of so many others, is experienced differently by the African American community more than any other. The Hope Border Institute in El Paso, Texas, had one of the most powerful statements, beginning with the reminder that God's love is universal but not neutral: He sides with the oppressed, not the oppressor. And, in Chicago, Cardinal Blase Cupich delivered the most personal statement of any I have seen from a church

leader and followed it up with an article in his archdiocesan paper calling for a reconciliation effort akin to that in Germany after the Shoah and in Rwanda after the genocide.

In The New York Times, one of the most illustrative headlines of the Trump era: "As Protests and Violence Spill Over, Trump Shrinks Back." Isn't it always that way with a bully? Their loud mouths and pushing get the fight started, but as soon as the real fighting begins, they go hide in the bushes. Except the president has a constitutional obligation to lead the country in such fraught times. It is so pitiful.

You don't see this every day: In The Washington Post, Fred Hiatt, who is nobody's liberal, calls on Republican leaders to stand up to President Donald Trump in a searing editorial. Everything on Hiatt's list of particulars has been said before, but not by him.

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If you share my concerns about Attorney General William Barr, voiced in my column yesterday, you are going to love the deep dive at The New York Times Magazine, by Mattathias Schwartz. What comes through is Barr's intelligence and his moral squishiness, on display throughout the article and summed up in this observation of Schwartz about one of Barr's answers: "He had found the right hair to split, and he split it so cleanly and decisively that I couldn't say this wasn't his position from the beginning." Machiavelli-Me! Make Barr an Argentine rose!

At Business Insider, Michael Gordon predicts the Democrats will retake the U.S. Senate, and do so in a landslide. I think his prognosis is too early: There is simply too much about how the virus plays out that we do not yet know. But such a prediction would have been laughable at the beginning of the year and it is not laughable now, merely premature.

At Politico Magazine, Michael Grunwald explains the political opposition to giving direct aid to states and municipalities, most of it having to do with red state vs. blue state distinctions inappropriate during a pandemic. The economic reality is that such aid works. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell will be forced to concede on this point. The only question is when and if it will be so late that voters will not only blame the Republicans for their slow response to the virus in the beginning, but also

for their tardiness in helping to mend the economic fallout.

[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.*

**This article has been updated to correct the time of the webinar.*