Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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At the Supreme Court website, Justice Neil Gorsuch was wrong in his dissent from the decision to deny injunctive relief from a Nevada church, which argued it should be permitted to exceed the governor's mandated limit of 50 parishioners at any one service on religious liberty grounds. Gorsuch compared an apple and an orange: Nevada also limits the number of moviegoers in any one theater and concertgoers in a concert venue to 50. But his one-sentence dissent was brilliant in its concision. It took Justice Samuel Alito 11 pages to make the same argument. Still, the majority was right: the courts have no place second-guessing public health decisions at a time like this.

From the Gallup polling organization, Frank Newport looks at Joe Biden and "the Catholic vote." He makes some interesting points along the way but his central conclusion is wrong: "All in all, it appears unlikely that Biden's Catholic religion will be a significant factor in the election — in either direction." Biden's Catholic faith is such a foundational part of his personality, it is there at all times, even if polling does not recognize it as Catholic.

From The Washington Post, a group of Christian advocates, professors and pastors urge the Democratic Party not to embrace the abortion extremism being peddled by

Planned Parenthood, NARAL, et al. Democrats think they have a chance to flip Texas and the key is Latino voters. If you want to turn them off, "shout out" your abortion.

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Relatedly, and also in The Washington Post, E.J. Dionne echoes a point I made here at Distinctly Catholic: Democrats should not be finicky about welcoming Republican support in the effort to defeat President Donald Trump. It is a time for clean slates. Big tents win elections.

OK, OK: You can read this article by Nate Cohn at The New York Times, but then you have to take a cold shower and not discuss it with anyone lest we all jinx the prospect. Cohn looks at how some changing attitudes among key demographic groups could lead to a Democratic Party tsunami this November. Mind you, a fully empowered party is dangerous, too, but if that is what it takes to stamp out Trumpism once and for all, it is worth the risk.

From Rome Reports, the finalists have been announced for prizes in sacred architecture. Most of the finalists are a bit too cool for my tastes, but it is important to remember that a church only becomes a church with time and prayer, as each generation adds its personal touches to an edifice. There was a time when the great cathedrals of Europe were spanking new and not yet full of character. And, many of these new churches are, like the great cathedrals of yesteryear, beautiful.

At ESPN, a look at the contagious oenophilia among some basketball stars, including LeBron James, Dwayne Wade and Carmelo Anthony. If I had more money than God, good wine would be one of the few luxuries I would permit myself to indulge. Nice to know I am in such illustrious company.

At Vox, Zack Beauchamp looks at the recent arguments over free speech, liberalism and so-called "cancel culture." He writes:

> What's happening now seems novel because we are currently seeing a wave of social justice activism that seeks to redefine how we understand appropriate debate over these topics, sometimes even pushing to consign to the margins views that may have seemed tolerable in the past. These advocates can and have overreached, and should be criticized when they

> do. But on the whole, their work is aimed not at restricting freedom but at expanding it — making historically marginalized voices feel comfortable enough in the public square to be their authentic selves, to exist honestly and speak their own truths.

How does pushing Andrew Sullivan out at New York Magazine expand freedom? Beauchamp is too generous with the heretic hunters, but his article is worth a read.

At The Norwich Bulletin, Richard Curland looks at the history of a small Connecticut town called Lebanon. I drive through that town to get to the kennel where my dog Damiana goes for boarding or doggie daycare, and while it really does contain a remarkable amount of history, it is sufficiently off the beaten path that you are likely to be the only person at the War Office or Trumbull house on the day of your visit.

[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.*