Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

View Author Profile

Follow on Twitter at @michaelswinters

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

September 1, 2020
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Next week, the Catholic Labor Network will host the first-ever virtual Labor Day Mass . Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky, will be the celebrant and a host of Catholic labor leaders, including AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka, will be participating. Be sure to register by clicking here.

At EWTN's "The World Over," Raymond Arroyo interviewed Sr. Deirdre Byrne, member of the Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts, who gave a speech, not a prayer, at the Republican National Convention. She tells Arroyo — without contradiction — that she was simply stating the facts, although it is factually wrong to say that either Joe Biden or Kamala Harris support infanticide. She defends her claim that Trump is the most pro-life president ever by citing Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, and Cardinal Raymond Burke. As I have said before, the danger with Arroyo is that he mainstreams extremism.

In The Guardian, Michael Moore warns that enthusiasm for Donald Trump is "off the charts" and that there is not such enthusiasm for Joe Biden. Judging by the lawn signs and flags in my neck of the woods, Moore is right.

Relatedly, at The Atlantic, George Packer explains how Joe Biden can lose the election. Spoiler alert: He has to get to Kenosha, Wisconsin, and denounce the looting and the violence as strongly as he condemned the shooting of Jacob Blake. If his speechwriters need help, Blake's mother said what the nation needs to hear from someone seeking the presidency. If she can say it, Biden can say it. Biden can quote her. And when the extremists attack him on Twitter, he needs to ignore them.

From the file marked "Be careful what you wish for," the LA Times reports that Bishop Kevin Vann has fired the board of the Orange Catholic Foundation, which was set up to be independent of the diocese and therefore to shield assets from lawsuits. The news report makes it sound like there is more to this story than meets the eye, but it shows that when you increase lay involvement, that involvement will be disproportionately in the hands of rich people, just as rich people have more power in our democracy. I am all for responsible stewardship and the days when bishops rule as autocrats should be banished, but lay influence is not an uncheckered good.

Advertisement

In The Washington Post, a look at the politics of race, especially some of the wackier threads that broke through into the mainstream when the Republican National Convention featured many Black supporters of Trump. To be sure, the convention's heavy focus on Black supporters of the president was aimed not so much at a Black audience as at white, moderate suburbanites who worry about the president's racism, and the organizers kept the more extreme ideas away from the microphones. My worry with identity politics has always been that it will end up, as detailed in The Washington Post article, with people thinking it is fine to attack someone like Harris because she married a white man. That is ugly and it is disturbing, but it is not entirely surprising.

From The New York Times, the U.K. is bringing back a proposal made by former Prime Minister Theresa May that would require companies to report on pay scale disparities by race and ethnicity the way they are already required to do by gender. This is the kind of concrete step that actually helps a society to recognize the structural racism that exists within it, by shining a light on information most people would otherwise never see, and probably not want to see.

NPR is not immune to clickbait: Why else give a platform to Vicky Osterweil, who has published a new book in which she defends looting. She says in the interview: "One thing about looting is it freaks people out. But in terms of potential crimes that people can commit against the state, it's basically nonviolent. You're mass shoplifting. Most stores are insured; it's just hurting insurance companies on some level. It's just money. It's just property. It's not actually hurting any people." Hmmm. Don't real people work at those stores? Don't real people shop at those stores? Is Osterweil a Trump-Pence plant?

[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.*