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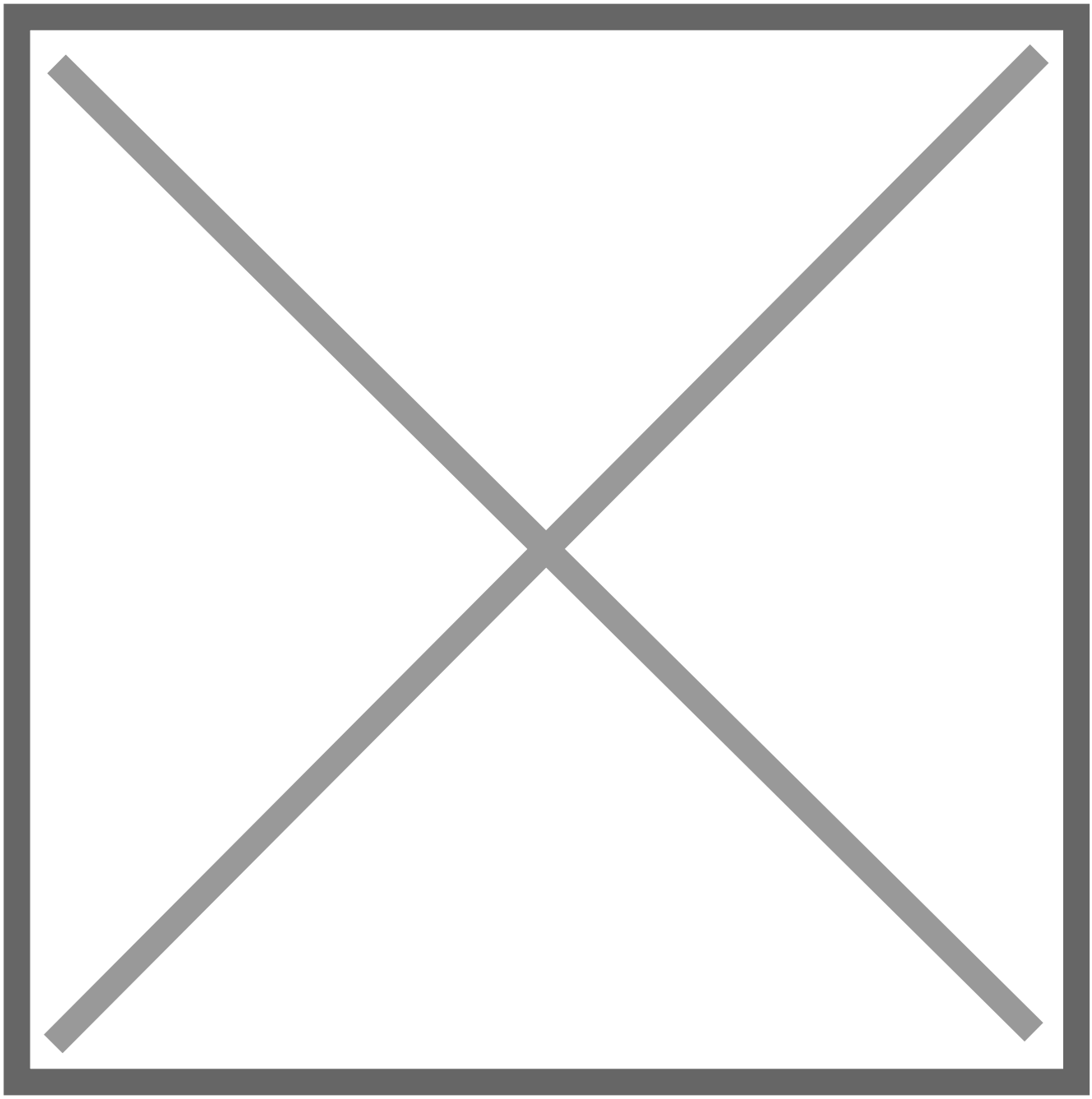

People line up as President Donald Trump arrives for a visit to Kenosha, Wisconsin, Sept. 1 after the shooting of Jacob Blake by a police officer sparked protests that led to the death of two other people by an armed 17-year-old from Illinois. (CNS photo/Leah Millis)



by Michael Sean Winters

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If you want to see what structural racism looks like, here it is: Black, Latino and Native Americans are more likely to get COVID-19, and more likely to die from it, yet they are underrepresented in the clinical trials for a vaccine. In The Washington Post, California Congresswoman Karen Bass, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, calls for change. Let's hope she gets it because this is morally appalling.

If you want to see what non-structural, volitional racism looks like, Politico details how some President Donald Trump supporters are defending Kyle Rittenhouse, the 17-year-old who shot three protesters in Kenosha, Wisconsin, two of them fatally. "He's a hero. He stuck up for the population, for property owners," one of them said of Rittenhouse. "He didn't come up here just to shoot people. He came up here to defend himself." That is racism, pure and simple, and it is shocking that more Republicans do not denounce it.

At America magazine, Joseph Dunn makes the case against higher taxes and strangely tries to invoke Pope Francis in making his argument. You would not know it from Dunn's article, but income inequality has grown exponentially since the election of Ronald Reagan and the adoption of his laissez-faire policies. The U.S. is long overdue for increased taxes on the wealthy, and especially on financiers who do not actually produce anything — they just manage large wads of money. You also would not know from this article that laissez-faire economics are the antithesis of

Catholic social teaching on the economy.

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A dynasty has ended. Tuesday, voters in the great Commonwealth of Massachusetts handed a Kennedy an election defeat for the first time. Congressman Joe Kennedy III fell short in his bid to grab the Democratic Senate nomination from incumbent Sen. Ed Markey. I like Kennedy, but there was no good reason to challenge Markey. Besides, dynasties are not good for democracies: On principle, we should not vote for people named Kennedy, Clinton, Bush or Trump.

Of all political movements, fascism is one of the hardest to define, mostly because its emphasis on nationalism means it will appear very different in different countries. As well, there is no canon of texts that ground its ambitions, no Marxist reading lists or Lockean essays defining the movement. But, in a remarkable examination of Vladimir Putin's intense hatred of Alexei Navalny, there is a paragraph that captures some of fascism's essence:

> "They really hate Navalny," Mr. Belousov said, because "what he has done is completely out of their control. The Kremlin fights against any force that it cannot control, any opinion that it does not control. This is their guiding strategy."

Navalny is comatose in a Berlin hospital after an attempt to poison him. We in the States should not be so quick to impugn our democracy or accept the spurning of its norms: Fascism could happen here.

[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.*