Opinion
News
Balloons that say "United States Census 2020" (CNS/Reuters/Brian Snyder)

The U.S. Supreme Court Nov. 30 heard oral arguments in a case brought by the Trump administration to exclude from the census those in the U.S. without legal documentation. (CNS/Reuters/Brian Snyder)



by Michael Sean Winters

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How vicious is President Donald Trump? According to a report in Politico, his administration is preparing some last-minute policy changes aimed at making life harder for immigrants. This move confirms the continued influence of Stephen Miller, who is one of the most xenophobic aides in this — or any — White House. Miller is descended from Russian Jewish emigres who escaped Tsarist Russia before the pogroms of the early 20th century, which makes his animus even more difficult to fathom.

At SCOTUSblog, a host of articles on yesterday's oral arguments in the case *Trump* v. *New York*, which focuses on whether or not the census should include undocumented persons in its count. As a nation, we have always done so, but Trump has proposed not counting them, a proposal that would have dire consequences in

the allocation of government aid, among other nasty consequences. I admit that the issue of congressional apportionment is more complicated as a matter of law, but the consequences of ruling for the administration will be unfortunate there as well. Trump has managed a lot of misery in four years.

In The Washington Post, attorney Kevin Baine looks at some of the recent history of First Amendment jurisprudence and religious liberty. He asks if religious liberty is a liberal or a conservative value, given the change in perspective on the court where conservatives now defend religious liberty and liberals are the ones challenging it. Baine embraces the classic liberal position: Religious liberty is a negative freedom, a freedom *from* government interference. Problem is that too many conservatives have bought into this liberal ideal and put it on steroids, and too many liberals care more about other outcomes than they do with preserving essential freedoms.

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Also in the Post, Democratic Congresswoman Debbie Mucarsel-Powell looks at how Trump improved his vote share among Florida's Latino population. Mucarsel-Powell lost her bid for reelection in Florida's 26th Congressional District, a district that is 68% Latino. She won by two points in 2018 and lost by three points this time, while Trump improved his vote share by a stunning 22 points. Those are vote totals, hard data, not exit polls. She is right to note the limits of racial identity as a unifying election theme, and that most Latinos are working-class people who were as frightened by the loss of work caused by lockdowns as they were by the coronavirus. An issue that gets too little attention: an aggressive misinformation campaign targeting Latino voters.

You know the old joke: What is the difference between a liturgist and a terrorist? At America magazine, Jesuit Fr. Anthony Lusvardi argues that we should discontinue videotaped liturgies because they are so far short of the real thing. I am sympathetic, of course. Mass should recognize that this is the most real thing we do; it is why the rubrics demand real candles and vestments of non-synthetic materials. It is why I resent electronic organs. But during a pandemic, better to watch it on TV than not to have Mass at all for those who cannot attend. It is all well and good to talk about "thirsting for the Lord," as the psalmist did and Lusvardi repeats, and how denying ourselves the Eucharist might embody that thirst, but for the elderly who might not make it to a post-pandemic liturgy, that is small comfort. The punchline to

the joke? You can negotiate with a terrorist.

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.