Opinion
News



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In The Washington Post, Yasmeen Abutaleb, Laurie McGinley and Carolyn Johnson report on the people in the so-called deep state whose comprehensive knowledge, gained over many years of toiling in the bureaucracy, allowed President Donald Trump to realize his goal of a vaccine before the end of the year. Pope Francis reminded us in *Fratelli Tutti* about the virtue of solidarity. This article reminds us of the fact that bureaucracy is where solidarity meets expertise and, thence, gives concrete expression to the common good.

Also from the Post, after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell finally acknowledged Joe Biden as president-elect, Trump took to Twitter to voice his displeasure, beginning with a statement of fact that happens to be of no consequence: "Mitch, 75,000,000 VOTES, a record for an incumbent president (by a lot). Too soon to give up!" In an election, raw numbers are only significant in relation to other raw numbers. The fact that Trump got more votes than any incumbent is true but irrelevant.

From Intelligence Squared U.S. Debates, Michael Eric Dyson debates John McWhorter on the subject of whether or not identity politics are a way to win. It is not surprising

that McWhorter wins easily because Dyson always sounds like a caricature of a woke professor, drowning in academic jargon, while McWhorter displays a careful and nuanced framing of the issue.

From Slate, a report on a bipartisan deal to end "surprise billing" in health care, and whether or not McConnell will allow the bill to come to the floor for a vote. The deal sounds like the kind of standard compromise that would regularly become law just a few years ago but that is now subject to the majority leader's political needs. It is time for the Senate to take away some of the power it vests in the majority leader and balance it by empowering committee chairs.

I mentioned last week that Archbishop Charles Chaput is having a divisive effect on the life of the church by wading into the issue of denying Communion to prominent Catholic politicians who differ from the church on core teachings, and criticizing the stance taken by the archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Wilton Gregory. Of course, by "core teachings," Chaput means abortion and same-sex marriage. In 2004, the U.S. bishops overwhelmingly voted not to adopt a nationwide policy on the Communion issue, correctly recognizing that such disciplinary measures are up to the local pastor, in this case, Gregory. Now San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone has come out with a statement supporting Chaput. Cordileone is not the archbishop of Washington either, so his statement is of no real consequence. Why then did he make it? Might he want to take up the mantle of Chaput as leading culture warrior of the U.S. church?

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In the file marked "good for the country but bad for the viewing public," CNN reports that President-elect Joe Biden is set to nominate former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm as secretary of energy. That means she will not be doing political commentary on CNN, where she was one of the panelists who best combined the need to be serious with the advantages of being funny.

I love it when The New York Times starts catching up with NCR. In its op-ed pages, Professors Susan Hyde and Elizabeth Saunders, of UC Berkeley and Georgetown respectively, examine the damage Donald Trump has done to democracy, and whether or not the damage will be terminal. "His bizarre legal strategy has failed, but he has turned the base of the Republican Party and many congressional

Republicans against valuing democracy for its own sake," they correctly note. They raise many fine points, but Robert Christian's essay here at NCR explaining what we can do to help repair democracy was far better, offering concrete steps we can all take to strengthen democracy.

And you thought all the conservative Catholic crazies were at the "Jericho March" last weekend? Alas, the craziest of them all, Cardinal Raymond Burke, was at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Wisconsin where he delivered a sermon that is so untethered from reality, it is difficult to know exactly what he is talking about. He began:

> We come to Our Lady of Guadalupe on her feast day with troubled and heavy hearts. Our nation is going through a crisis which threatens its very future as free and democratic. The worldwide spread of Marxist materialism, which has already brought destruction and death to the lives of so many, and which has threatened the foundations of our nation for decades, now seems to seize the governing power over our nation.

Joe Biden, a "Marxist materialist"? That would be news to socialist Sen. Bernie Sanders — and to all sane people. Burke's comments about the church were even more alarming: "The confusion regarding what the Church truly teaches and demands of us in accord with her teaching generates ever greater divisions within the body of Christ. All of this cripples the Church in her mission of witness to divine truth and divine love at a time when the world has never needed more the Church to be a beacon." Perhaps Burke was a tad too schismatic for the "Jericho March"?