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A reflecting pool is seen near the U.S. Capitol Jan. 9 in Washington. (CNS/Tyler Orsburn)

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At the National Catholic Register, Princeton Professor Robert George demonstrates moral relativism in the worst way. He admits, "People who are characterizing this as an attack on our constitutional system are not wrong. It was directed precisely at disrupting a constitutional process." So far, so good. But then he adds, "More of the context is that we have seen violence and lawlessness and people taking the law into their own hands, for months now literally, in cities like Seattle and Portland and Kenosha, and even in Washington, D.C. We can't say that this sin against the law that was committed by a mob yesterday is unique." I make no excuse for any violence, but the protests last summer followed the murder of George Floyd and others, which really happened, and the protests last week were premised on the lie that the election had been stolen. And, there is a difference between throwing a rock at a police station in the middle of the night and storming the U.S. Capitol to disrupt one of its most solemn constitutional obligations. Fr. Robert Sirico appeared on

EWTN's "The World Over" with Raymond Arroyo last week and made the same comparison. It doesn't pass the most rudimentary moral smell test.

Arroyo also appeared on Laura Ingraham's Fox News show on Friday night. In one of the most extraordinary examples of what psychologist's call projection, Arroyo complained that the mainstream media was not asking tough questions of Democratic office holders like newly elected Sen. Raphael Warnock and President-elect Joe Biden. This from the man whose interview of President Donald Trump last year deserved an Emmy in the category "bootlicking sycophancy."

Amidst all the commentary on last week's assault on our democracy, much of it fine, one article really stands out, Caitlin Flanagan's "Worst Revolution Ever" at The Atlantic. The money quote:

> *This week the reign of Donald Trump reached its natural culmination, the activation of an army of white thugs who could be motivated by the oldest trick in the nationalist playbook: the promise that they operated in service of some grand idea — to be explained at a later date — and that it was going to take some head-cracking and bloodletting to be born.*

Every day we get more videos, and see that the attack was more brutal, more obscene, than we had thought before. It is hard to imagine anyone will better capture its grotesqueness than this fine bit of writing.

With Pope Francis' change in liturgical law, explicitly permitting women and girls to serve as acolytes and lectors, and to be installed in such ministries as prescribed in the bishops' Pontifical, we can all set our clocks: How long will it take for conservative venues like EWTN to change what they have on the subject at their website? I am guessing they don't get around to it for some time.

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At Commonweal, Matt Sitman has a wonderful reflection on his first visit to Rome during Yuletide last year, and how the intervening year has changed some of his perceptions. A beautiful spiritual reflection indeed:

> *Most of all, I remember the warmth of Rome's churches, the feeling of stepping in from the cold and seeing a candle flickering against stone. Maybe this is because I was raised in Baptist churches, with their bare white walls, carpeted floors, and empty crosses—places built on the belief that God could never be found in, or through, things. But it was just that possibility that made me Catholic.*

Splendid.

Holy Cross Fr. John Jenkins, University of Notre Dame president, issued a powerful statement calling on President Trump to halt the planned executions in the next few days, most notably that of Lisa Montgomery, a woman whose mental instability after years of physical and sexual abuse should especially warrant mercy. Pro-lifers call Trump "the most pro-life president in history" but he is going out with more blood on his despicable hands.

At the Tablet, Christopher Lamb reports that Bishop Donald Hying of Madison, Wisconsin, denied that he ever authorized an exorcism relating to partisan political activity by Fr. John Zuhlsdorf. Lamb also spoke to Bishop Vincenzo Apicella of the Diocese of Velltri-Segni, for which Zuhlsdorf was ordained by Pope John Paul II. Apicella said that Zuhlsdorf never served a day in the diocese, that Hying is responsible for him now, and that he had never read Zuhlsdorf's blog. Lamb quotes the Italian bishop:

> "*We certainly cannot verify and evaluate from Velletri what is said, written and published in Wisconsin, apart from the fact that, personally, I have never used or contacted any blog or such thing and I have no intention of starting now, given that unfortunately, I belong to a non-digital generation.*"
>
> *But he added: "On the other hand, one who combines arguments of faith and morals with photos of birds, Chinese food and aircraft seats, as well as boasting about a firearms license, speaks for itself and I do not see what theological or scientific credibility he can have.*"

Ouch. Hying needs to really rein Zuhlsdorf in because his pernicious reach extends far beyond the boundaries of the diocese.