Opinion

News



The Book of the Gospels in Latin is seen in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Jan. 6. (CNS/Paul Haring)



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At Commonweal, Cathleen Kaveny has penned by far the best tribute to the late Latinist Reginald Foster, who died on Christmas Day. She captures one of the principal challenges we English speakers face when we do theology: the temptation, derived from our language, to think time is exclusively linear because of the necessity of word order in our grammar. Conversely, as Kaveny explains, "The rigor of Latin's system of inflection creates a certain liberty of word placement without sacrificing clarity of meaning. That frees up new possibilities for beauty in both poetry and prose. In Latin, as in Christian anthropology, law serves freedom, not the other way around." And this: "If an English sentence is more like an arrow moving relentlessly through space, a Latin sentence is more like a set of nesting Russian dolls or a chiastic pattern of A B C D D' C' B' A'. Reggie taught us to start translating in the middle and move to the edges. Nothing is left behind. Everything is gathered in and recapitulated, just like in salvation history. God wills to save us all together, not only the last bitter remnant of us." Such a splendid tribute from one scholar to another.

A reminder to President Joe Biden and congressional Democrats: This article in the New London Day reports on a food distribution effort in my area of eastern Connecticut, but there are similar stories nationwide, people who had never thought of seeking charitable assistance, lining up for free food. There have always been food pantries in our rural part of the state, but nothing like this. So, when someone who has never before needed this kind of help returns home to read that the 10 richest people in the world made enough money since the pandemic started to pay for everyone on the planet to be vaccinated, you know that you had better deliver on your promise to build back a more just economy, or you risk a return to Trumpism.

Relatedly, at the Working-Class Perspectives blog from the Kalmanovitz Center at Georgetown, Jack Metzgar reminds us to speak about economic hardship in inclusive ways that will unite those who have been disadvantaged by 40 years of neoliberal economic policies. His arguments should be must-reads at the White House, Democratic National Committee and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. His conclusion:

> We do not have to choose between racial justice and class justice. Racial justice can be achieved within a determined push for economic justice. And truth be told, racial justice can probably only be achieved within a political economic context that mobilizes the huge numbers of white folks who will benefit from economic redistributions that will disproportionately benefit people of color.

It is so, so important that Democrats learn to speak about the need to address racial disparities without making it sound like they are indifferent to the fact that there are millions of poor white people whose lives evidence great suffering, too. We need solidarity across racial lines to win economic battles and prevent a resurgence of Trumpism.

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The problem with becoming a lapdog is that it is hard to shake the habits one has acquired. Congressional Republicans, having toyed with the idea of ridding themselves, their party and the country of Donald Trump are all falling back into line, according to this article at Politico:

> "There are 74 million people who voted for him," said Charlie Gerow, a Pennsylvania-based Republican strategist. "You're not going to get a mass exodus … At the grassroots level, he's very, very popular, and I think the party as a whole understands that in order to be a majority party, it's going to have to include those Trump enthusiasts."

To be clear, if holding on to your base means believing the big lie about election fraud and turning a blind eye to the attack on the Capitol building on Jan. 6, our democracy is still in jeopardy.

At The Washington Post, Jefferson Morley writes about the Mount Pleasant neighborhood in Washington, D.C., and the successful efforts of the residents to resist the gentrification that has altered so many other D.C. neighborhoods. Combatting racism will take more than laws; it will take the kind of community sensibilities displayed in this piece.

On Monday, I was on "The Colin McEnroe Show" at WNPR to discuss the inauguration and the bishops' nasty attempt to rain on Biden's parade. Here is the link.

From Classicfm, composer Patricia Wallinga has transcribed Lady Gaga's mesmerizing performance of the national anthem at last week inauguration ceremony.

I thought I heard Gaga singing a triplet at the words "rocket's red" and "bursting in" but Wallinga thinks the time changed. Either way, it was a wonderful performance and this article gives us all reason to listen to it again!