Opinion

News



U.S. Army soldiers and contractors load a military vehicle for transport as U.S. forces prepare for withdrawal, in Kandahar, Afghanistan, July 13, 2020. (CNS/U.S. Army Sgt. Jeffery J. Harris handout vis Reuters)



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At Yahoo Finance, Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen explains how the infrastructure bills represent a renegotiation of the social contract in ways that will help the 90% of Americans who did not get filthy rich in the past couple of decades. Public goods have been underfunded for decades, from train stations to roads to child care and basic research. And for what? So Jeff Bezos can go into space?

From Vatican News, the Holy Father received the members and staff of the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life on the occasion of its anniversary. The dicastery is led by Irish-American Cardinal Kevin Farrell who, by all accounts, has been masterful at merging what were several distinct offices and pointing them in the direction indicated by Pope Francis. Congratulations to Farrell and to all his collaborators.

I was saddened to learn of the untimely death of Thomas Levergood, who founded and led the Lumen Christi Institute at the University of Chicago. Levergood was kind enough to host an event I helped engineer 20 years ago to discuss the publication of Leon Wieseltier's magnificent book *Kaddish*. Cardinal Francis George was one of the panelists, as was the late, great Jean Bethke Elshtain. More conservative than myself, Levergood was no ideologue, and he loved the church and its intellectual tradition with all his heart. He will be greatly missed.

At Newsweek, the GOP has scrubbed its website, removing a page that praised President Donald Trump for reaching a peace deal with the Taliban. Politics 101 teaches that when your opponent is on the hot seat, the best thing to do is to get out of the way, but there is no way you can divorce President Biden's decisions from Trump's. I still think scrubbing the website is shortsighted: The images of horror will soon pass from the nation's television sets, and most Americans were happy to see us depart Afghanistan.

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In The Washington Post, a couple in Texas leave four children orphaned after they both die from COVID-19. The mother said she thought she was strong enough to beat the virus *without* a vaccine. She wasn't. Gov. Greg Abbott, who has now tested positive himself, and others who spread misinformation about the vaccine, or downplayed its importance, should be required to pay for the education and care of these orphans.

At Religion News Service, Mark Silk makes the case that Zionists should support the Ben and Jerry's decision to stop selling ice cream in the occupied West Bank, as a way of signaling their disapproval of the occupation and support for a two-state solution. It is interesting that in Israel, there was more support for the decision than in the U.S. I dislike the idea of corporations throwing their weight around to make a political point: They will be more concerned about virtue-signaling to their American market than affecting the situation in the West Bank. Still, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the pro-settler policy of the last 20 years needs to be rolled back.

In The New York Times magazine, a group of architectural scholars selected the 25 most significant buildings built in the postwar era. Significance does not equal beauty, although most of the buildings chosen exhibited some kind of beauty. Le Corbusier's Couvent Sainte-Marie de la Tourette made the list, but I do not find it beautiful. The Centre Pompidou in Paris was very controversial when it was first built, but I have enjoyed the building both from the inside and the out. The same goes for Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome built to house the U.S. pavilion at Montreal's Expo 1967, which is now an environmental museum. I am not sure either was significant in the sense that they led architects to mimic them. The only other building on the list I have seen in person is the magnificent Seagram Building in New York City, a sleek example of modernism that is very beautiful.