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Medical staff and others walk through the hallway of Mutual Help Catholic Hospital in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 2017. (CNS/Bob Roller)



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At The Washington Post, health reporter Rachel Roubein looks at the complicated issue of Medicaid funding for U.S. territories like Puerto Rico. The Biden administration has issued a different interpretation of the law from that offered by President Donald Trump, with the consequence that the island will receive $2.9 billion rather than the $392 million it was slated to receive under the Trump approach. Given the high rate of poverty on the island, this is a hugely important victory for the health and welfare of the people of Puerto Rico.

At Politico Europe, a look at the German elections and, specifically, the good news that the populist right-wing Alternative for Germany party's share of the vote declined from 12.6% in 2017 to only 10.3% this year. It was outpolled by both the Greens and the Free Democrats, so it is now only the fifth largest party in the Bundestag. Alternative for Germany did manage to come in first in two regions of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Saxony and Thuringia, so it is unlikely to disappear. Its defeat at the national level, however, is very welcome indeed.

At Wired.com, David DeSteno, a social psychologist, explains that as a scientist he always assumed religion was built on "opinion, conjecture, and even hope, and therefore irrelevant to my work." But then he had an epiphany:

> I've realized that much of what psychologists and neuroscientists are finding about how to change people's beliefs, feelings, and behaviors — how to support them when they grieve, how to help them be more ethical, how to let them find connection and happiness — echoes ideas and techniques that religions have been using for thousands of years.

Imagine that! There was wisdom before the development of the scientific method! Who knew? More to the point, the differences between social psychology and faith remain large, and the two disciplines cannot be merged just because they yield similar outcomes. Faith is received, and received as true, no matter the

consequences. Reducing religion to its utility is the worst kind of betrayal of the Gospel.

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Relatedly, the editors at The New York Times decided to host a contest for a new design for our national flag. Bad idea — and if you doubt it, check out the entrants! In large part, because ours was a nation-state before it had been a nation — that is, it did not grow organically out of a particular group like the Franks or the Celts — we invest our symbols with more significance than do other countries and we have very few. I confess I have always thought the U.S. flag was, like most Americans, a bit too brash, but I know that any suggestion about changing it will become catnip for the folks at Fox News and the Trump presidential campaign.

So, it is not just the U.S. From the happily named public policy publication "Pearls and Irritations," Bill Uren catalogs the stance of three archbishops in Australia who seem more concerned with the libertarian rights of individuals to do as they wish than they do with the right to life or the common good, asking the government to allow the unvaccinated to worship indoors with the vaccinated. Where did these prelates get trained in moral theology? Or is the problem that they do not want to face the backlash from the anti-abortion zealots who think they own the Catholic church?

At Business Insider, a report on a Manhattan restaurant owner who decided to start paying all her staff $25 an hour. Yes, she had to raise prices to do so and there is a no tipping policy at the restaurant. At a time when many industries are having trouble finding staff, that has not been a problem at this shop. "I still don't think we pay them enough," she said. She's right, but hats off to her for taking a step in the right direction.

At the Working-Class Perspectives blog, Tim Strangleman from the University of Kent in the U.K. looks at the recent announcement by global accounting firm KPMG that as they seek to diversify the upper ranks of their organization, they will be including considerations of class, hoping to have 29% of its partners and director posts filled by those from working-class backgrounds. Great! But there is a problem, too. Turns out some people, like all nations, get their own history wrong, inflation the humbleness of their immediate origins to justify and inflate their own sense of personal accomplishment. A very interesting analysis.