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Pope Francis delivers his blessing during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatica

Pope Francis delivers his blessing during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican Oct. 27. (CNS/Paul Haring)



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A good friend asked if Pope Francis, in his general audience address yesterday, wasn't speaking to the U.S. bishops. Perhaps. But what I found remarkable was the degree to which Francis was channeling his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI and the other "Communio" theologians such as Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar. In any event, it is a beautiful text and I would invite those who don't much like Francis to read it with an open mind, and those who invoke to advance a political agenda to read it and see how it might challenge them.

In The Washington Post, fact checker Glenn Kessler examines an ad being run by Virginia GOP gubernatorial candidate Glenn Youngkin that features a mother discussing how upset her son was when he read Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. As well her son might. I hope he would be upset when reading books about slavery, like

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or any account of the Holocaust. Responding with disgust to crime is an appropriate response. Kessler shows how the ad lacks a significant degree of context — for example, the reading assignment was in an advanced placement course and the kid was a senior — and it displays one of the oddities of contemporary politics: It is now conservatives who present themselves as easily bruised snowflakes, as victims, as much as liberals.

At Politico, Nahal Toosi looks at the deteriorating human rights situation in Nicaragua, where President Daniel Ortega, still leader of the Sandanistas, and his wife and Vice President Rosario Murillo, are jailing all opposition political figures ahead of the next elections. The couple have ruled the country with an increasingly iron fist for 14 years. Corruption, not communism, is the threat.

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In The New York Times, John Pomfret sketches the building up of a strong relationship between the CIA and Polish intelligence agencies, and how the U.S. then broke the promise it made to the Poles not to undertake any activities, like torture, that violated Polish law at the secret detention centers it set up in that country. In Poland, the moral imperative of banning torture is like that always displayed by the late Sen. John McCain: It is categorical and comprehensive. The Poles have been on the receiving end of torture too many times not to recognize it as dehumanizing in essence and in consequence. Great reporting once again from Pomfret.

From NBC 4 in Connecticut, the supply chain problems come home to roost, and do so in a devastating way. Rein's Deli, a Connecticut landmark, has been unable to get the kosher pastrami and corned beef that it puts in its reubens and rachels. Rein's is a little taste of New York City without the hassle of driving into the city, but what do you order if you can't get a reuben? Seriously, I wonder what effect this supply chain problem has on the bottom line, which, magnified to thousands of other businesses, explains a large part of President Joe Biden's slippage in the polls.

I just love this story. QSR reports on A&W fast food restaurant's decision to reboot one of the most classic marketing fails in history, the one-third of a pound burger. The problem with the original marketing plan? One third seemed smaller, not larger, than one-fourth to most American consumers. After all, three is less than four. The chain's revamped campaign? A 3/9 burger.

The Associated Press reports on the completion of a restoration project of Bernini's magnificent "St. Theresa in Ecstasy" statue in Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. The sculpture and the chapel that houses it were thoroughly cleaned after years of soot and smoke build-up. It was spectacular before the restoration, so I can't wait to see it in person. The AP story does not mention it, but Santa Maria della Vittoria is the titular church of Cardinal Sean O'Malley, the archbishop of Boston.