



The Royal Danish Opera House, on Holmen Island in Copenhagen, pictured March 2018 (Wikimedia Commons/Mattias Hill)



by Michael Sean Winters

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June 4, 2020

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[From our friends at Jubilee USA Network](#), the remarks by the group's executive director Eric LeCompte to the special session of the United Nations on recovering from the COVID-19 crisis. Jubilee USA has developed really unparalleled expertise on the intersection of economic policy and vulnerable populations, with a special focus on sovereign debt held by developing countries. Bless their work and wisdom: As the world rebuilds the economy, there is a real opportunity to build it in a more just fashion.

Relatedly, [from our friends at the Africa Faith & Justice Network](#), a declaration marking Africa's Liberation Day and calling on the countries of the continent to pursue economic justice, universal access to health care and other key tenets of Catholic social teaching. Africa Faith & Justice Network is another Catholic organization doing splendid work both in lobbying the U.S. government and in creating webs of communication and influence throughout the developing world. As they like to say, citing an Ethiopian proverb, when spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.

[In The Washington Post](#), Gary Abernathy explains why those who think President Donald Trump's reelection effort is doomed are deluding themselves. He gives three takes on recent events that are so different from what most of us would consider to be the case that it is worth reading — just as I always watch Fox News for a bit at night. There are millions of people who think more like Abernathy than like me, so he is clearly right about one thing: Sending Trump home after one term is by no means a guaranteed thing.

But, [at Politico Magazine](#), Joshua Zeitz thinks Trump is doomed and that his situation is not like that of Richard Nixon but more akin to that of Lyndon Johnson. Zeitz writes:

Like Johnson before him, Trump's is the party in power — the party that has failed to provide peace, prosperity and social order. Republicans control the executive branch, the Senate and the Supreme Court. They alone own the chaos, rancor and instability that many voters have come to

abhor and dread.

I am not so sure. It is hard to see how Democrats will make the Republicans "own" the coronavirus, seeing as they failed to repeatedly tag Trump throughout the shutdown for the slowness of his response; and it is easy to see how the GOP will blame everything, even the riots, on the virus.

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It looks like Trump is going to move the Republican National Convention out of Charlotte, [according to a report at Politico](#). Republicans are worried that the state Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper will pull the rug out from under them citing concern about the coronavirus. Cooper is right to be concerned: North Carolina has not had many cases, but the percentage of those infected per 100,000 people [has increased by 16% in recent days](#). Apparently Arizona, a swing state with a Republican governor is interested, but the smart money thinks Trump's desire for grandeur, and want of historical perspective, will lead the GOP to hold their convention in the Piazza Venezia in Rome, so that the president can deliver his acceptance speech from the [same balcony used by Mussolini](#), and with the same hand gestures, the same moving around the microphone, the same dramatic postures. Which reminds me: Today is the anniversary of the liberation of Rome in 1944. Overshadowed by D-Day two days later, the liberation of Rome was a great event, not least because it was achieved with so little destruction of the city itself.

[From Architectural Digest](#), proof that modern architecture can be extraordinarily beautiful with a look at seven new opera houses of striking modern design. My favorite is the Royal Danish Opera House in Copenhagen, but I wonder how much that has to do with having a head of Kierkegaardian quality hair due to the fact that barber shops here are still closed! Seriously, the relationship of beauty to religion is profound, and so much modern architecture has failed. It is promising to see a real concern for beauty and not mere form returning to this most extraordinary art form.

For those who wondered: Yes, when I chose 2 Timothy 2:9 for the [closing of my column](#) on Archbishop Wilton Gregory's dissing Trump's would-be rally with the Knights of Columbus at the John Paul II shrine, I was thinking of [this song](#) from Leonard Bernstein's "Mass." Some readers wrote recalling the stellar performance of that work at the dedication of the Pryzbyla Center at the Catholic University of

America. Then Fr. David O'Connell, now a bishop, specifically requested that work, and he took some criticism for such an avant-garde choice. The performance silenced the critics. It was wonderful, and many of us remember it well.

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

Editor's note: Don't miss out on Michael Sean Winters' latest. [Sign up](#) and we'll let you know when he publishes new [Distinctly Catholic](#) columns.