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by Michael Sean Winters

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May 10, 2018

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I do not normally link to anything from Sandro Magister: He has been one of the most outspoken and unfair critics of Pope Francis. But, [he has a new text](#) that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote, a preface for a book by the retired pope's friend Marcello Pera and it is well worth reading. I will have commentary on this in the days ahead.

At Politico, [a report on the West Virginia primary](#) in which Republican voters rejected the candidacy of the coal baron Don Blankenship, who had referred to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell as "Cocaine Mitch" and complained about the senator's "China family." Good for the country he lost, and incumbent Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin has his work cut out for him, but there is also something good when people are confronted with the true, deep ugliness President Donald Trump has conjured. Meanwhile, in Indiana, GOP businessman Mike Braun [beat two sitting Congressmen](#) in the GOP primary to challenge incumbent Sen. Joe Donnelly. Donnelly is one of the best senators in the country, one of the few Democrats who remains pro-life as well. Some pro-life leaders criticize Donnelly as insufficiently committed to the cause, but, then again, [they say the same thing about the pope](#).

How different is New Orleans? Before her inauguration as the city's new mayor, LaToya Cantrell [attends Mass at the Cathedral of St. Louis](#) and Archbishop Gregory Aymond prays over her after Holy Communion. I love it. (h/t to Rocco)

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[Dana Milbank at the Washington Post](#) on Trump's decision to leave the Iran deal, and the weird, reality-TV way the decision was announced. Abnormal is the new normal.

At PennLive, a video entitled "[The clergy sex abuse scandal explained in 3 minutes](#)." Devastating to see this compressed collection of the horror. It is amazing anyone still comes to church.

[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 to receive free newsletters](#), and we'll notify you when he publishes new [Distinctly Catholic](#) columns.