

[Opinion](#)
[News](#)



by Michael Sean Winters

[View Author Profile](#)

Follow on Twitter at [@michaelswinters](#)

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

March 19, 2020

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

And the prize for the most oxymoronic headline of the year goes to The Washington Post, which titled a David Ignatius column, "[Trump loyalists take command of the intelligence community](#)." The header may cause a chuckle but the article is downright frightening.

From the oxymoronic to the simply moronic. Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, tweeted:

Dumb is never attractive but it is not usually dangerous. This kind of obscurantism in a public health crisis is dangerous. Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio, should find a way to shut Strickland up.

Sticking with the theme, leave it to [R.R. Reno of First Things](#), in his quest for counter-cultural relevance, to pen the dumbest article about the church and the coronavirus so far. "When we worship, we join the Christian rebellion against the false lordship of the principalities and powers that claim to rule our lives, including sickness and death," he writes. "This does not mean carelessness about our health, nor does it mean indifference to the health of others." Actually, it does mean

carelessness and indifference about the health of others. At Corpus Christi Parish in Queens, New York, [a eucharistic minister](#) tested positive. Six members of St. Gabriel's in Queens, New York, also tested positive for the virus, but it is unclear how it was contracted.*

[At Working Class Perspectives blog](#), Joseph A. McCartin, who directs the Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor at Georgetown University, writes that COVID-19's impact "is likely to reveal with deeper clarity than we have seen in a long time the class lines that divide our society and the true costs of decades of deepening inequality." It is a horrible price to pay for clarity about something that was already clear to all except those who willfully did not want to acknowledge the gross inequality that plagued our society long before COVID-19 plagued us.

By way of example, Whole Foods is [inviting its employees](#) to pay for additional sick leave for each other. Whole Foods is owned by Jeff Bezos who could afford to pay all of the company's employees for a very long time. So, let's not be seduced when told about the wonders of private philanthropy such as that [emanating from Bill Gates and Mike Bloomberg](#). I am glad they are spending their money looking for ways to help. But for the incompetence of the current administration, however, I would prefer that the government confiscate their assets and deploy them the way we the people might choose to do so.

Advertisement

There are many issues on which I disagree with Rep. Dan Lipinski, but [his loss in the Democratic primary](#) to abortion rights activist Marie Newman is deeply regrettable. Lipinski was the last full-throated pro-life Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was also a strong supporter of organized labor. When the culture war issues drive a pro-union Democrat from office, the party should not wonder why it loses elections.

[At The New York Times](#), Thomas B. Edsall on Stuart Stevens' new book *It Was All a Lie*, in which the famed GOP strategist admits that "Trump isn't an aberration of the Republican Party; he is the Republican Party in a purified form." I hope every bishop who has spouted the "abortion only" mantra that has been a part of the Republican Party's electoral success will read Stevens' book and examine their consciences.

[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.*

**This sentence has been corrected from an earlier version. The eucharistic minister who tested positive for COVID-19 served at Corpus Christi Parish, not St. Gabriel's. It is not clear that the six members at St. Gabriel's who have tested positive contracted the virus from a eucharistic minister.*

This story appears in the **Coronavirus** feature series. [View the full series.](#)