

Maryland was complex state during Lincoln era

I enjoyed reading “Catholic press reflected disdain for Lincoln in Maryland,” (CR, Jan. 15) but believe the article oversimplified the highly complex geopolitical situation of Maryland in the 1860s.

Upon Lincoln’s orders, Marylanders suffered egregious violations of their constitutional rights including the arrest of legislators and prominent citizens, the suspension of habeas corpus, illegal searches, voter intimidation and suppression of their right to free speech.

It should be noted that Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of 1862 did not free a single slave in states and territories under the control of the federal government. Rather, it was a brilliant albeit disingenuous political ploy to disguise the true nature of the war. Lincoln himself acknowledged that the War was fought to preserve the Union.

Lest readers be left with the impression that Catholic support for the Confederacy was somehow an anathema to Catholic hierarchy, it should be noted that Pope Pius IX was the first European head of state to formally recognize the Confederate States. At Confederate President Davis’ request, the pope discouraged foreign Catholics from enlisting in Union forces, to avoid internationalizing the conflict.

Following the war, Pius IX took a deep personal interest in the harsh treatment and unjust prosecution of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, sending to Davis a Crown of Thorns he crafted as well as a portrait of himself bearing the scriptural inscription “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”