Opinion



by NCR Staff

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It was just a few days ago that President Donald Trump announced his nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. A graduate of Notre Dame Law School, Barrett's ties to the charismatic Christian religious group, People of Praise, has come into question. But is her Catholic faith important? Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese writes that it is important, but irrelevant, meanwhile NCR political columnist Michael Sean Winters writes that she is the kind of cafeteria Catholic that continues to damage the U.S. church. Following are letters to the editor responding to the news. The letters have been edited for length and clarity.

As a pro-life Democrat, I admire Judge Amy Coney Barrett and I also believe that Barrett's appointment to the Supreme Court could actually be of benefit for Joe Biden's campaign.

Having achieved a more pro-life Supreme court, it may force Catholics to focus on other important life issues like health care, abolishing the death penalty, care for the natural environment and immigration.

The U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops have written about all of these important issues and the stance of the bishops clashes with the Trump administration. I would hope that we will not be single issue voters. Catholics need to be reminded that we should not only advocate for the protection of life but also for policies which promote and foster the quality of human life.

(Fr.) MICHAEL J. HOBAN

Garden City, New York



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My, oh my, here we go again! Although I would hope that Judge Amy Coney Barrett would honor her duty to law and justice, I am afraid she would be compromised by the dictates of the Roman Catholic Church.

If you rely on the Bible as a sole source for your judgements, remember, the Bible is a book of metaphors to inform the peoples of the issues of the times and some

toward love and equality and others toward power, fear and punishment.

Hopefully, she has evolved as a well-informed citizen, albeit a Catholic one, and knows that any religion tends to try and control one's mind and soul.

Women are always the most vulnerable when controlled by the likes of mostly white male privilege and power over them.

Tell me, Amy, even though you have seven children, have you ever given thought to artificial contraception? Natural family planning may or may not appeal to you. I feel sure you probably have many advantages to choose either, however many women don't. The Affordable Care Act affords women opportunities to take control from the Republicans and manage their own bodies.

Dismantling the Affordable Care Act when many have no other means of taking care of themselves is an amount to cruelty — white privilege.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg's heroic efforts for equality for women and men surely would be compromised with another four years with the current administration.

ANNE HARTER

Belleville, Illinois

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I think that someone should publicly challenge Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-California) to explain and justify her line of questioning of Judge Amy Coney Barrett. Does Feinstein realize how offensive her questioning was to even liberal Catholics? Does she realize that her display of her own ignorance exactly plays into the hands of President Donald Trump by insulting Catholics and alienating them from the Democratic Party?

Politically it is one of the most self-defeating behaviors one could imagine. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Illinois) is not much better. Having read accounts of the judge's article on matters of conscience and the law, she seems to be saying the exact opposite of what Feinstein insinuates. If her conscience conflicts with enforcing the law, she would recuse herself. That is a very noble act to preserve both the integrity of conscience and of the law.

Did Feinstein even read the article or just a distorted summary of it handed to her by someone with their own prejudices? I think she owes all of us an answer to that. Is there anyone who can demand that from her? I think she should be made accountable for what was really an example of reckless and irresponsible behavior.

JOHN McDONAGH

Cold Spring Harbor, New York

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President Donald Trump's appointment of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court has raised a great many alarms.

But at least one of them is false. It is not that "the dogma lives loudly within," as Sen. Dianne Feinstein observed three years ago. It is rather that it is too quiet. For it was Barrett who objected to Catholic judges not recusing themselves from murder trials, lest the death penalty be invoked. That is not what one would expect from an ardent believer, but it is an infallible sign of belief in the gods of expediency.

Likewise, she is not an originalist, but an unoriginal sinner, committed to the notion that whatever was, was right. Thus, her appointment to the High Court will not set a bad precedent. But it will help Trump to turn back the clock of human dignity to 1618, 1606 and 1491.

DENNIS ROHATYN

San Diego, California

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It is sad to hear Democratic senators like Chuck Schumer vowing to not meet with Judge Amy Coney Barrett during her nomination process. Barrett has distinguished herself as an honorable judge, passionate parent and a lover of the United States and its Constitution. Barrett is being targeted for her Christian faith just like U.S. District Judge Brian Buescher.

Democratic Sens. Kamala Harris and Mazie Hirono targeted Buescher for his membership in the Knights of Columbus. Hirono took the bigoted stance to demand that Buescher drop his membership in the Knights of Columbus, the largest fraternal, charitable Catholic organization. Barrett was targeted by Democratic senators in 2017 during earlier confirmation hearings. She was attacked for belonging to the charismatic People of Praise prayer group having both a Catholic and Protestant membership.

The bigoted premise of Democratic senators to oppose Catholic candidates for public service due to their adherence to the church's moral teaching is discriminatory. The view to hold Catholics in intense suspicion and to hold them unfit for public service, especially on U.S. courts is wrong.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

Port Washington, New York

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With all due respect to Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese, whose writing I enjoy and I respect, I believe he has drawn a longbow and missed the mark.

"What matters is how a nominee views the law, not why she views it that way. What matters are her decisions, not her motivations." Decisions are formed by thought based on experience. I decide will have chocolate ice cream rather than another because I've had it before and like it. Action follows.

Motivation is defined as "the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way." Motivation precedes a decision which leads to action. Crime stories show law enforcement attempting to establish a motivation for a crime before bringing a person to trial. What motivated this person to decide to act and kill a person?

Judge Amy Coney Barrett's motivation is based on her decision to fully embrace People of Praise, a (radical) fundamentalist cult-like group outside mainstream Catholicism. Because highly religious people interiorize their beliefs, her legal decisions flow from her being. Reese neglects to explore the level of Barrett's belief system which is profound. We more than negligent if we dismiss it as being of little importance.

MICHAEL J. McDERMOTT

Tyler, Texas

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