

# Love ONE ANOTHER

BY: ARCHBISHOP JEROME E. LISTECKI



September 29, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am a product of the 60s. My high school and college years took place from 1963 to 1971. This period was known for the drug culture, the sexual revolution and the civil rights movement. I never shied away from protests or vocal challenges and arguments about the issues that impacted our society. My opponents would often respond to my statements with: “Oh, you have to believe this because you’re Catholic.” My response was simply: “Yes, the Catholic Church does teach this, but I believe this also because of my use of reason. It is right, and I am proud to defend it.”

I have always been aware that the Catholic Church continues to be marginalized by the public. In my ecclesiological history class at the major seminary, I studied about the prejudice and bigotry leveled on the Catholic Church in the United States. We speak of the KKK’s attack on blacks, but rarely do we speak of the KKK’s attacks on the Catholic Church. County clubs and other social organizations prohibited Catholics from membership. Realize, this was not in the Deep South, which is often accused of xenophobia, but it happened right here in the Midwest.

When emphasizing voting issues, many find it strange that the first issue I always declare important for the well-being of our society is religious freedom. I realize that the prejudice against the Catholic Church lies just below the surface of friendly smiles and meaningless gestures. When John F. Kennedy was nominated for the presidency, commentators ignorantly questioned whether he could govern apart from the pronouncements of the Pope. Some intimated that the Pope would be the true leader of the United States. There was almost a frenzy to have Kennedy disavow the influence of the Church on his character. No one asked if his faith in Catholicism interfered with his ability to pilot a PT boat or fight for the U.S. in World War II. It is as if Catholics cannot think for themselves and integrate issues.

America has never understood the Catholic Church, and politicians have often used fear of this global behemoth to garner votes, claiming that the Catholic Church would oppress freedoms. Tell that to St. John Paul II. The Catholic Church’s dogmatic teachings, centrality and hierarchical nature make it easy-picking for those who claim that Catholics think single-mindedly. In my experience as Archbishop of Milwaukee, I know that every Catholic immediately follows everything that the Archbishop says. (I can dream, can’t I?)

Now, the Catholic Church will be front and center in the nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, following the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. It is interesting to note that Judge Barrett already has been criticized for her large family, pro-life stance and the practice of her faith. Although Judge Barrett will be answering the questions presented to her, it is really the Catholic Church that will be on trial. Of course, this is not the first time and certainly will not be the last.

--- over ---

Since Judge Barrett is a practicing Catholic, her litmus test as a Supreme Court nominee will be how well she has followed the Church's teachings. Was there a litmus test for those who claim to be practicing Catholics and either occupy or wish to occupy public governing offices before this? (I'm thinking of Joseph Biden, Nancy Pelosi or Andrew Cuomo.) Of course, any religious litmus test is against the Constitution of the United States. There may be other issues, but I believe that the pro-life issue is hidden in the subtle questions that will be asked to Judge Barret. The religious litmus test, which is now required of other political candidates, is secularism.

At another time in our history, a large family and a pro-life and religious foundation would be exactly the type of person we would desire to make prudential decisions from the bench. My, how times have changed! As a Catholic, I will offer my prayers for Judge Amy Coney Barrett, for our country and for all of us to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Sincerely,

***Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKi***

Archbishop of Milwaukee

