

BARRETT SUBJECTED TO MORE CATHOLIC BAITING

On October 5, the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. Senate voted 11-9 to approve the nomination of Notre Dame law professor Amy Coney Barrett for a seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. The committee sent her nomination on to the full Senate for a final vote.

The whole process was tainted by yet another round of Catholic-baiting directed against the nominee. After first being questioned about her religious convictions—coming close to invoking a religious test—by Senator Dick Durbin and Senator Dianne Feinstein (Bill Donohue wrote to both of them registering his outrage), Barrett's religious affiliations then came under attack.

The *New York Times* had an interesting story on Barrett's membership in a Catholic group called People of Praise. The paper called it "a small, tightly knit Christian group," one whose members enter into a covenant with each other.

What seems to bother the *Times*, as well as others opposed to President Trump, are two issues: the extent to which membership in this group might compromise Barrett's independence, and whether her association with a group that accepts a traditional role for married women is acceptable for a federal judge.

"These groups can become so absorbing that it's difficult for a person to retain individual judgment," said Sarah Barringer Gordon, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

"These groups?" If Gordon has proof that People of Praise is a cult—that is the clear implication of her remark—she should share it. But she has none. Which leaves us to conclude that she is engaged in the same Catholic-baiting tactics used by

Durbin and Feinstein.

People of Praise was founded in 1971 in South Bend, Indiana. Today it has branches throughout North America and the Caribbean. It sees itself as “part of a global movement that has brought powerful new experiences of the Holy Spirit to more than 500 million people since the beginning of the 20th century.” It aligns itself with “the Pentecostal movement or the charismatic renewal.”

Among other things, it operates interracial schools and camps, and provides for many family outings; members often travel together. Is it a Catholic fringe group? No, for if it were, Pope Francis would not have welcomed it in June: he celebrated with them, and others, the 50th anniversary of the Catholic charismatic renewal; the event drew over 30,000 people from 128 countries.

People of Praise publishes a magazine, V&B (Vine and Branches), that offers concrete proof that it is anything but a cult. The cover story of the Winter 2014 edition was called, “Looking at Marriage.” It featured the experiences of five community couples. They were illustrative of the theme, “Marriage & Community: Two Covenants, One Life Together.”

The first couple, Clem and Julie, do not sound like biblical robots who live an ascetic existence. The interview begins with Julie putting Clem in his place for going out for beers after work on Friday nights, leaving her to tend to their babies. “I’d like to go out for beer on Friday nights, and here I am with these two kids all day, and you go out for a beer?” This isn’t exactly the voice of submission.

Then there is Tom, married to Nancy, who says, “I’m aware of people who left the community because they felt the People of Praise was too much encroaching on their family time...” Cults don’t allow their members to bolt, and if some do manage to leave, there is no lament—just condemnation.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this latest attempt to smear Barrett is the hypocrisy: while there are some people of faith who are guilty of Groupthink, it is not a phenomenon unique to them. "Open-minded" liberals, it could easily be argued, are the most likely to lack independence of thought. Enter Hillary and Michelle.

Why do liberals resent it when women do not engage in Groupthink? Hillary Clinton is fuming over women who did not vote for her: women have an obligation to vote for the woman candidate, she says, regardless of their convictions. She explicitly excoriated women who exercised their independence of mind by not voting for her.

Michelle Obama also resents women who think for themselves. She slammed women who voted for Trump, saying that they "voted against their own voices." Tell that to the majority of white women who voted against Hillary, Michelle: it's important to inform them that you know what their interests are better than they do.