

IN DEFENSE OF PEOPLE OF PRAISE

Prior to the battle over Amy Coney Barrett's nomination to the Supreme Court, many reporters focused on a charismatic Christian organization, People of Praise, to which Barrett reportedly belongs.

Much of the coverage was negative. The media and left-wing activists tried to present this group as a fringe cult. Those claims were bogus. People of Praise is comprised of many well-educated Christians. Indeed, they are a vibrant community that makes the Church stronger. Consider what those who know the organization have said about it.

- Sean Connelly, communications director for People of Praise, said, "[C]harges of the mistreatment of women, insularity, lack of privacy and shunning are contradictory to our beliefs and our practices as a community."
- Connelly also said, "Contrary to what has been alleged, women take on a variety of critical leadership roles within People of Praise, including serving as heads of several of our schools and directing ministries within our community."
- Joannah Clark, who grew up in People of Praise and is now the head of the Trinity Academy in Portland, Oregon says, "This role of the husband as the head of the family is not a position of power or domination... It's a position of care and service and responsibility. Men are looking out for the good and well-being of their families."
- Clark also said, "At any point, a community member can decide to leave and is free to do so."
- Clark added, "There's a high value on personal freedom," and "I've never been asked to do anything against my own free will. I have never been dominated or controlled by a man."
- Clark further added, "I consider myself a strong, well-educated, happy, intelligent, free, independent woman." "We

are normal people – there's women who are nurses, doctors, teachers, scientists, stay-at-home moms.... We are in Christian community because we take our faith seriously. We are not weird and mysterious.... And we are not controlled by men."

- The late Cardinal Francis George wrote, "In my acquaintance with the People of Praise, I have found men and women dedicated to God and eager to seek and do His divine will. They are shaped by love of Holy Scripture, prayer and community; and the Church's mission is richer for their presence."

- Bishop Peter Smith, an auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Portland, Oregon and member of People of Praise, said, "We're a lay movement in the Church.... We continue to try and live out life and our calling as Catholics, as baptized Christians, in this particular way, as other people do in other callings or ways that God may lead them into the Church."

- Nathan W. O'Halloran, a Jesuit who grew up in a charismatic Catholic group, writes in *America Magazine* that "the charismatic movement...has been an answer to the prayer and the desire of many Catholics to live a more animated and evangelistic Christian life."

- Dan Philpott, a Notre Dame political science professor whose children attend Trinity School, run by People of Praise, said, "In my view, the phrases 'right' and 'conservative' aren't really helpful. Most Catholic lay organizations are there to help people live faithful Christian lives. It's hard to say that the causes it supports are really 'left' or 'right.' Its mission is really not political."

- Nicolas Rowan of the *Washington Examiner*, observes that "The group has enjoyed friendly relations with Pope Francis, contrary to many politically conservative Catholics."

- In the Associated Press, current members described People of Praise as, "a Christian fellowship, focused on building community. One member described it as a 'family of families,' who commit themselves to each other in mutual support to live together 'through thick and thin.'"

- The AP also notes that "People of Praise has a strong

commitment to intellectualism, evidenced in part by the schools they have established, which have a reputation for intellectual rigor.”

- The AP also reports that “Barrett’s parents are both registered Democrats, according to Louisiana voter registration records.”

- In a *Politico* article, Adam Wren says, “What’s difficult to understand outside of South Bend, however, is just how deeply integrated this group is into the local community.” (Anyone who has studied cults knows that cults try to cut their members off from the rest of society.)

- Peggy Noonan writes in the *Wall Street Journal*, “O. Carter Snead, a Notre Dame law professor and director of the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, notes, Amy Barrett – herself a law professor as well as a judge – appears to be failing at being submissive and a total disaster at being subjugated.”

Those senators opposed to Barrett had a hard time trying to nail her on her association with the People of Praise. That didn’t stop some of them from unfairly attacking her on other issues.