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STATEMENT
Friend of the Court to Justice Barrett:
Apply Pro-Life Principles to all of the Issues

ALBUQUERQUE – Monday, November 9, 2020 –Archbishop John C. Wester issues the following statement: “Friend of the Court to Justice Barrett: Apply Pro-Life Principles to all of the Issues.”

Amy Coney Barrett is now a Supreme Court justice, charged with resolving some of the most controversial issues facing our nation. During her confirmation hearings, her knowledge of the law and composure under intense questioning was impressive.

Impressive, as well, has been her ability to balance a stellar legal career with family life as a wife and the mother of seven children. She quickly has become a new feminist role model, in which a woman can welcome and embrace children while still reaching the highest levels of her field. No doubt she has and will continue to positively influence an untold number of young women in the years to come. In addition, Justice Barrett adds a new element to the Supreme Court and to the public sphere as an unapologetic and proud pro-life woman who does not shrink from her beliefs or her Catholic faith. This is inspirational to millions of pro-life Catholics, both men and women.

As she made clear in her confirmation hearing, she is independent and no one’s “pawn.” The country will not be getting a female Justice Scalia, she proclaimed, but Justice Barrett. As such, she has a great opportunity to reshape how Catholics and all US citizens think about, and decide, the most contentious public issues of the day.

While she argued in her hearing that her personal views on issues were not relevant in discharging her duties as a justice, she also admitted that justices must take into account the impact a case may have on US citizens—not just the litigants. Certainly, how she weighs those impacts should be influenced by her personal views and her faith, although these influences may not appear in her opinions.

Of course, as a pro-life woman, much attention will be focused on how she rules on abortion cases. But Justice Barrett's support for life should not end with the issue of abortion. It also should be applied to other issues which impact the life of the human person.

Justice Barrett was careful in not revealing her personal views on a number of public policy issues during her hearing—health care, climate change, and immigration, to name a few. How she rules on cases involving these issues will help determine her legacy—whether she is remembered as another conservative justice or as a groundbreaking jurist who applied the law to protect human life in all of its forms.

Health care certainly impacts life, and Justice Barrett will be tested on this issue early in her tenure. Will she acknowledge this impact in the upcoming Affordable Care Act decision? Climate change has the potential to threaten the survival of human kind—will she follow the dictates of science and acknowledge this? Despite the dehumanization of immigrants in our political discourse, their lives are valued equally in the eyes of God. Will her opinions reflect that truth? Death penalty cases come before the Supreme Court every term. Will she push to end the ultimate punishment, consistent with the position of her church?

These are questions Justice Barrett will have to answer in the days and years ahead. Of course, the cases which come before the Supreme Court are complicated and fall into a gray area—that is why they are there. A presumption for life, however, can be found in many of them—in addition to abortion cases.

Justice Barrett is in a unique position to promote a “culture of life,” as St. John Paul II described it, in her career on the Supreme Court. John Paul's definition of a “culture of life,” extended beyond abortion to include other issues which threaten human life. How she judges these issues and promotes a culture of life in our country will help define her place in history.

Most Reverend John C. Wester
Archbishop of Santa Fe

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