

Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson speaks about faith

by [Jack Jenkins](#) in the [March 23, 2022](#) issue



Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson speaks after President Joe Biden announced Jackson as his nominee to the Supreme Court on February 25. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)

Immediately after President Joe Biden introduced Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson as his nominee to the US Supreme Court on February 25, the federal appeals court judge stepped up to the podium and appealed to the divine.

“I must begin these very brief remarks by thanking God for delivering me to this point in my professional journey,” she said. “My life has been blessed beyond measure, and I do know that one can only come this far by faith.”

Jackson’s words marked the beginning of what promises to be a historic confirmation process: if confirmed by the US Senate, Jackson, 51, who currently serves on the DC Court of Appeals, would be the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court.

“If I’m fortunate enough to be confirmed as the next associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, I can only hope that my life and career, my love of this country and the Constitution, and my commitment to upholding the rule of law and the sacred principles upon which this great nation was founded, will inspire future generations of Americans,” she said.

If confirmed, Jackson would also be the first federal public defender on the Supreme Court and would bring the total number of women serving on the bench to four—the most in US history.

Jackson did not mention a specific faith tradition in her remarks, so it was not immediately clear whether she would alter the religious makeup of the Supreme Court, which currently consists primarily of Catholic and Jewish justices. (Justice Neil Gorsuch was raised Catholic but attended an Episcopal Church in Colorado.)

Religion has been a point of interest in recent Supreme Court nomination battles, particularly the debate over Justice Amy Coney Barrett. When she was nominated by former president Donald Trump in 2020, many observers questioned whether her conservative brand of Catholic faith would influence how she approached issues such as abortion.

Although Jackson reportedly has not ruled on a case narrowly focused on abortion, her appointment nonetheless drew attention of groups concerned about the issue.

Jamie L. Manson, president of Catholics for Choice, which advocates for abortion rights, praised Jackson and made mention of Jackson’s April 2021 Senate confirmation hearing to serve on the US Court of Appeals. Manson said Jackson expressed “a clear and firm commitment to the principle that true religious liberty involves both freedom of and freedom from religion.”

During that hearing, Sen. John Hawley (R., Mo.) noted Jackson had served on the board of Montrose Christian School. The Maryland school, which has since been closed, operated under a statement of faith that declared “we should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death” and outlined a belief that marriage exists only between a man and a woman.

In responding to Hawley, who said he agreed with the statements, Jackson distanced herself from the school’s beliefs. She said she did not “necessarily agree with all of

the statements” and was not previously aware of their existence.

She went on to express support for religious liberty, describing it as a “foundational tenet of our entire government.” —Religion News Service