

Fr. Perozich comments —

When I read this article, my church experience came to the fore in light of Jackie Gingrich's categories in her political article below which I am not sending as an endorsement for voting, rather an illustration of current church life and characteristics of her leaders.

Substitute the words "religion or faith" for "politics" in the article below. Substitute names of church leaders for the names of the politicians, and evaluate your experience which may be different from my own.

Then read the question, " 'Does the candidate [religious leader] care about people like me?' 'Does the candidate [leader] care about the same people I care about?' "

Initially pastors of parishes, bishops of dioceses, and popes in Rome get the benefit of the doubt with an instant connection to us because we WANT them to care about us and the same people we care about.

The masks then begin to fall off us clergy as we are exposed when we confront situations, doctrine, charity, challenges, and so forth. It is sometimes found that the faithful are not clergy's concern, rather that agendas are placed over people's spiritual lives and salvation.

Competency is NOT administrative skill alone resulting in balanced budgets, buildings and grounds, increased vocation numbers, organization of structures, and appointment of personnel in parishes and offices to staff these places.

Competency is a deep faith in the timeless gospel and the person of Jesus Christ when the world challenges and attacks the leader for fidelity to the Lord.

"Voters [true believers who do not get to vote on their church leaders] care if you [we clergy] are warm. Incompetent and cold equals a clown; incompetent and warm equals well-meaning. Competent and cold equals egotistical; the sweet spot is competent and warm."

Some of us are more astute in seeing the man behind the mask much earlier than others. Perhaps the astute are so because we are less trusting.

Nonetheless Catholics crave religious competency, true belief in the faith and morals of God brought to earth by Jesus and

promulgated over the centuries without change by His Holy Catholic Church, and the courage to promote this without compromise to the world.

With this, we also crave a warmth, that someone cares about us rather than the world's agenda, structures, programs, finances, administration.

I have neither a claim to competency in all my former pastoral decisions nor warmth in every situation with every person at every moment; yet I hope that this was expressed most of the time.

I have not experienced warmth and competence from my leaders at all times either.

We get what we get because we cannot vote, rather the leaders we have are appointed by men who choose leaders with qualities like themselves: incompetent and cold, incompetent and warm, competent and cold, and sometimes competent and warm. I'll leave out the name calling from the articles and allow you to fit the men into the categories according to your experience.

Yet the competent and warm person of Jesus Christ is always present when we come to Him in prayer.

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Biden Versus Trump: Where Are We Heading?

Jackie Gingrich Cushman

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In politics, it's often not who you want to vote for but who you don't want to vote for, and while policies are important, personality drives a lot of the decision-making. Often pollsters ask, "Does the candidate care about people like me?" Now they ask, "Does the candidate care about the same people I care about?"

The ability to connect with and care about others is vitally important for candidates and has fueled former Vice President Joe Biden's surge in the Democratic primary process. Voters care if you are competent, but they also care if you are warm. Incompetent and cold equals a clown; incompetent and warm equals well-meaning. Competent and cold equals egotistical; the sweet spot is competent and warm.

That's Biden's current position in the Democratic primaries. The question is will he be viewed as competent or incompetent in the general election (assuming he wins the Democratic nomination), and will President Donald Trump be viewed as cold or warm?

This week has been even crazier than the last in politics. Last Wednesday, three days ahead of the South Carolina Democratic primary, Rep. James Clyburn of South Carolina, who serves as the House majority whip, the highest-ranking black in Congress, endorsed Biden's White House run. This endorsement drove Biden to a huge win in South Carolina this past Saturday, where he won 48%.

Biden's long and warm relationship with the black community made a difference, with Clyburn saying: "I know Joe. We know Joe. But most importantly, Joe knows us."

Biden's huge win over the balance of the field led billionaire businessman Tom Steyer to drop out Saturday night, former Mayor Pete Buttigieg of Indiana to drop out Sunday night and Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota to drop out Monday night.

On Monday night, Biden appeared at an event at Texas Southern University. Fueled by his strong win in South Carolina (due to Clyburn's endorsement), and by Buttigieg's and Klobuchar's endorsements of him, he was energetic, enthusiastic and optimistic.

"I am here heart and soul," he told the crowd. As he talked about his strong ties to the minority communities, he also acknowledged his need for their support. "I take nothing for granted, nothing at all," he said. "I am asking you for your vote." Warm, warm, warm.

"There is a lot of love for Biden right now, but I would reframe it," said Ed Espinoza, executive director of Progress Texas. "It is not so much rallying around Biden, as it is rallying around black and brown voters."

As of this writing, on Super Tuesday, Biden earned 399 delegates, and Sen. Bernie Sanders won 322. At a distant third was former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg with 44 delegates followed by Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren with 42.

These results must have been terribly disappointing for Bloomberg, who spent a quarter of a billion dollars on advertising and the same amount on staff and infrastructure. This does not include the millions of dollars he has spent in support of other candidates. In 2018, Bloomberg spent \$100 million to help 21 of the 40 newly elected Democratic representatives win their seats.

Bloomberg announced Wednesday that he was pulling out of the race, proof once again that money cannot buy victory. Just ask the party's former presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, who spent \$132 million versus the \$94 million Donald Trump spent.

This leaves the Democratic contest to a Biden-versus-Bernie event.

My guess is that the Democratic Party will continue to coalesce around Biden, who will be its nominee. It might be nasty and ugly for a while, but in the end, it makes sense that the Democratic National Committee would not support Sanders, a self-described Democratic socialist whose official Senate website notes he is "the longest serving independent member of Congress in American history."

What does this mean for President Trump, assuming Biden wins the nomination? Biden's strength is neither his policy expertise nor his debate performance but his connection to people. People might think he is goofy and says silly things, but they like him.

A recent poll by Fox News (conducted Feb. 23-26 with 1,000 registered voters) shows Biden with a 50% favorable rating and 46% unfavorable. Trump came in at 44% favorable and 55% unfavorable.

There was a big divergence in suburban women's ratings of Trump, at 36% favorable and 63% unfavorable. They rated Biden 49% favorable to 47% unfavorable.

The poll also noted that in a head-to-head contest, Biden would beat Trump 49% to 41%. For Trump to win, the shifting view needs to cast Biden as incompetent and Trump as warm, and as a president who cares about the people I care about -- Americans.

It can be done and should be interesting to watch.