

So who is 'pro-life' and who isn't?

Thomas C. Fox | Oct. 28, 2012 NCR Today

So what does it mean to be "pro-life"?

Consider what Thomas Friedman writes [in today's New York Times](#). [1]

...To name something is to own it. If you can name an issue, you can own the issue. ... We must stop letting Republicans name themselves "pro-life" and Democrats as "pro-choice." It is a huge distortion.

In my world, you don't get to call yourself "pro-life" and be against common-sense gun control — like banning public access to the kind of semiautomatic assault rifle, designed for warfare, that was used recently in a Colorado theater. You don't get to call yourself "pro-life" and want to shut down the Environmental Protection Agency, which ensures clean air and clean water, prevents childhood asthma, preserves biodiversity and combats climate change that could disrupt every life on the planet. You don't get to call yourself "pro-life" and oppose programs like Head Start that provide basic education, health and nutrition for the most disadvantaged children. You *can* call yourself a "pro-conception-to-birth, indifferent-to-life conservative." I will never refer to someone who pickets Planned Parenthood but lobbies against common-sense gun laws as "pro-life."

"Pro-life" can mean only one thing: "respect for the sanctity of life." And there is no way that respect for the sanctity of life can mean we are obligated to protect every fertilized egg in a woman's ovary, no matter how that egg got fertilized, but we are not obligated to protect every living person from being shot with a concealed automatic weapon. I have no respect for someone who relies on voodoo science to declare that a woman's body can distinguish a "legitimate" rape, but then declares "when 99 percent of all climate scientists conclude that climate change poses a danger to the sanctity of all life on the planet" that global warming is just a hoax.

The term "pro-life" should be a shorthand for respect for the sanctity of life. But I will not let that label apply to people for whom sanctity for life begins at conception and ends at birth. What about the rest of life? Respect for the sanctity of life, if you believe that it begins at conception, cannot end at birth. That radical narrowing of our concern for the sanctity of life is leading to terrible distortions in our society.

Respect for life has to include respect for how that life is lived, enhanced and protected — not only at the moment of conception but afterward, in the course of that life.

Links:

[1] <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/28/opinion/sunday/friedman-why-i-am-pro-life.html?ref=todayspaper>