

The Confusing Language of Life and Death

I want to discuss the language of life and death because I believe that how we speak, and the meaning we give to words, affects our ability to move life efforts forward in the state.

We all know that Pro-Life means we support and protect innocent life. Pro-life means we oppose abortion, and stem cell research. We know that Pro-life supports the life of the fetus, and life from conception.

It is after that point where the term Pro-Life begins to blur. Pro-Life in the Catholic tradition means we respect life from conception to natural death. We believe that all life is sacred. We support life at conception, so we oppose abortion, and cloning, and embryonic stem cell research. We also believe that life is sacred even after the birth occurs, so we oppose use of the death penalty. We believe that God is the creator of life, and God is the final arbiter of life.

It is the Catholic belief that our Savior Jesus Christ died for our sins. We believe that we can be forgiven and enter His kingdom if we ask for forgiveness and turn our lives over to God. This was true when Dismas, the “penitent thief” recognized Christ as Lord when he was hanging on the Cross next to Him, and asked to be forgiven of his sins. We also believe all persons have value, even though we may not recognize what the value is.

What do you suppose the early Christians thought of St Paul, or Saul as he was called when he was persecuting Christians? He was a self described zealot who by his own admission drove Christians from their homes and delivered them in chains to be beaten and in some cases killed.

Christ recognized Saul, not as the early Christians knew him, but as a man who would become the greatest of all evangelizers and the one who could take the good news of our Savior Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

I believe that situation continues today. Sometimes those who have committed serious crimes against humanity have the most powerful witness. It is my belief that we should not get in the way of God and his salvation plan for even the worst of the worst. Who is to say what God’s plan is for them?

Physician Assisted Suicide also splinters Pro-Life groups. Certainly, most people who are Pro-Life believe physician assisted suicide is wrong, but there are some, probably more than we might think who quietly think it is OK. In fact, I am surprised by some of the comments I get when I talk about the recent constitutional ruling in Montana. Some people are less disturbed that it happened, than how it happened. They are upset the decision was legislated from the bench, not that it happened.

So what does Pro-Life mean? Is it limited to beginning life, or beginning and ending life? (Or innocent life, recognizing that those people who are affected by physician

assisted suicide, and of course the death penalty, have made mistakes, maybe horrible mistakes along the way?)

I believe Pro-Life must be consistent, and pro-life must come to mean we respect “life from conception to natural death”. As Pro-Life people we should hold ourselves to a higher standard. That’s the only way it makes any sense to me. And I think if we are consistent in our pro life efforts we will be better able to promote life issues on all fronts.