

Pro-life Basics

Dear Judie,

I don't see a difference between the words "conception" and "fertilization." I do know that some doctors have tried to change the meaning of them. Which terms should pro-lifers be using? Thank you,

—Your friend

Dear Friend,

Understanding the definition of basic scientific terms is important for those of us involved in defending the preborn child. So many terms have been twisted by the wordsmiths of the culture of death. Here are some basic definitions that should be useful to you:

Zygote: the individual that develops from the union of a sperm and an ovum (one to three days)

Morula: the solid mass of blastomeres resulting from the early cleavage divisions of the zygote (three to four days)

Blastocyst: the modified blastula stage of the human embryo consisting of the inner cell mass and a thin trophoblast layer (five to seven days)

Embryo: the developing organism from conception until approximately the end of the second month, including the zygote, morula and blastocyst stages

Fetus: the preborn individual from the end of the eighth week after fertilization to the moment of birth

Fertilization: the development of a new individual initiated through the process beginning with penetration of the secondary oocyte by the spermatozoon and completed by fusion of the male sperm and female ovum

Conception: See the definition for fertilization. The two terms are interchangeable.

Please note that the onset of pregnancy is *not* implantation. In fact, the 27th edition of *Dorland's Medical Dictionary* defines "pregnancy" as "the condition of having a developing embryo or fetus in the body, after union of an ovum and a spermatozoon."

So, considering these stages of human life and all the ways that a human person can come into being these days, we should defend and seek the protection of each human person from the first moment of his or her creation.

For further reference, see *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*, *Dorland's Medical Dictionary* and "When do human beings begin? 'Scientific' myths and scientific facts" by

Dianne N. Irving, Ph.D. at www.ALL.org/abac/dni003.htm.

Judie Brown is president of American Life League and a member of the Pontifical Academy for Life. Ask Judie questions at her www.ALL.org blog.

E-mail this article from our web site www.CLmagazine.org.

