

# **Catholic Diocese of Little Rock**

**2500 North Tyler Street, Little Rock, AR 72207**

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Administrative Affairs

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*The following statement was issued today by the Rev. Msgr. J. Gaston Hebert, Diocesan Administrator.*

## **POSITION PAPER ON SUSAN G. KOMEN FOR THE CURE**

On February 7, 2008, the Respect Life Apostolate of the Diocese of Little Rock issued a position statement saying that it “neither supports nor encourages participation in activities that benefit Susan G. Komen for the Cure.” This position was based upon what were believed to be “facts,” which upon further study have turned out not to be true.

As administrator of the diocese, I had been assured that 25 % of the money given here in Arkansas goes to the national Komen foundation, which provided grants to Planned Parenthood, a major provider of abortions. If that were true, money donated in Arkansas could have indirectly funded abortions. Regardless of the exceptional work done by Komen to help detect, treat, and prevent breast cancer, the good accomplished would not have been a legitimate reason to participate in the death of unborn children. Therefore, I directed our Respect Life Apostolate to prepare a position statement indicating the moral problem in supporting the Komen foundation. However, the reality is that the national Komen foundation does NOT give grants to Planned Parenthood – and, therefore, money given to Komen in Arkansas does NOT, even indirectly, fund abortion. Thus, my major reason for releasing the position statement was NOT valid.

I would note that there is a relatively small number of affiliates of Komen that do give grants to Planned Parenthood for breast examinations, treatment, and education, mostly in low-income areas where no other facility is available for the exams. While I understand the motivation for the grants in these instances, I would encourage the national Komen foundation to continue to seek alternate avenues where these exams might be given and to completely sever their connection with Planned Parenthood. Even this partnering, born out of apparent necessity, unintentionally gives credence and acceptability to Planned Parenthood due to Komen’s excellent reputation.

Our position statement further states that “Donors cannot control how an organization designates its funds.” I have assurance from those who receive grants here locally from Komen that stringent safeguards are placed upon those funds being used for their designated purpose. Therefore, the conclusion reached in our statement that grant money could “free up funds to support other areas” appears also to be untrue. But, in any case, let’s remember that in Arkansas no grants are made to Planned Parenthood.

Our statement implied that there exists a link between procured abortion and increased risk of breast cancer and that Komen dismisses that link. The National Cancer Institute states that there exists no link between abortion and breast cancer. The preponderance of scientific research states that no such link exists, but there is a minority opinion that insists that such a link exists.

Our statement stated that “Komen endorses embryonic stem cell research requiring the destruction of embryonic human life.” Komen states that it does not endorse embryonic stem cell research but does fund adult stem cell research, which would be in line with Catholic moral teaching.

It is important that the stance of the Catholic Church always be based upon truth. The position statement issued on February 7 was based upon unintentional error. To let that statement stand would be an act of injustice. With apologies to Komen, to those fighting breast cancer and to the survivors, to the Catholic clergy and faithful who were embarrassed by this mistaken policy, I rescind the position statement in its entirety.

There was a considerable amount of confusion over the level of authority expressed in the position statement issued on February 7. It was not issued as a mandate but as a position paper. Any individual Catholic, Catholic parish or school, and Catholic organization within the Diocese of Little Rock is free to make their own decision as to whether to support Susan G. Komen for the Cure. I will state very plainly, after meeting with the Komen officials of the Arkansas affiliates, that these are good people highly dedicated to the finding a cure for breast cancer and preserving life; this is their only goal.

Again, I offer a sincere apology for the unintended turmoil and misunderstanding created by the statement that has now been rescinded.

Rev. Msgr. J. Gaston Hebert  
Diocesan Administrator

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