

## Bishop to Catholics: Suspend support for cancer fund

Sara Angle Catholic News Service | Jul. 13, 2011

**WASHINGTON** -- Bishop Leonard P. Blair of Toledo, Ohio, has told Catholic institutions and schools in the Diocese of Toledo to suspend fundraising efforts for the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, a foundation that supports breast cancer research, and instead direct such donations to a local group of Catholic-run cancer centers.

In a July 5 letter to Catholics, Bishop Blair cited Komen's contributions to Planned Parenthood and noted the foundation does not exclude the possibility of funding research that uses embryonic stem cells as reasons Catholic entities should not support the nonprofit organization.

"While we want to do everything possible to support the search for a cure (for cancer), sadly the landscape of medical research today is sometimes marred by the erroneous belief that research is not bound by moral norms rooted in faith and reason, as reflected in the teaching of the church," said Bishop Blair.

He acknowledged Komen does not currently fund research using embryonic stem cells, but said its "policy does not exclude that possibility."

A 2007 document from Susan G. Komen for the Cure said: "Embryonic stem cells are currently considered to have the most potential for use in the regeneration of diseased or injured tissues," and can also provide "a better understanding of cancer development."

However, Andrea Rader, a spokeswoman for Komen at its Dallas headquarters, told Catholic News Service July 12, that she wanted to make it "very clear that we do not fund embryonic stem-cell research."

"There is little application for embryonic stem cells in breast cancer research. It's not likely that we will use embryonic stem cells," she said, but added, "We do not want to preclude that possibility, so we do not shut that door."

"We are attempting to meet with the bishop," said Rader. "We are going to reach out. The work that we do has so much value; we don't just fund research, we take care of access to health care for uninsured and poor women."

In a clarification released July 12, the diocese said that Bishop Blair's letter was "neither a condemnation, censure nor ... a 'ban'" -- as described by one local news story -- on support for Susan G. Komen.

"Individual Catholics who want to contribute to Komen locally can continue to do so on the basis of Komen's assurance that no local funds go to Planned Parenthood or to embryonic stem-cell research," the diocese said.

Currently, Planned Parenthood is the largest provider of abortions in the United States, but it also offers free breast exams and mammograms, considered key to early detection of breast cancer. While Susan G. Komen for the Cure said it intends its contributions to go toward these exams, it cannot control how funds are allocated at Planned Parenthood.

The diocesan clarification said that because "there are some, who in good faith, continue to have misgivings

about Komen's association with Planned Parenthood and its openness to embryonic stem cell," the Catholic bishops of Ohio want Catholic entities to direct money raised for breast cancer research directed elsewhere.

Earlier this year, a similar statement about Susan G. Komen for the Cure was released by Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr of Cincinnati.

In April, the Archdiocese of St. Louis reissued one of its previous policy statements on the Komen foundation: "Due to its policy allowing affiliates to offer financial support to abortion-providing facilities, its denial of studies showing abortion as a cause of breast cancer, and its endorsement of embryonic stem-cell research, the Respect Life Apostolate neither supports nor encourages participation in activities that benefit Susan G. Komen for the Cure."

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