

## **Norman Roberts: A pro-life Catholic supports Komen**

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As a committed pro-life advocate, I find myself in an awkward dispute with the Catholic Pro-Life Committee, an organization I normally support. You see, I am also an enthusiastic supporter of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, a group that does a great deal of good in raising money and advocating for research, prevention, early detection and treatment of breast cancer. I was recently dismayed to learn the Pro-Life Committee is cooperating in a scandalous campaign to discourage Catholic support for Komen.

My mother died of breast cancer. My wife, Lynne, is a two-year survivor. Her sister died of it after a 10-year battle. We would not like to see the work that Komen does disrupted.

For a number of years, Lynne worked as the principle organizer for groups from her company participating in the Komen Race for the Cure in Plano. She's retired now. This year, she asked for and got permission from our pastor to organize a group from our church to walk, run or otherwise support next weekend's race in Plano. A few weeks ago, she ran an announcement in the parish bulletin. The next Monday, the Pro-Life Committee was on the phone with the parish office saying we shouldn't be doing that.

It seems the North Texas Komen affiliate previously funded a local Planned Parenthood program to provide breast screening for women who are medically underserved and wouldn't otherwise get the exams. The grant was restricted to that purpose, covered one year and was audited to ensure that the money was used as intended. Still, the Pro-Life Committee reasons that the grant freed other funds for immoral uses, including abortions. They offer no evidence that that happened, and there doesn't seem to be any.

The argument is flawed on several levels. As Christians, we have special obligations toward the less well-off. Those obligations would include doing what we reasonably can to see that these women get the needed mammograms. We could and should advocate that Komen affiliates make grants to groups untainted by abortion. We could donate to alternate groups directly, but there is a logical trap here. No matter how we fund these programs, in theory it frees objectionable groups of the burden and allows them to use other money for immoral purposes. The alternative is to force women to apply for needed services through groups we find unacceptable or not get the services at all.

The grants in question represent a tiny fraction of the funds Komen raises, all of which, as best I can determine, go to an unequivocally noble cause.

Maybe most important, the church must do its work in a sinful world. I'm no theologian, but we rub elbows with sinners all the time. We are all sinners. We must from time to time work with less-than-perfect people and organizations. Komen isn't even the villain in this morality play. If we can't work with them, then who can we work with?

At least the charges the Pro-Life Committee levels against North Texas Komen affiliate contain a kernel of truth. I am sad to say others (I wish I could say a few) in the pro-life community aren't so fastidious. Some accuse Komen of far greater ties to Planned Parenthood than is the case. Many of the accusations rest on innuendo, half-truths, wild exaggeration and outright fabrication. Incredibly, only one U.S. Catholic diocese – the Diocese of Little Rock – has worked with Komen to sort out the truth. That office then issued a statement reversing an earlier decision not to support the race, saying church leaders had acted on misinformation and wished to right an injustice.

An injustice is being done here, too. This pro-lifer will do what he can to right it.

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