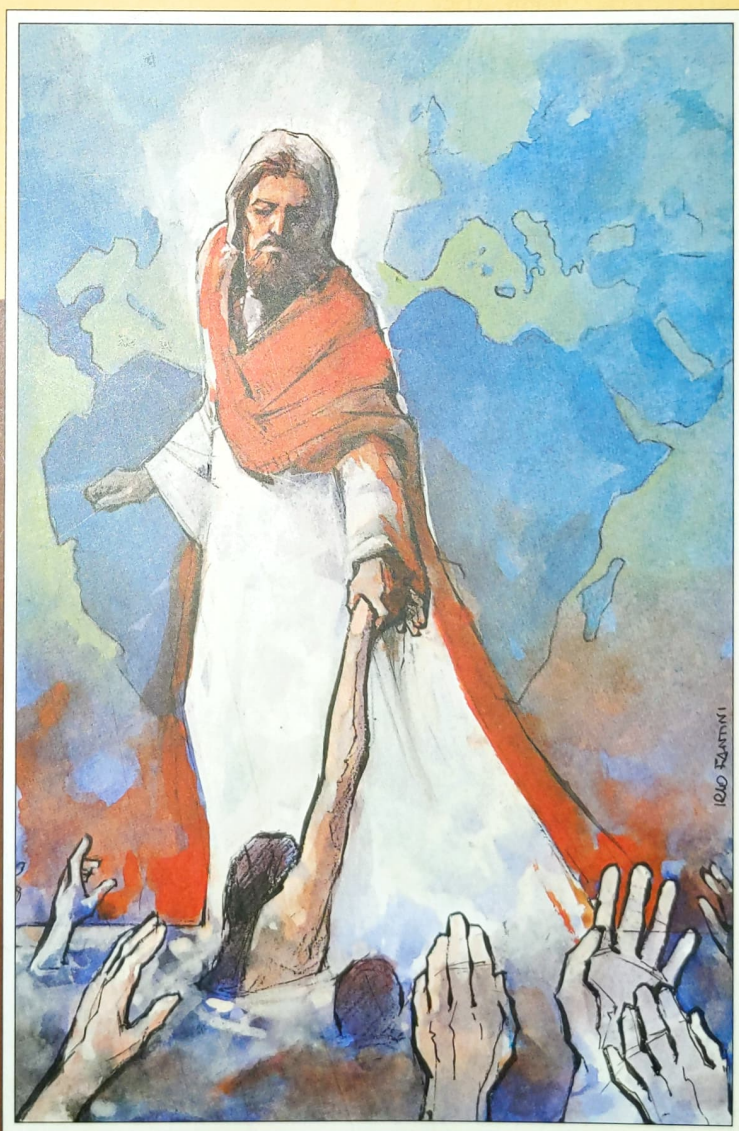


**PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR HEALTH PASTORAL CARE**

Church: drugs and drug addiction

**Pastoral
Handbook**



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PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR HEALTH PASTORAL CARE

CHURCH: DRUGS AND DRUG ADDICTION

PASTORAL HANDBOOK



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PREFACE

After a long work of preparation, we are now able to present this Pastoral Handbook on "Church: Drugs and Drug Addiction". Early in 1997, the Holy Father, through the Secretary of State of the Holy See, entrusted the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care with the duty of following up on the terrible problem of drug abuse in the world. Since then, we have organised a series of study sessions, meetings, International Conferences, and set up special work groups, in order to accomplish the mandate received from the Pope. Among our concerns there emerged a need to prepare a Handbook on Health Pastoral Care, in the specific area of the world of drugs.

Often, questions are asked on what to think and do in the pastoral area with regard to the problem of drugs. Many bishops, priests, men and women religious, and anguished parents ask themselves: what can we do as Christians, faced with the drug problem? With this manual, we do not pretend to offer a definitive answer but to give some suggestions that could be of help in pastoral work. We know that there are many methods, and that there are many experiences of people who are totally and heroically dedicated to this pastoral work. We respect this plurality – at times not very harmonious – of ways that are applied to prevent and treat drug addiction: we do not intend to propose a new method, but to offer a simple practical guide, to questions that we consider important for pastoral action, and which perhaps will also be of use to those who through much dedication and care work in this field.

We offer this Handbook particularly to the bishops, in whose dioceses this problem is present, and this is a problem they cannot overlook among youth, children, and even adults. This work is for the priests and other pastoral workers, who together with the bishop carry on the work of making the Kingdom of God always present in the world. We have in mind also the parents of addicted children who do not know how to help them; then the families to which we strongly address ourselves.

Politicians are very important in the fight against this scourge. Any results attained in stopping the problem depend very much on their attitude. To them also we offer our Handbook, which perhaps will help them in realising the difficult and delicate mission to which they are dedicated, in order to save and treat the many people who suffer from this terrible evil.

In a particular way we look to the world of health, particularly to health professionals. This handbook is not a specialised treatise of the problem, nevertheless, we offer here values and guidelines that will facilitate their preventive and curative mission.

The Handbook takes into consideration youth; we would wish that they use it as an appropriate instrument both to prevent this evil and to quit drug addiction. School-teachers at all levels, especially those in the primary schools, can offer to their students adequate information and education on this problem. To them, as well as to all those interested in this serious problem of our time, we dedicate our Handbook.

As we said before, the Handbook opens with the words of the Holy Father John Paul II. The chapters that follow thereafter are a kind of commentary on His words.

The Pope speaks of three particular actions for a pastoral programme capable of dealing with the problem of drugs: prevention, care and suppression. The Handbook takes into consideration the first two: prevention and care. It does not treat suppression, to which the Pope makes reference stressing that we all have to fight against the production, processing and distribution of drugs in the world and that it is a special duty of governments to face with courage this fight against the "traffickers of death". This point will not be developed in the Handbook; however, in unison with the words of the Pope we invite all to fight strenuously against drugs.

We know very well that if there is no demand there is no supply. Prevention, as well as education to the meaning of values which make life worth living, and the deep sense of life, love and sex, will certainly lead to the reduction of this demand and as a consequence the supply of drugs will also diminish. We can no longer speak of producer countries on the one hand and consumers on the other. Nobody is a stranger to this evil wave that embraces everyone. All nations produce and all consume, especially now with the availability of synthetic drugs. We are all involved and drug barons are very powerful and are causing more damage in the rich countries than in the poorer ones. We all have to be seriously involved in the fight against this fatal evil.

We thank all those, who with a lot of dedication have helped us in the writing of this Handbook. Special thanks go to the Rev. Father Tony Anatrella and his collaborators who worked a lot on the drafting of this Handbook, in order to offer to all this pastoral aid.

We would like to place our Handbook under the special protection of our Lady, Health of the Sick (Salus Infirmorum). May the Blessed Virgin entrust to her Son Jesus, all who suffer because of this terrible evil, so that in Him all may find the profound values that can fill the emptiness of the life of many people in today's society; may the Lord Jesus through his death and resurrection, which is the only valid basis for accepting to live or to die, give us all an authentic meaning to life.

Vatican City, 1 November, 2001.

His Excellency Msg. JAVIER LOZANO BARRAGÁN
President of the Pontifical Council
for Health Pastoral Care

INTRODUCTION

1. Drugs and drug addiction are phenomena that are invading all societies in the world and do affect youth in a particular way, whatever be the environment to which they belong. The enhancement of more varied drugs and their use has never been so prominent and even deliberately sustained. The substances are made to appear as if they are a supplement to "freedom", a source of well-being and life in common. Yet, whatever be the ways of using them and the expectations placed in them, the outstanding question is: "Why does one take drugs?".

*Drug addiction
invades the world*

2. The reasons that lead to taking drugs are manifold, but we hold that it is above all the attitude of the person that makes an addict, and not the substance. Education and prevention will therefore be concerned about taking action on what gives rise to this behaviour, and not just pay attention to the substances, even though it is still useful to offer abundant information about drugs.

a Httude makes addict

3. The growing use of psycho-active substances, that is substances with stimulating or inhibiting effects on the brain, the diffusion of some of these products and the continuous appearance on the market of new substances, arouses an expectation of "well-being" that most of the time turns day after day into suffering and peril. We must sympathise with all those who believe they cannot live without drugs, because they are instead destroying themselves, even to the point of death; they destroy their relationships, they destroy the milieu around them, and seriously compromise their future. Will society allow this to continue, something which is certainly not a sign of health and confidence in life? In effect, drugs testify to a kind of contempt for life and represent a personal attempt, which is certainly imaginary, of extricating oneself from reality and from the circumstances of human life.

*Solidarity with drug
addicts*

*contempt for and
extricate from life*

4. If some adults have been long-term consumers of psychotropic plants, this practice is not a mass phenomenon.

Nor is it right to conclude that "a society without drugs does not exist", accepting that all societies are part of the drug culture. So the appropriate response is to simply put in place a system in which a minimum consumption is acceptable. Today the use of drugs is no longer limited to adults or to some particular individuals; in the contemporary world and for about forty years now, the problem has spread to all sectors, especially adolescents. A society concerned about the well-being of its children and peace between the generations, cannot accept that it has to learn to live with drugs, which are a source of ruin and death, and not life.

5. We now know a great deal more about the fatal effects of drugs on the psychic balance, on family life, on the personal and social life of adults and youth. They cause various handicaps for many people who seek "a supplement to life" offered by the psycho-stimulants. They lead in fact, to results that are contrary to what was expected, because the consumption of the substances can give rise to negative behaviour, which interferes with the relationships, and which seriously reduces the freedom of a person, sometimes to the extent of cancelling it completely. They also dim the mind of those who cannot liberate themselves from their consumption, and motivate demands on doctors for prescriptions of drugs that can alleviate difficulties in living, reduce their suffering, and inner anxieties. This blindness is greater when it leads to political pressure for the liberalisation of drugs. However, those who are more lucid among the addicts do not hesitate to launch an appeal, from the very depth of their dependence: "Tell the youth never to use these substances, to have the courage to reject them, to find adults and youths who can help them to live and resolve their problems, rather than taking recourse in drugs".

mind
dimmed

Drug-use and self-
destruction

Socio-cultural
complexity of the
phenomenon

6. The phenomenon of drug-use does not limit itself to private actions of taking toxic substances. It is related to socially supported systems.

7. In fact, an underground economy and an international crime ring have developed, with the aim of producing and commercialising drugs in large quantities.

8. Drugs also pose problems for public health, whose cost is very heavy to sustain, especially for countries with scarce resources. It is not feasible to encourage drug related behaviour, which causes organic pathologies, and also causes social and psychological problems that will have to be treated in the future.

9. Drugs encourage a way of behaving which borders on individualism and egocentrism, leading to withdrawal from meaningful communication with others. A society, which promotes development, based on economic criteria, service and efficacy, to the detriment of religious, spiritual and moral values, does not assist the integral development of a person. In promoting these values human behaviour is improved and the conduct of a person acquires a highly positive sense. To forget this means mistaking the symptoms for the cause.

10. What should be done then? How should the Church concern itself with the phenomena of drugs and drug addiction? The parents, and even the social agents, priests, religious and the laity are witnesses and the first protagonists trying to understand, intervene and propose to the individuals an alternative to a dependency on various drugs.

*Proposing a credible
alternative*

11. The family is one of the first places for the prevention of drug-use. However, it is not always supported and enhanced in its educative work, especially by contradictory legislations that are in effect in many countries. Youth movements within the realm of the parish also play a part in drug prevention through the promotion of a style of life that is based on the Gospel message so as to better discover God. Developing the inner life of youth, with the help of prayer, the sacraments and above all the celebration of the Eucharist, offers them a glimpse of the eternal and blessed life of Christ, thus revealing a fuller sense of human existence.

12. Preventing addiction, and treating and rehabilitating drug addicts are the most important ways of helping people

who are caught up in the relentless cycle of drug taking. But we also know that the problems are complex and that the way of handling them depends on a diversity of activities and many helpers. The Church, in dealing with the questions that present themselves in drug related situations and phenomena, exercises her role and gospel mission, with the aim of helping people to come out "of a world pressed for hope".¹

*Pastoral action of the
Church for drug
addicts*

13. For many years now, the Church has been engaged in helping drug addicts through the pastoral action of many priests, religious and laity, within institutions or in open precincts, and in situations created to respond to people with drug-related problems. In some countries, the Church has developed programmes for the assistance and reintegration of drug addicts. It contributes by educating to true freedom and responsibility, by promoting prevention of drug-use, by assisting drug addicts and helping in their rehabilitation. The establishing of community structures, with the intention of promoting the dignity of the human person, has often led to positive results. However, in most cases the work is difficult and costly; it requires patience and needs the collaboration of many people, especially volunteers who can dedicate their time to drug-prevention and support of drug addicts. It is important here, to acknowledge the work of many professionals and volunteers, who do all they can to help drug addicts and their families.

14. The principles and values that inspire the teaching of the Church and its pastoral action in this field have been expounded many times in various ways by Pope John Paul II. Nevertheless, the decision to confront this problem in a more immediate and organic way was made by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers, after Doctor Giorgio Giacomelli, the then Executive Director of the United Nations' International Programme for Drug Control, approached the Pope, asking the Church

¹ John Paul II, *To the Participants at the International Symposium on Drugs*, 11 October 1997, in *Insegnamenti*, XX/2, 1997, p. 533, n. 3.

to help in resolving one of the most serious problems of our time, indicating in particular that drug trafficking and consumption are a "menace that could endanger the future of an entire population". The Cardinal Secretary of State, Angelo Sodano, then entrusted the task to our Dicastery.

15. Dr. Giacomelli said in his note that "the police and the international judiciary system, alone, were not capable of defeating a phenomenon that is so wide-spread". Hence, his approach to the Church for help, "above all in the area of prevention, so that the diffusion of strong values may keep the young generation away from drug consumption".

16. The phenomenon of drugs constitutes without doubt a worrisome problem in the entire world and requires serious study. It is proper that this question should be treated according to the illuminating teaching of John Paul II. Within the past few years, the Holy Father has dealt with this problem, in over eighty statements.

*The Pope expresses
his worry as
universal pastor*

Commentary on SP1

17. From 9 to 11 October, 1997 a Church Symposium organised by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers, was held in the Vatican on the theme "United for Life"; this meeting is a proof of the decisive and energetic commitment of the Holy See to addressing the drug problem. The Catholic Church, which is strongly involved in the sector of prevention and rehabilitation of drug addicts, considers the drug phenomenon to be of pastoral urgency on the world scale, since it concerns all countries and all social groups (rich and poor, youth and adults, elderly, men and women); a phenomenon of such breadth requires a strong and decisive response, in order to check the ethical decay that arises from it.

18. For this reason, 90 experts (delegates of Episcopal Conferences, specialists, those in charge of rehabilitation centres, and interested international organisations), from 45 countries where the problem is particularly present (because of drug production, consumption, trafficking and laundering) met in the Vatican to study the situation,

*Handbook came out of
this conference*

*Guidelines of the
world Congress of
1977*

exploring various aspects of the phenomenon, and learning from the different experiences in prevention and rehabilitation realised up to now by local churches.

19. At the end of the Congress, the first of its kind, in terms of its wide representation and the experience of the participants, it was possible to express various ideas and guidelines upon which there was a wide agreement.



20. The experiments carried out so far in certain countries, on liberalisation and legalisation of drugs have been disastrous. It is certainly important to state the problem correctly, for it does not only concern the substance consumed but rather the person using it.

21. The drug phenomenon is a symptom of a profound malaise affecting the culture and moral sense; it exceeds therefore, the limits of a medical question and cannot be limited to a particular sector of society.

22. The problem of drugs is at the same time a fruit and cause of high moral loss and of a growing social disintegration.

23. The phenomenon is not only the concern of rich countries. Drugs are consumed for various motives (poverty, unemployment, urbanisation, changes in customs) in many developing countries, and the problem is intensifying on four fronts: production, consumption, trafficking and laundering.

24. The contribution of the Church aims to complement the efforts of workers in a variety of fields (politicians, social and health workers, parents, educators, judges and directors of sectors of action); it presents itself as an itinerary of liberation that leads people to the discovery of their proper dignity both as human beings and as children of God, which they can then recover.

25. In order to put the fruits of this important congress at the service of the Church, the decision was made to compile a pastoral handbook, in which doctrinal principles

*The handbook is a
guide for pastoral
protagonists*

related to the question, and also important practical guidelines for a pastoral approach to drug addicts, would be included. It is this handbook that we are offering. It is in the first place addressed to the bishops, to the pastoral workers, as well as to all people who are concerned about the drug problem, with the hope of offering some help to them in this difficult and delicate field of their apostolates.

26. The first chapter of this manual presents in a synthetic way the position of Pope John Paul II on the issue of drugs, whereas the second offers practical information on the different types of drugs, and of treating the problem of drug addiction under the aspect of dependence. The third chapter offers a reflection both on the question of freedom and on the discovery of the sense of pleasure and joy, demonstrating that every person is called to build his or her life positively and to learn to love life. The fourth chapter deals with the topics of education and prevention as fundamental means of fighting drug addiction; the fifth chapter presents in a synthetic way the pastoral attitudes and the delicate ministry of a spiritual guide to the drug addicts and their families.

Scheme of the work

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THE TEACHING OF JOHN PAUL II ON THE PHENOMENON OF DRUGS AND DRUG ADDICTION

28 II 27. This chapter offers a synthesis of the mind of John Paul II on the question of drugs. It also makes reference to some observations of the Cardinal Secretary of State, Angelo Sodano as well as the position of the Pontifical Council for the Family and that of Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers.

1. The Phenomenon of drugs today

28. The Pope said that, “among the threats facing youth and our entire society today, drugs take the first place as an invisible and insidious danger, that is not yet adequately evaluated according to the amplitude of its seriousness. [...] the infection spreads like wild fire, extending its tentacles from big cities to small centres, from rich and industrialised nations to the Third World. [...] There are torrents of illegal trafficking that interlace and cover international routes to reach, through thousands of channels, the purification laboratories and from here to capillary circulation”.² Drug trade, the pope underlines, upsets nations. “The scourge of violence and terrorism, aggravated by the foul trade of drugs for which it is often the cause, puts the social equilibrium of countries at risk”.³

*Drugs put the world
equilibrium at risk*

29. Referring to drug related groups, the pope adds. “Deep sadness and abhorrence stirs up in our hearts [...] because of the crimes that people and groups commit in

² John Paul II, *To the Youth of the Therapeutic Community for Drug Addicts*, 27 May 1984, in *Insegnamenti*, VII/1 1984, pp. 1538-1539, n. 2.

³ John Paul II, *To the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 13 January 1990, in *Insegnamenti*, XIII/1, 1990, p. 79, n. 14.

order to build illegitimate sources of income through the drug trade".⁴ For the pope, therefore, drugs are a phenomenon that is closely connected with the culture of death.

30. "One cannot but observe with sorrow, that the culture of death threatens to overtake the love for life [...], death procured with violence and drugs".⁵ On the other hand, "One cannot fail to deplore the damages caused by any type of violence and drug dealing in certain societies, to the point of shaking their foundations; I think particularly of the people who have been assassinated, those taken as hostages, or the disappearance of innocent people".⁶ "We must unfortunately note that today this phenomenon is reaching all spheres and regions of the world".⁷

*Drugs and the
culture of death*

31. The pope is worried about the extension of the phenomenon. "We are now faced with a phenomenon of terrifying scope and proportions, not only because of the very high number of lives brought to an end, but also because of the worrisome spread of the moral contagion, which for some time now has been reaching the very young as well. As in the case unfortunately not uncommon, of children along with their peers being forced to become pushers, and consumers themselves".⁸

*A phenomenon that
is widespread among
the youth of every age*

32. "The tragic episodes show that this disgusting epidemic, involving a vile market, has become so widespread as to surpass national and continental boundaries [...], and its

⁴ John Paul II, *To the Cardinals and the Roman Curia for the Christmas Greetings*, 22 December 1989, in *Insegnamenti*, XII/2, 1989, pp. 1597-98, n. 9.

⁵ John Paul II, *To the Pontifical Athenaeum "Antoniano"*, 16 January 1982, in *Insegnamenti*, V/1, 1982, p.139, n.4.

⁶ John Paul II, *The Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, during the audience for the exchange of the New Year Greetings*, 12 January 1991, in *Insegnamenti*, XIV/1, 1991, p.82, n. 4.

⁷ John Paul II, *To the participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, 11 October 1997, in *Insegnamenti*, XX/2, pp. 531-32, n. 2

⁸ John Paul II, *To the participants at the VI International Conference on "Drugs and Alcoholism against Life"*, 23 November, in *Insegnamenti*, XIV/2, 1991, p. 1251, n. 3.

connections with delinquency and crime are such that they constitute one of the principle factors of general decadence".⁹

33. "The drug phenomenon is a particularly serious evil. Many young people and adults have died or will die as a result, while others find themselves impaired in their innermost being and personal capacities".¹⁰

34. In his opening address at the Church Symposium on Drugs, "United for Life", to which we made reference in the introduction, the Cardinal Secretary of State spoke of the devastating effects of drugs today, not only on health but also on conscience and the collective mentality. Drugs are both the fruit and cause of a great ethical degeneration and a growing social disintegration, that corrupt the very fabric of morality, of interpersonal relationships, and of civilised community life. He then also revealed the physical damages concomitant with and resulting from drug abuse, ranging from hepatitis to tuberculosis and AIDS. We need not mention, he said the context of violence, sexual exploitation, arms trade, and terrorism in which this phenomenon prospers, and who does not know the family relationships that have been rendered difficult because of it? A particular burden falls on women, often forced into prostitution to sustain addicted husbands. In order to be able to reduce the profit of the traffickers it would be necessary to intercept at least 75% of the international drug traffic. Trafficking of heroin and cocaine is in its major part controlled by trans-national organisations, and managed by criminal groups that are strongly centralised, with a wide range of specialised personnel: ranging from chemists to experts in communication and money laundering, from lawyers to security guards.¹¹

⁹ John Paul II, *In an Address to the Therapeutic Communities*, 7 September 1984, in *Insegnamenti*, VII/2, 1984, p. 347, n. 4.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *To the participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, op. cit., p. 532, n. 3.

¹¹ Cf. Angelo Sodano, *The Opening Address of Cardinal Secretary of State, Angelo Sodano at the Symposium "United for Life" promoted by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers* (9 October 1997), in *"L'Osservatore Romano"*, 11 October 1997, p. 4, 1. The "Drug Scourge"; 2. "Devastating Effects".

2. The causes of the drug phenomenon

35. The pope states: "Psychologists and sociologists say that the first cause that drives youth and adults to the harmful experience of drugs is a lack of clear and convincing motivations for life. In fact, the lack of points of reference, the vacuum of values, the conviction that nothing has sense and that life is not worth living, the tragic and distressing feeling of being unknown wayfarers in an absurd universe, can lead some to the search for a desperate and exasperated escape. [...] Experts in psychology also say that the cause of the drug phenomenon is a sense of loneliness and incommunicability that unfortunately weighs on modern society, noise and alienation even within the family. It is a sad fact, that alongside the absence of intimacy with God, and without justification, there is a seeking after drugs, beginning a journey of flight in order to forget oneself, to dazzle oneself, and to escape from oppressive and unbearable situations. A second cause, according to the experts, involves a search for "artificial paradises" into different types of drugs, so as to escape the defective social structures that do not offer satisfaction, but it is a journey of no return".¹²

36. Elsewhere the pope adds: "Avarice for money takes possession of the hearts of many people and transforms them, by means of the drug business, into traffickers of the freedom of their brothers, who then become slaves of a slavery that is much worse than that of the black slaves. The slave drivers deprived their victims of the exercise of their freedom; the drug traffickers lead their victims to the destruction of their personality".¹³

37. With regard to the drug business, "Widespread drug use is a sign of a serious malfunction in the social sys-

¹² John Paul II, *Homily at the Mass for ex-drug addicts* [for the Italian Committee of Solidarity for the addicted youth, directed by Don Mario Picchi], 9 August 1980, in *Insegnamenti*, III/2, 1980, pp. 347-349.

¹³ John Paul II, *Appeal before the tomb of St. Peter Claver*, 6 January 1986, in *Insegnamenti*, IX/2, 1986, p. 197.

tem; it also implies a materialistic and, in a certain sense, destructive 'reading' of human needs. In this way the innovative capacity of a free economy is brought to a one-sided and inadequate conclusion. Drugs, as well as pornography and other forms of consumerism which exploit the frailty of the weak, tend to fill the resulting spiritual void".¹⁴

Effect: existential
void and violent
deterioration

38. On the causes of drug abuse, the pope stresses "that at the origin there is always an atmosphere of human and religious scepticism, and of hedonism, which in the final analysis leads to frustration, to an existential void, to a conviction that life is without purpose, ending in violent negativity".¹⁵ "[...] at the root of alcohol and drug abuse – though in a complexity of causes and situations – there is usually an existential void due to the absence of values and a lack of self-confidence in others and in life in general, [...] and today we are faced with insidious social plagues which have spread throughout the world, fostered by huge economic interests, and sometimes political ones as well".¹⁶

Drug business and
loss of hope

39. "Drug addiction is a symptom of a problem in life, of having difficulty in finding ones place in society, with fear of the future and ending with a flight into a deceptive and fictitious life. [...] The growth in the market and of the consumption of drugs show that we are in a world devoid of almost all hope, where vigorous human and spiritual purposes are lacking. In effect, many young people think that all behaviour is the same, and do not differentiate between good and evil or acquire a sense of moral limits".¹⁷

40. For his part, the Cardinal Secretary of State underscores the fact that drug addition is related to the pre-

¹⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 1 May 1991, n.36, in *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 1991-1993/13, EDB Bologna 1995, pp. 125-129.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *At the Italian Centre for Solidarity on the World Anti-Drug Day*, 24 May 1991, in *Insegnamenti*, XIV/1, 1991, p. 1784, n. 2.

¹⁶ John Paul II, *To the participants at the VI International Conference on "Drugs and Alcoholism against Life"*, op. cit., p. 1249, n. 2.

¹⁷ John Paul II, *To the participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, op. cit., p. 532, n. 3.

sent state of a permissive and secularised society, in which hedonism, individualism, pseudo-values, and false models prevail. It is a depersonalised and standardised society. What people seek in drugs, continues Cardinal Sodano citing Cardinal Ratzinger, is "the endless perversion of human aspiration..., the pseudo-ecstasy of a world that does not believe, but all the same cannot shake off its shoulders the tension of the soul towards paradise".¹⁸

~~✱~~ ✱

41. The Pontifical Council for the Family adds in turn, that the fundamental and constant motive for the use of drugs is constituted by the absence of moral values and the lack of interior harmony in an individual. At the root there is the lack of education, whereby society and the family do not transmit values. Without values, the addict suffers from "lack of love". "It is not only the drugs in question, but also the psychological and existential human questions underlying this behaviour. Very often there is the refusal to understand such questions forgetting that, what makes drug addiction is not the toxic substance but the person who feels the need for it. [...] The recourse to drugs is a symptom of a profound "illness". [...] Behind these phenomena there is a request for help from the individual, who remains alone with his or her life; there is the desire not only for recognition and appreciation, but also for love. [...] In effect, the problem is not in the drug, but in the sickness of the spirit that leads to drugs, as Pope John Paul II reminds us: "There is need to recognise that there is a link between the lethal sickness caused by the abuse of drugs and the sickness of the spirit that leads the person to escape from oneself and seek deceptive satisfactions in avoiding reality, to the point of cancelling completely the meaning of ones existence".¹⁹

*The drug addict,
suffers from lack of
love*

¹⁸ Cf. Angelo Sodano, *The Opening ...*, op. cit., p.4, 4. "To the Ethical-Cultural Roots of the Phenomenon" (J. Ratzinger, *Svolta per l'Europa*, Edizioni Paoline 1992, p. 15)

¹⁹ Pontifical Council for the Family, *Liberalizzazione della droga?*, in "Enchiridion Vaticanum", n.16, 1997, pp. 31-33.

3. Moral Judgement

3.1. *The human being does not have right to harm him/herself*

Drug traffickers,
merchants of death

42. The presentation of the problem has implicitly led to the realisation that from the moral point of view, there is need to totally reject the use of drugs. It is in effect a practice that is completely incompatible with Christian morality. The pope defined the drug traffickers as “merchants of death”; he underlines that the drug addicts are like “people on a journey”, who go in search for something in which to believe in order to live; they stumble instead, into the merchants of death who assail them with the allurements of illusory and false prospects for happiness. [...] While aware of this, you and I nevertheless wish to testify that there are reasons to go on hoping and they are much stronger than those against: (*contra spem in spem*). Indeed, today, too, as in the parable of the gospel, Good Samaritans are not lacking, who with personal sacrifice and sometimes at a personal risk, are able ‘to become the neighbour’ of those in difficulty”.²⁰ He refers to drugs as “a wicked trade”, considers drugs as a scourge, speaks of the criminals of drugs, and of the evil business of toxic substances. “What should we say about the obscure face of drug supply? Of the big reservoirs and the millions of rivulets through which the wicked traffic flows? About the colossal speculations and the ignoble links with organised crime? Every serious preventive proposal on a large scale, solicits interventions capable of drying up the sources and arresting the courses of this swollen river. The fight against drugs is a serious duty connected with the exercise of public responsibility”.²¹

43. [...] taking drugs [...] is always illicit, because it involves an unjustified and irrational renunciation of thinking, willing and acting as free persons. [...] We

²⁰ John Paul II, *To the participants at the VI International Conference on “Drugs and Alcoholism against Life”*, op. cit., p. 1250, n. 2-3.

²¹ John Paul II, *In an Address to the Therapeutic Communities*, op. cit., p. 349, n. 6.

cannot speak of the 'freedom to take drugs' or 'the right to drugs', for the human being has no right to harm him/herself, nor the right to abdicate ones personal dignity, which comes from God! These phenomena – it must always be remembered – are not only detrimental to physical and psychic well being, but frustrate the person precisely in his or her capacity for communion and self-giving. All this is particularly serious in the case of youth. Theirs is, in fact, the age which opens to life, the age of the great ideals, the season of sincere, altruistic love".²²

*Use of drugs, a
renunciation of
freedom*

44. Speaking of the psychosomatic aspect of drugs, the pope reiterates [citing Paul VI] "that which science affirms as the biochemical action of drugs introduced into the organism. It is as if the brain were hit violently: all the structures of the psychic life remain upset under the shove of these excessive and disorderly stimuli",²³ and he adds then that drug addiction other than being a sickness of the body, is a sickness of the spirit.

45. In his address, the Cardinal Secretary of State quotes the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, that, "except on strictly therapeutic grounds, the use of drugs is a grave offence" (n. 2291). It is clear that in each case, there is need to establish the degree of personal responsibility of the individual, in order to be able to eventually speak of the gravity of his fault.

*The use of drugs is a
grave offence*

46. In its document *Dalla disperazione alla speranza* (From Desperation to hope), the Pontifical council for the Family, declares that the consumption of drugs is nothing but a false answer to the lack of a positive sense of life; besides, it affirms that drugs attack the sensibility of a person and the good use of his reason and will.

²² John Paul II, *To the participants at the VI International Conference on "Drugs and Alcoholism against Life"*, op. cit., p. 1251-52, n. 4.

²³ John Paul II, *Homily at the New Rome Branch of the "Italian Centre for Solidarity"*, 21 June 1980, in *Insegnamenti*, IX/1, 1986, p. 1890, n. 3.

3.2. No to the Liberalisation of Drugs

Ineffectiveness of
permissive laws

47. It is exactly in this context that the problem of the liberalisation of drugs sets itself. What does the Pope think about it? He responds, reiterating his affirmation during the meeting with the therapeutic Community of San Crispino of Viterbo: "Drugs cannot be won using Drugs". Drugs are an evil, and you do not make concessions to an evil. The legalisation of drugs, be it partial, besides being more or less questionable in relation to the nature of law, does not take into account the (pre)-established effects. This is confirmed by an experience that is by now common".²⁴ In the already cited address to the participants of the International Congress on drugs, organised by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers, the Pope asserts again: "It is not surprising that a great bewilderment and a feeling of powerlessness are over-running society. Some current opinions propose the legalization of the production and sale of certain drugs. Some authorities are prepared to let things go, and just try to organise the drug consumption in order to control its effects. Consequently, the use of certain drugs becomes common even in schools; this is encouraged by the argument that seeks to minimise the dangers, especially by distinguishing between soft and hard drugs, leading to proposals for the liberalisation of certain substances. Such a distinction overlooks and downplays the risks inherent in taking any toxic product, especially the dependency behaviour that is based on the psychic structures themselves, the blurring of the conscience and the loss of one's will and freedom, whatever be the drug".²⁵

Still need
dln soft & hard

Replacement
drugs
Inefficacy of
replacement drugs

48. Directly related to this problem, is the question of replacement drugs. "Drugs cannot be won with Drugs. Replacement drugs are not an adequate treatment, but rather a disguised way of surrendering to the phenomenon. [...] It is the common opinion of the respectable observers,

²⁴ John Paul II, *In an Address to the Therapeutic Communities*, op. cit., p. 349, n. 6

²⁵ John Paul II, *To the participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, op. cit., 532, n. 2.

that the capturing power of drugs on a youthful spirit is in the disaffection to life, collapse of values, and the fear of the future".²⁶

49. When speaking about the possibility of recovery in the therapeutic communities, the pope considers it "significant that this happens with methods that rigorously exclude any concession in a substitutive way of both legal and illegal drugs".²⁷ In his address that we cited above, Cardinal Sodano recalls that replacement drugs are not a good treatment, instead they are a capitulation; with regard to liberalisation, he underlines that according to the opinion of those who support the use of soft drugs, prohibition has not done other than aggravate the problem, while according to the opinion of those in favour of prohibition, the ascent to soft drugs is nothing but a preparation of the access to hard drugs; besides, this has to do with an irreversible step that will not eliminate the black market for narcotics and will not in fact reduce violence and criminality. He then quotes the thought of the pope with regard to the question of prohibition. "Drugs are an evil, and you do not make concessions to an evil... It is for this reason that the distinction between 'hard drugs' and 'soft drugs' leads to a dead end. Addiction does not take its origin from the drug itself, but in what leads the individual to taking drugs".²⁸

Drugs are an evil

Soft drugs

50. In this regard, the Pontifical Council for the Family specifies that in certain countries legislation controls the use of drugs, permitting however an easy access to "soft drugs". Some say that this does not provoke neither biochemical dependency nor secondary effects on the organism; the idea is that in this way it would be possible to know better the addicts, in order to offer them better help and assistance. Instead it has been proved that these so-

Even soft drugs generate dependency

²⁶ John Paul II, *To the Youth of the Therapeutic Community for Drug Addicts*, op. cit. p. 1540, nn. 3 and 4.

²⁷ John Paul II, *In an Address to the Therapeutic Communities*, op. cit., p. 347, n. 3.

²⁸ Angelo Sodano, *The Opening ...*, op. cit., p. 4, 3. "Public Responsibility" (Cf. also J. Ratzinger, op. cit.).

called "soft" drugs provoke loss of attention and the alteration of the sense of reality; first they favour isolation, then dependency, in this way encouraging the taking of stronger products. From the pharmacological point of view, it is difficult to distinguish soft drugs from the hard ones. The decisive factors are the quantity consumed, the way of assimilation, and the eventual mixing or combination of products. The market witnesses the arrival of new drugs everyday, with new effects and therefore new questions.

*Liberalisation causes
confusion*

51. This same Council, on examining the request for drug liberalisation, says that sometimes those who have the responsibility of deciding express doubts with regard to the necessity of continuing with the fight against drugs, given that its use is by now so widespread. Should we therefore, surrender to the idea of watching the formation of an inferior class of underdeveloped human beings, who depend on drugs to live? There has not been enough consideration of what the experts for many years have been saying, that addiction does not take its origin from the drug itself but from what leads the person to taking drugs. The use of drugs is a device for not facing all the demands of life. We have forgotten that everyone has to respond to the essential questions of existence in order to consciously assume ones humanness. In reality, the weakness of the wish to legalise certain drugs can be seen in the baleful consequences that such decisions may have on education; liberalisation of drugs leads to their acceptance as legal; from this would derive such a confusion that makes one believe that what is legal is normal and moral. This legalisation would inevitably provoke high consumption, high criminality, a high number of road accidents, worsening of personal problems, an increase in the health problems at the expense of the general public, a State inclined to abdicate the duty to safeguard the common good, since it would give way to the destruction of youth, to the violation of the principle of equity and subsidiarity, and in the end the poor would be neglected.²⁹

²⁹ Pontifical Council for the Family, *Liberalizzazione della droga?*, op. cit., nn. 16-19, pp. 37-39.

52. The Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers equally wants to underscore the questions related to the legalisation of "soft" drugs and the controlled distribution of heroin. As has already been revealed, the problem in drug abuse is not only the drug substance, but also the addicted person. We find ourselves confronted by an ambiguity. The difference between what is morally and juridically illicit and the possibility of its sanction by law has not been sufficiently clarified. And so, there are some countries where only drug distribution is penalised and not its consumption, yet in other countries both are crimes and are therefore punishable. In some countries the punishments are very severe, extending from hard labour to hanging. In countries where the State were to organise the distribution of drugs, it would then become the principle provider, and that would be absurd! The criteria sometimes observed in order to allow drug distribution, for example hashish, is that of verifying whether its use produces harmful effects, or not, on the organism. Once again, the problem should not be looked at only in relation to the physical damages, but also the psychological consequences and the effects on the behaviour. When taken as a treatment to alleviate moral discomfort or to resolve personal difficulties, instead of offering remedies, drugs aggravate these sufferings and difficulties. All involved parties therefore, have to work not only on the reduction of the supply but particularly also on the demand, with an educative programme based on truth, freedom, and responsibility.³⁰

*The State cannot
become a drug
distributor*

*Why drugs can't
are drug problem*

4. Suggested Remedies

53. There are three ways to be followed: prevention, suppression, and rehabilitation. The first one is the most important, that is prevention combined with an appropriate education that proposes the true sense of life and gives priority to values.

³⁰ Cf. Conclusion of the Church Symposium on Drugs, "United for Life", in *Dolentium Hominum. Church and Health in the World*, n.38, Year 1998/2, pp. 73-76.

restoring
values
combat

The real struggle
consists in the
recovery of values

The Church proposes
the therapy of love

4.1. Prevention

54. "The phenomena of drugs and alcoholism cannot be combated, underlines the pope, nor can effective action be taken for the healing and recovery of their victims unless the *human values of love and life* are first restored – the only ones capable, especially if illuminated by religious faith, of giving full meaning to our existence".³¹ Drugs are combated not only through medical and juridical measures, but also and above all through the creation of new human relationships, rich in spiritual and affective values.³²

55. The Church, in the name of Christ, proposes an answer and an alternative: the therapy of love, because God is love, and he who lives in love knows communion with God and with others. "Whoever does not love, remains in death" (1 Jn 3, 14). "As it is incumbent on the Church, to work at a moral and pedagogical level, intervening with great sensitivity in this specific area. It is up to public institutions to adopt a serious policy aimed at healing situations of personal and social discomfort, such as the crisis in the family, the origin and foundation of human society, unemployment among the youth, housing problems, social and health services, and the educational system. [...] The Church, which desires to work in society as the yeast of the Gospel is and will continue to be ever at the side of those, who with responsible dedication face the social plagues of drugs and alcoholism, in order to encourage and support them with the words and the grace of Christ."³³ "The clear conviction in the immortality of the soul, the future resurrection of the bodies and the eternal responsibility for one's actions is the most sure method for the prevention of the terrible evil of drugs, the treatment and rehabilitation of its poor victims, and for strengthening

³¹ John Paul II, *To the participants at the VI International Conference on "Drugs and Alcoholism against Life"*, op. cit., p. 1252, n. 4.

³² Cf. The Homily of John Paul II at the inauguration of the "Italian Centre for Solidarity", 21 June 1986, in *Insegnamenti*, IX/1, 1986, p. 1890, n. 3.

³³ John Paul II, *To the participants at the VI International Conference on "Drugs and Alcoholism against Life"*, op. cit., p. 1253, n. 5.

them in perseverance and steadfastness in the way of goodness".³⁴

56. In this phase the family has a very important role. "Faced with a world and a society that runs the risk of becoming more and more depersonalised and therefore dehumanised, with the negative results of many forms of escapism – a principal one being the abuses associated with drugs – the family possesses "formidable energies capable of taking the individual out of his anonymity".³⁵ In the above cited address to the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers, the pope invites married couples to develop stable conjugal and family relations, based on fidelity to their bond of love in the fight against drugs: "They will thus create the best conditions for a peaceful life in their homes, giving to their children *the emotional security and self-confidence they need for their spiritual and psychological growth*. [...] I therefore invite all those who have an educational role to intensify efforts with young people, who need to form their conscience, develop their interior life and create positive relationships and constructive dialogue with their brothers and sisters; they will help them live freely and responsibly".³⁶

*The role of the
Family in the fight
against drug
addiction*

57. With regard to the necessary information, the pope recalls "the duty to provide wise and precise medical information, especially to young people: stressing the harmful effects of drugs on the physical, intellectual, psychological, social and moral levels".³⁷ Prevention demands "the contribution of the entire society: parents, schools, social environment, instruments of communication, national and international organs. There is need for a commitment to

³⁴ John Paul II, *In an Address to the Therapeutic Communities*, op. cit., p. 350, n. 7.

³⁵ John Paul II, *To the United States House of Representatives Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control*, 19 January 1984, in *Insegnamenti*, VII/1, p. 115.

³⁶ John Paul II, *To the participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, op. cit., p. 534, n. 5.

³⁷ John Paul II, *Ibidem*, p. 534, n. 6.

form a new society, meeting the needs of men; the education to be human ”.³⁸

4.2. Suppression

Necessity of
legislations against
traffickers

58. The pope recognises that suppression alone is not enough to stop the phenomenon of drugs, however this has to be hard fought “It must be recognised that a crack-down on those who use illegal substances is not enough to contain this scourge; in fact, *a significant criminal network of trafficking and financing has been organised on an international scale*”.³⁹ To fight these drug organisations, “it is necessary to create legislation on a comprehensive plan of deterrence against trafficking in narcotics”.⁴⁰ The pope asks that “a united front thus be formed, engaged increasingly not only in prevention and the rehabilitation of drug addicts, but also in denouncing and legally prosecuting the traffickers of death and in demolishing the webs of moral and social disintegration. [...] I thus repeat – adds the Pope – the serious appeal I made several years ago to the different public bodies, both national and international, that they ‘curb the expansion of the drug market. To this end, the interests of those speculating on the market must first of all be brought to light; the instruments and mechanisms they make use of should then be identified; and, finally, the co-ordinated, effective dismantling of these ought to begin.’”.⁴¹

Urgency for a
regional and
continental plan
of action

59. “In order to confront this problem, it is necessary to give more force and efficacy to the principle of unity and integration of Latin-America. [...] In this regard it becomes necessary to follow a plan of honest regional and continental co-operation, so that the means that have been

³⁸ John Paul II, *To the Youth of the Therapeutic Community for Drug Addicts*, op. cit. p. 1541, n. 5.

³⁹ John Paul II, *To the participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, op. cit., p. 532, n. 2.

⁴⁰ John Paul II, *To the United States House of Representatives Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control*, op. cit., p. 116.

⁴¹ John Paul II, *To the participants at the VI International Conference on “Drugs and Alcoholism against Life”*, op. cit., pp. 1250-51, n. 3.

applied to fight the trafficking of narcotics can be rendered efficacious".⁴² "It is imperative that the criminal activity of drug production and trafficking should be directly opposed and ultimately stopped. In this regard, my encouragement and admiration go to all those countries in which government leaders and citizens are truly committed to combating the production, sale and misuse of drugs, sometimes paying a very high price, even sacrificing their own physical integrity".⁴³ "I invite the *civil authorities, the economic decision-makers and all who have social responsibility* to continue and intensify their efforts in order to improve at all levels legislation against drug abuse and to oppose all forms of drug culture and trafficking".⁴⁴

Politicians have a duty to fight the culture of drugs

4.3. Rehabilitation

60. The Pope invites us to confront this problem in concrete terms: "In order to confront drugs, neither sterile alarmism nor careless superficiality are of any use. Instead what is required is the effort to know individuals and understand their interior world. To lead them to the discovery or the rediscovery of their proper human dignity. To help them thorough a confident reactivation of the mechanisms of the will directed towards sure and noble ideals, and to resuscitate and develop those personal qualities, which the drugs have destroyed".⁴⁵

The sense of human dignity at the basis of rehabilitation

61. The Pope encourages "parents who have an addicted child never to despair, to maintain dialogue with him or her, to show them their affection and foster contacts with facilities that are capable of treating them. The family's warm attention is a great support for the

The Gospel helps to overcome crisis

⁴² John Paul II, *To the representatives of Latin-American Countries*, 5 December 1985, in *Insegnamenti*, VII/2, 1985, pp. 1418-19.

⁴³ John Paul II, *Message to the International Conference in Vienna on the trafficking and abuse of Drugs*, 5 June 1987, in *Insegnamenti*, X/2, 1987, p. 1942.

⁴⁴ John Paul II, *To the participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, op. cit., p. 534, n. 6.

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *In an Address to the Therapeutic Communities*, op. cit., p. 347, n. 3.

*Understand the
young people's thirst
for life*

interior struggle and the progress of detoxification treatment".⁴⁶ "The most difficult human and social crises can be overcome in the light of the Gospel, and [...] therefore today one can also come out of the drug drama and get back to a confident way of life".⁴⁷ "The fear of the future and the insertion into the adult life that is noticed in young people makes them particularly vulnerable. Often, they are not encouraged to struggle for a good, upright life; they have the tendency to withdraw into themselves [...]. Forces of death, then, drive them to abandon themselves to drugs, to violence, sometimes even to the point of suicide. Behind what may appear as a fascination for a kind of self-destruction, we must see in these young people a call for help and a deep thirst for life, so that the world may radically modify its proposals and ways of life".⁴⁸ "The gift of life' appeals to sobriety, chastity, opposing pornography, and sensitisation to the dangers of drugs".⁴⁹

*It is possible to
overcome drugs*

62. Then, continues the Pope, "if we have to confront this great danger to the human person, and above all to the young person, which is drugs, we must have proof of the possibility of winning. If we have the certainty that it is possible to win, one proved by those who have won, then we can confront the problem with hope. Therefore, you young people, who have been victorious, be for others a witness of hope, a proof of the possible victory; become also for society that is worried about the drug phenomenon, a new impulse for the struggle. So that it may apply all forces and all good will. It is worth it because victory is possible".⁵⁰

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *To the participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, op. cit., pp. 534-35, n. 6.

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *To the Youth of the Therapeutic Community for Drug Addicts*, op. cit. p. 1538, n. 1.

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *To the participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, op. cit., p. 533, n. 4.

⁴⁹ John Paul II, *To the Polish Bishops gathered at Jasna Gora*, 19 June 1983, in *Insegnamenti*, VI/1, 1983, pp. 1588-89, n. 5.

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *Homily at the Mass for ex-drug addicts*, op. cit., pp. 350-51.

63. In his address cited above, the Cardinal Secretary of State emphasises that only the personal commitment of the individual, his or her will to revive and to recover, can guarantee a return to normality, having gone through the hallucinating world of narcotics. To this end the social aids to the family and the therapeutic communities are indispensable.⁵¹

64. In turn the Pontifical Council for the Family affirms that drug addicts need to know and experience the love of Jesus Christ. To be open and to revive an authentic ideal of life. That through faith they will fully and sincerely adhere to Christ and his Gospel, accepting his sovereignty to the point of becoming his disciples. The addict will be able to listen to the words of Jesus: "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11, 28). The Church proposes, and does not impose; she leads the human person to the discovery of his or her dignity as an active subject, and teaches him the reason for one's earthly existence.

*The importance of
experiencing the love
of Christ*

65. The duty of evangelising the world of drugs requires three fundamental steps: announce the paternal love of God, denounce the evils caused by drugs, and ensure assistance to the drug addicts. The Christian model of the family remains the primary point of reference for prevention, rehabilitation and insertion of the individuals into society.⁵²

*Always ensure
assistance to the drug
addicts*

5. The Church in front of Drug Addicts

66. "Drugs are not the main problem of the addict. The consumption of drugs is only a false answer to the lack of a positive sense of life. At the centre of drug addiction is the human being, a unique subject, with his or her interior life and specific personality, the object of the love of the

*The divine call is
also addressed to the
drug addict*

⁵¹ Angelo Sodano, *The Opening ...*, op. cit., p. 4, 7. "Horizon of Hope".

⁵² Pontifical Council for the Family, *Dalla disperazione alla speranza*, in "Enchiridion Vaticanum", n. 13, 1992, pp. 891-913.

Father, who in his plan of salvation calls everyone to the sublime vocation of sonship in the Son. However, the realization of such a vocation is – together with happiness in this world – seriously compromised by the use of drugs, because it influences in a harmful way the sensibility and the right exercise of the intellect and will, in the human person, the image of God (cf. *Gn* 1, 27) ”.⁵³

God saves man

67. The Church proclaims that God saves man in Christ, revealing to him or her their vocation and the love with which they are loved.⁵⁴ In the light of this truth, all human beings have the right to know that to live means to say yes to God and walk in the way of holiness. The merciful love of God is directed in a particular way to those who have more need of his compassionate and liberating action. Christ tells us that it is the sick who need the physician (cf. *Mt* 9, 12; *Mk* 2, 17; *Lk* 5, 31).

*The Church
proclaims the Gospel
of salvation*

68. We should be happy about the concern and activities of the numerous people and institutions that are with patience committed every day to help the individuals hit by drug addiction. The Church puts itself at the service of those who find themselves under the yoke of this new form of slavery. What the Church proposes is the Gospel plan for man. To those who live the tragedy of drug addiction, to those who suffer because they lead a miserable existence, she announces the love of God that does not want death, but conversion and life (*Ezk* 18, 23). The argument here is about an integral life, the eternal life, proclaimed also for those who are in threatening and dangerous situations. The Church wishes to restore hope to all people.

69. For the drug addict, who fundamentally suffers from a “lack of love,” the Church would like to get him or her to discover the love of Christ. When one is under the agony of

⁵³ Pontifical Council for the Family, *Dalla disperazione alla speranza*, op. cit., p. 893.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ecumenical Council Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, n. 22.

an ailment, a deep vacuum of existence, the road towards light is through the revival of the authentic ideal of life, which is fully manifested in the mystery of revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. With her specific contribution, the Church intervenes in the problem of drug addiction to prevent the evil, help the addicts to liberate themselves from drugs and socially reintegrate themselves, and also to help their families.

70. To the phenomenon of drug addiction, the Church responds with a message of hope and a service that goes beyond the symptoms and behaviour of the individual in order to reach his or her heart; she does not limit herself to the ailment, but proposes programmes for life. She puts herself at a level that takes into consideration the precise vision she has of man, which leads her to indicate the values of life. Her duty is evangelical; to announce the good news. She does not assume any type of temporary post with respect to other institutions and/or other human needs. In fact, she would like to support all people who dedicate themselves to drug addicts and assume her due role in the world. In effect, her specific duty is that of proposing the "the evangelical school" as a form of life founded on the relationship with Christ, the only one who can realise the desires of man, because our soul thirsts for the living God (cf. Ps 62).

*Eliminate the
distance between the
drug addicts and the
institutions*

71. It is exactly at the centre of the Church's evangelising mission that its intervention in the area of drug addiction takes place. In this activity the Church "has but one purpose: to serve man by revealing to him the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ".⁵⁵ It is only in Him that every human being can find the true treasure, the true reason of his existence. The words of Christ, "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11, 28), acquire an extraordinary significance when they are addressed to the drug addicts.

⁵⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 December 1990, n. 2. *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 1990/12, EDB Bologna 1992, pp. 453.

*The Church, a
dynamic presence*

72. The Gospel unites the proclamation of the Good News to good works, like, for example, the cure of "all kinds of disease and illness" (Mt 4, 23). The Church is "a dynamic force" and is "a sign and promoter of gospel values among men".⁵⁶ Exactly because of this, the Church, "never losing sight of the priority of the transcendent and spiritual realities, premises of eschatological salvation",⁵⁷ has always offered a gospel witness uniting it with the execution of her activities: dialogue, human promotion, commitment to justice and peace, education and care of the sick, aid to the poor and to children. It must be clear, once and for all, that in the proclamation of the Good News of the love of God, she does not exercise any constraint on the freedom of people: she stops before the sanctuary of the conscience, and *proposes without imposing anything*.⁵⁸

*Help drug addicts to
recover their human
dignity*

73. The Holy Father recalls that the evangelising ministry of the Church consists in the proclamation of the Good News, to lead to the recognition that Jesus Christ is for every human being "the real treasure, the precious pearl, the true and definitive reason for their being".⁵⁹ Referring to the drug addicts, the Supreme Pontiff affirms that it is necessary to "lead him or her to the discovery or the rediscovery of their proper human dignity; and help them as an active subject, thorough a confident reactivation of the mechanisms of the will directed towards sure and noble ideals, to resuscitate and develop those personal qualities, which the drugs had buried".⁶⁰

74. Today, with the wide diffusion of drugs, the Church finds herself in front of a new challenge: she has to evangelise people who live these particular circumstances and

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 20.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 39.

⁵⁹ John Paul II, *Homily during the Mass in Piazza Sordello* [Mantova], 23 June 1991, in *Insegnamenti*, XIV/1, 1991, p. 1762, n. 5.

⁶⁰ John Paul II, *In an Address to the Therapeutic Communities* [on the occasion of their VIII International Congress], 7 September 1984, in *Insegnamenti*, VII/2, 1984, p. 347, n. 3.

those who contribute to the diffusion of toxic products. For this purpose, she sets as objective:

75. The annunciation of the paternal love of the Father to save every human being;

76. The denunciation of the personal and social evils caused and promoted by the drug phenomenon;

77. The witness of the faithful who dedicate themselves to the care of the drug addicts, after the example of Jesus Christ, who did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life (*Mt* 20, 28; *Pb* 2, 7).

78. This threefold activity involves:

79. the prophetic duty of announcing, which presents the original gospel vision of man;

*Prophetic
annunciation*

80. the duty of humble service, to the image of the Good Shepherd who give his life for others;

Humble service

81. the duty of pastoral and moral formation of individuals, families, and human communities, to be realised according to the natural and supernatural principles, in order to offer an integral vision of the human being.

Moral formation

82. The Church wants to intervene in the situation of drug addicts in the name of her evangelical mission; with the aim of letting them listen to the word of the love of God, offering the means to spiritually reach all those who are hit by drugs.

Chapter II

DRUG ADDICTION IS A SYMPTOM OF DEPENDENCY

*Dependency and the
crisis of values*

83. The *Charter for Health Care Workers* defines dependency, from the standpoint of medicine and health care, as “an addiction to a substance or product – such as pharmaceuticals, alcohol, narcotics, or tobacco – for which individuals feel an uncontrollable need, and the privation of which can cause them psychophysical disorders. The phenomenon of dependency [according to the *Charter*], is escalating in our societies; it is disturbing and, under certain aspects, dramatic. This is related, on the one hand, to a crisis in values and meaning which contemporary society and culture, is experiencing and, on the other, to the stress and frustrations brought about by the quest for efficiency, by activism, and by the high competitiveness and anonymity of social interaction. Undoubtedly, the evils caused by dependency and the care it requires are not a matter for medicine alone. But medicine does have a preventive and therapeutic role”.⁶¹

84. The majority of people, who resort to “drugs”, claim that they are in search of happiness, pleasure or a particular form of life that they do not presently experience. This is something to which we will return often in our reflections on the use of psycho-active products. Some of the effects of these products are known, liberating the subjects from certain inhibitions, provoking a sense of tranquillity to the point of almost extinguishing every desire, calming deep anxieties or overcoming certain discomforts of living so that they can face the realities of everyday life.

85. Drugs have always been present in all societies, but most of the time in a relatively circumscribed way. With

⁶¹ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, Vatican City 1995, n. 92.

improvement in communication and transport, there has been an expansion of the chains of drug diffusion, and consumption, especially among youth, and even children.

86. Human beings have always had a complex and ambivalent relationship with certain substances that are either found in the wild or are easily cultivated. While physicians use them for therapeutic purposes,⁶² many others came to know these substances, using them for reasons other than therapeutic especially to rouse particular states of consciousness or new sensations. In Mesopotamia and in Egypt (2000 BC) physicians could already distinguish, for example, between the pharmacological use of opium to alleviate pain, and its “mundane” use meant to produce states of unconsciousness and flights from reality. For this reason it was required that the contents be indicated on the bottles, people being reminded that wills made under the influence of drugs were considered invalid.

*Natural drugs in
history*

Moreover, the use of drugs was sometimes related to magic and pagan religions. Today we still find that this magic spirit persists around drugs, giving the consumer the illusion of a liberation from human circumstances and limits. There is also the collective consumption of drugs within a group, often used for initiation or other specific rites that characterise the life of the group. Recourse to drugs is also seen in some sects whose people seek a relationship with a divinity or who live as a group under the influence of a leader.

87. The increasing number of natural and synthetic products on the market gives rise to new varieties of drugs. These act in different ways on the organism, notably the brain, especially affecting the will, the reason, and the behaviour of the individual, to the point of affecting not only freedom and its exercise but also a person's sense of responsibility.

*The new synthetic
drugs*

88. Before probing the question, it is important to present the products that are consumed the most today, and

⁶² Cf. J. C. Dousset, *Histoire des médicaments des origines à nos jours*, Payot, Paris 1985.

their effects on the person. There is a continuous appearance of new drugs on the market, especially synthetic ones, which prove to be more dangerous. The recourse to doping in order to improve the performance of sportsmen and women, the use of psychotropic drugs and poly-addiction, which combine different products, increasingly give rise to the phenomena of dependency, and a certain alienation of the individual.

1. The Products⁶³

1.1. *The action of drugs on the brain*

Drugs and dopamine

89. Most drugs act on the brain. All the products that cause dependency in the human being have a common property: increasing the amount of dopamine (that which is called the "return circuit") naturally present in the brain. Many drugs act at the level of the connection zone between neurons, called the synapse, where manifold information is transmitted at the cortical level, between the neuron that releases dopamine and the target neuron. Dopamine is a neuromediator, which is a compound of chemical substances that ensures the continuity of the nervous influence. It is released by the synapse; it then settles on the receptor neuron and slowly invades the entire nervous system.

90. The stimulation of the neurons by dopamine produces an intense feeling of pleasure. And so the individual will try to reproduce this or that sensation by resorting to the product(s) used. This mechanism partly explains the behaviour related to repetitive consumption of drugs,

⁶³ The sources that inspired this chapter and from which long passages reproduced here were taken, are the following: *Dictionnaire des drogues*, Larousse, Paris 1999; Académie Nationale de France de Pharmacie, *Dictionnaire des Sciences pharmaceutiques et biologiques*, Éditions Louis Pariente, Paris 1997, 3 voll.; Mission interministérielle de la lutte contre la drogue et la toxicomanie (MILDT), *Drogues et dépendance*, Seuil, Paris 2000; CLER (Centre de liaison des équipes de recherche), *Outil pédagogique: Les jeunes face à la drogue*, Cler, Paris 1998.

observed by and known to many individuals. The dopamine is then recaptured by the transmitter neuron and destroyed by an enzyme.

1.2. *Glue and solvents*

Definition

91. Various types of glue (mastic gum, office glue, equipment glue, wood glue, aircraft construction glue) and also certain solvents (like ether, trichloroethylene, acetone, detergents, nail varnish, essential oil, hydrocarbon) are products that are inhaled by some young people between the ages of 12 and 18 years, and which have effects similar to those produced by drugs. Young people readily use them, without initially having any particular intention, for the very fact that it is easy and less burdensome to procure them, and also because of the incitement within youth groups where they are used. Youth learn quickly to identify the points of sale in order to buy them, without arousing suspicion among adults. Glue and solvents represent, therefore, the first experience with drugs among youth, who are curious and experience initial sensations that they afterwards try to reproduce.

Cheap drugs

92. In some countries, the sale of trichloroethylene and compounds that contain more than 5%, to minors below 14 years, is forbidden. Other products like ether and chlorophome are, for example, provided only on the presentation of a medical prescription.

Effects and dangers

93. The impact on the organism is without ill-effects if the use of substances is limited to a few occasional instances and is quickly stopped. However, there could develop risks of serious inflammations in the respiratory system, especially the throat and the bronchi. Repeated consumption may in the long run, cause certain states of coma that are more or less serious, a hypoxxygenation of the cardial-vascular system tissues.

*Effects that slow
down the process of
thinking*

94. At the psychological level, the effects are most evident shown in the slowing down of the processes of thinking, a sense of general depression and lack of will, together with a progressive deterioration of the memory. Depending on the mental status of the consumer, the euphoria may extend to overexcitement. This may cause accidents due to lack of right perception of reality, and of the surrounding environment.

1.3. *Cannabis*

Definition

*The different
derivatives of the
herb*

95. Cannabis is a plant that grows in countries with a temperate and hot climate. It can reach the height of three metres in a few months. It is especially the female plant that is sought for the inebriation it produces.

96. Cannabis appears in three different forms:

97. The herb (marijuana): leaves, stalks and the blooming peaks, which are simply dried. They are generally smoked mixed with tobacco, rolled up like a cigarette and are usually cone-shaped: *a joint, stick, or petard*.

98. Hashish (shit): resin of the plant obtained by scraping the leaves, to which dust is added that is obtained by drying and shaking the plant. It appears in the form of compressed slabs, small bars of green, dark or yellow colour, depending on the region of production. It is generally smoked mixed with tobacco and very rarely is it consumed in the form of gastronomic dishes. Hashish can be blended with other substances that are more or less toxic, like henna, wax and paraffin.

99. Cannabis oil (or tar): a more concentrated preparation, in principle active, generally consumed in a pipe. Its use is presently not widespread.

100. The active substance of cannabis, which is responsible for psychotropic effects, belongs to the group known as

terpenophenols (different types of THC tetrahydrocannabinol),⁶⁴ listed among stupeficients. Its concentration varies according to the preparation and the origin of the product.

101. Hashish and marijuana are mainly used by young people, between 13 and 30 years of age. The use in common of the noted *joint* or the *petard* reveals in fact a desire for initiatory communion. For adolescents, the use of *hashish* particularly, represents a way of protest in all fields in relation to their parents, but is also a means of communication with other youth of the same age on an essentially affective level, which completely excludes parents and adults.

102. What does the adolescent want to do and experience through this type of behaviour? Initially, it is an attempt to infringe all the prohibitions and take distance from ones parents, demonstrating entry into the world of adults. The young person is in search of himself and tries to make himself known. He also tries to “really” communicate with adults, who often try to avoid any such meeting that threatens them because of the relational and affective intensity of the request.

*The use of herbs
as a protest against
authority*

Effects and dangers

103. Some consumers of every age are only looking for pleasure and relaxation. The effects of cannabis consumption are variable: slight euphoria accompanied by a sense of satisfaction and a desire to laugh, and slight drowsiness. Strong doses quickly bring about difficulty in executing a duty, upset the perception of time, visual precision and immediate memory, and cause a kind of lethargy. Such effects can be dangerous when one drives a car, or uses certain machines.

⁶⁴ For more information, refer to the work of the French National Academy of Pharmacy, *Dictionnaire des sciences pharmaceutiques et biologiques*, the article on *Cannabis*, I, pp. 287-288.

*Dangerous effects on
the visual perception*

104. Depending on the individual, the amount consumed and the composition of the product, the effects of cannabis could consist in an increase in the cardiac rhythm (palpitation), a decrease in the salivation (sensation of a dry mouth), swelling of the blood vessels (red eyes), and sometimes a sensation of nausea. The respiratory system is exposed to risks similar to those associated with tobacco (toxic tar and nicotine), and these risks are amplified in certain conditions when there is inhalation (by the pipe and water, muffs and tubes). To be pointed out, however, are certain effects that are not adequately perceived by the population and by consumers who have already suffered serious consequences: concentration and learning difficulties, an almost excessive worry about obtaining the product, contacts with illegal circuits of drug diffusion, and therefore an involvement in a certain form of delinquency.

105. In more fragile individuals, cannabis can trigger hallucinations or modifications in the perception of oneself: multiple personalities, and paranoia. These effects can generate strong anxieties, induce serious psychic disorders and cause panic crises, even hallucinatory phenomena.

*Prolonged use, cause
of dependency*

106. The repeated use of cannabis leads to psychic dependency, of a medium to high level, depending on the individual. As a counter, experts agree that physical dependency is minimal. Nevertheless, regular use, often revealing problems, is worrisome especially when it has to do with consumers who are very young.

*To speak of soft
drugs is a pure
illusion*

107. The most recent scientific works⁶⁵ have clarified the impact of hashish and its active compound, THC, on the cellular membrane and its mechanical receptors. This works to explain the essential effects of hashish on the neurones: disorders of the sensorial, visual, auditory, spatial, and temporal perceptions. Considering all the facts, it is

⁶⁵ Cf. Nahas G., Sutin K, and Augurell S., *Marijuana and Medicine*, [Acts of the International Conference of the University of New York], Humana Press Edition, Totowa H.J., USA, 1999.

irresponsible to consider cannabis in a trivial way and to think of it as being "a soft drug", that is, one without remarkable effects on the organism.

1.4. Cocaine

Definition

108. The cultivation of cocaine dates back to ancient times in Bolivia and Peru. The Indian populations of the Andes use it, by chewing the leaves and its alkaloid, a hydrochloride of cocaine (active principle), provokes a sensation of euphoria, accompanied by the repression of inhibitions and a diminution of the sensations of hunger and weariness. Cocainism spread to Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, after the discovery of cocaine's active principle. This type of addiction developed above all in the circle of artists and intellectuals.

109. Cocaine appears in the form of white powder, obtained from the distillation of the leaves that are first dried. It is principally sniffed (with the help of a straw); it can also be injected intravenously or smoked. Cocaine is sometimes adulterated, blended or mixed with other substances, which increases the danger and magnifies the effects.

*Dangers of blended
drugs*

The effects and dangers

110. The use of cocaine causes immediate euphoria, a sensation of intellectual and physical power, as well as indifference to pain and strain. These effects will then give way to states of depression and of anxiety which some try to calm by taking heroin or psychoactive medicine.

111. Cocaine causes the contraction of the majority of the blood vessels. Insufficiently irrigated, the tissues become impoverished and are consequently prone to necrosis. This is often the case of the nasal septum, which sustains perforations in those who make prolonged use of cocaine.

Cause of cardial-vascular troubles

112. Cocaine also causes cardiac rhythm problems, which could lead to cardiac complications, especially in fragile people or those who consume strong tobacco. Moreover the consumption of tobacco and alcohol often increases when one takes cocaine.

...and psychic

113. In fragile people, the use of cocaine could give rise to psychic disorders, great mood instabilities, paranoid deliriums (especially in relation to noise) or panic crises. With increased activity, cocaine causes sleeplessness, amnesia and phases of excitement. Besides, the straws used to "sniff" can transmit viruses of A, B and C hepatitis, if they are shared among several consumers.

114. Cocaine, the strong stimulant, causes a remarkable physical dependency. Once one has started using it, it is difficult to limit the consumption, so important and pressing is the necessity of taking it again. Unlike the case of heroin and cannabis, there is no possible gratification on the consumption of another substance.

115. Another characteristic of cocaine is that it removes inhibitions. It promotes a sensation of "omnipotence", which risks leading the individual into acts that are dangerous.

Crack

Definition

Derivative of cocaine

116. Crack is a derivative of cocaine. In fact, it is a mixture of cocaine, sodium bicarbonate and ammonia, which appears in the form of pellets or small stones. After heating them, the consumer inhales the smoke. This operation causes the characteristic crackling, from which the name arises.

117. The way of consuming crack causes effects that are more intense than those of cocaine; the product reaches the brain more quickly, but the duration of its action is shorter.

Effects and dangers

118. Regular use of crack may provoke hallucinations and give rise to violent behaviour, paranoid episodes or even suicide impulses. Among the physical consequences of the regular use of crack, we can note rapid effects on the brain, serious deterioration of the respiratory tract, as well as cardiac and respiratory arrests, which may cause death. Regular consumption quickly leads to a strong physical and psychic dependency. Those who make use of crack often remain subject to mood alterations, experiencing for some months a certain dependency and possible relapses, even after they have ceased consumption.

Cerebral damages

1.5. Ecstasy

119. Ecstasy belongs to the family of amphetamines. This product is part of the new series of substances that appeared with the chemical evolution: synthetic drugs, produced in clandestine laboratories by chemists who try to create new substances and produce a synthesis of molecules with more powerful and dangerous actions than those of the existing natural substances. The massive diffusion of ecstasy is related to the emergence of a new musical evolution called *techno* and the organisation of *rave party*, gatherings of young people that often go on for several consecutive days, day and night, and which produce a kind of collective intoxication.

Synthetic drugs

120. For about ten years now, there is a growing consumption of ecstasy (*extasie*) both in North America and in Europe. Ecstasy is a neurotoxic substance mostly associated with a molecule whose structure is similar to an amphetamine and a mescaline. Among the most famous derivatives, there is *methylenedioxy – methamphetamine* (methelene dioxide) (MDMA), or *methyl 3, 4 methylenedioxy phenil-isopropylamine*, or *ecstasy*. MDMA was synthesised in 1912 by a German company called Merck. The product, which is presented as an effective pill against sleep (destined for soldiers) and with an anorexic effect, is used in slimming treatment, without actually being recognised by physicians as a medicine.

*Association of
amphetamine and
mescaline*

121. An ecstasy tablet contains from a few to 200 mg of MDMA. In reality, the composition of one tablet presented as ecstasy is often uncertain: the MDMA molecule is not always present or could be mixed with other substances: amphetamines, analgesics (substances that soothe or suppress pain) hallucinogens and anabolic steroids. Ecstasy can also be blended with starch, caffeine, detergents, and soap!

Effects and dangers

*Sensation of pleasure
and freedom*

122. The consumers of ecstasy seek a sensation of energy, of performance and the removal of their inhibitions. In this way, all blocks, impediments and prohibitions fall away, producing a sensation of perfect inner freedom and omnipotence. To the effect of pleasure and excitement is added that of the feeling of freedom in relation to others. Ecstasy initially provokes a slight state of anxiety, an increase in arterial pressure, acceleration of the cardiac rhythm and the contraction of the jaw muscles; the skin becomes moist, and the mouth dry. Then follows a slight euphoria, a sensation of comfort and pleasure, accompanied by relaxation, stimulation of the senses and the impression of understanding and accepting others. The use of ecstasy also causes dehydration of the organism. This makes regular consumption of water necessary, especially when the consumer is in an overheated environment or is being physically exerted.

*Inhibition of the
organs for heat
control at the level of
the brain*

123. After swallowing, MDMA is digested and passes into the blood. The product spreads in the organism and one part reaches the brain, which in effect increases the production of serotonin and dopamine. These neurotransmitters intervene in the transmission of information between the cells of the brain. Besides, they control the regulation of the temperature within the body. The effects of MDMA (and of amphetamines) consist in making one forget the sensation of uneasiness that accompanies excessive heating. Here resides the greatest danger. This aspect of brain functioning is still not well known. The temperature of the body may rise from 37° to 42° and this without any feeling of heat. There could

therefore be aneurysm ruptures, with dramatic consequences like certain handicaps, or even death.

124. The part of MDMA that is metabolised still remains in the organism for 48 hours after ingestion. It happens therefore that after taking the substance, the consumer experiences sensations of a void for three or four days, which may cause anxiety or depression that requires medical consultation.

125. The damage that ecstasy does to the brain is still not well known; some scientific works suggest a possible degeneration of cells which may be irreversible and could with time cause degenerative problems, like Parkinson's disease or cognitive disorders. Certain observations have verified distortions of the judgement capacity, difficulty in making calculations, as well as various defects in the memory. They have also observed cases of paranoia. Some individuals experience pain in the lumbar region, probably due to fatigue in the kidneys because of dehydration, which may cause renal blockage and a serious coma. The media tends to present ecstasy as an aphrodisiac. In fact, the drug could exasperate sexual fantasy, but suppress sexual capacity on the physiological level, both in men and women.

*Possible causes of
cerebral degenerative
diseases*

126. In the same category of synthetic products, one finds other substances:

LSD

127. LSD 25, the abbreviation used to indicate lysergic acid diethylamide (from the German *Liserg Diäthylamid*), is extracted from rye grains. It appears in the form of "blotting paper", a "micro point" (similar to the tip of a lead pencil) or also in a liquid form. A "trip" of LSD 25 consists of 50 to 400 micrograms or even more.

*Hallucinogen gener-
ating serious
conflicting effects*

128. LSD is a powerful hallucinogen. It causes severe sensorial modifications; provokes hallucinations, crises of uncontrollable laughter, as well as frenzy. These effects, which are very strong at the psychic level, are very variable

depending on the individual. A trip can last from 5 to 12 hours, sometimes even longer. The return to reality is often unpleasant; the consumer may find him/herself in a state of confusion, which could also involve anguish, panic, paranoia, phobia, and delirious fits. The use of LSD can lead to serious and lasting psychiatric complications.

Amphetamines

129. Amphetamines (speed, ice or crystal) are powerful psycho stimulants, with anorexic and hallucinogenic effects. These products appear in the form of sachets for swallowing or as powder to be sniffed or swallowed wrapped in a bit of paper; very often they are blended with other products.

130. Amphetamines are generally consumed in combination with alcohol or other psychoactive substances, like ecstasy. These physical stimulants give the illusion of being invincible, even eliminating fatigue. Their effects last for several of hours.

Deterioration of the general equilibrium

131. The consumption of amphetamines may provoke a deterioration of balance, favouring malnutrition and prolonged states of wakefulness, which lead to being unsettled, to great anxieties and sometimes to serious psychic disorders (psychosis, paranoia). There could also be skin problems (pimples, acne requiring medication).

132. Emerging from the period in which the drug is active can be particularly difficult, to the point of provoking contraction of the jaws, anxiety and tetany crises, states of depression and even suicide impulses. These products prove to be very dangerous in cases of depression, cardiovascular problems and epilepsy.

Poppers

133. Poppers is a vasodilator, produced from different derivatives of nitrites (amyl nitrite), used to cure certain cardiac and vascular diseases, as well as certain forms of headaches.

134. Poppers is inhaled (sniffed). Its effect is almost immediate: producing short periods of giddiness or unusual stimulant outbursts. The consumer experiences an intense sensation of inner warmth and his sensuality is exacerbated. These effects last for about two minutes. Poppers is particularly used in homosexual circles.

135. The consumption of poppers causes red spots on the skin, dizziness and headaches that could be violent, but of short duration; it increases intraocular pressure.

*Damages that vary
according to the rate
of consumption*

136. In strong doses, poppers may cause respiratory depression and damage the nose sector. In cases of regular consumption, poppers causes serious anaemia (weariness due to the diminished capacity of red corpuscles to process oxygen), momentary problems of sexual physiology, red spots and swellings on the face, yellow crusts around the nose and mouth. When concentrated it provokes violent dizziness, and also malaise. Combined with viagra (medicine used by people who have problems of sexual impotence), it carries cardiac risks that could cause death.

Ketamine

137. Ketalar is a powerful anaesthetic, which initially appears in liquid form before being transformed through heating into white or brownish powder. It is sniffed and rarely assumed by intramuscular injection. Ketamine has a hallucinogenic effect. Its consumption provokes psychic disorders (anxiety, panic attacks), neurologic (temporal paralysis) and digestive (nausea, vomiting). The effects, which differ according to the consumed dose, could involve prolonged coma, in cases of an overdose.

1.6. Heroin

Definition

138. Heroin is a strong opiate, obtained from morphine. Opiates are natural substances contained in latex (opium) collected from a plant, the opium poppy. Heroin appears in

the form of powder. While it is mostly assumed by intravenous injection, after being diluted and heated, heroin can also be sniffed and smoked.

Risks pertaining to the use of syringes

139. Injection carries the risk of infection (especially from the AIDS virus and/or those of hepatitis), if the consumer does not use sterilised and disposable syringes.

Effects and dangers

Forget at all costs

140. Heroin provokes a sensation of appeasement, euphoria, and ecstasy. It has a tranquillising and anti-depressive effect, since it tends to make one forget the sufferings and psychic difficulties of the moment.

Changes in the daily life of the consumer

141. The immediate effect of heroin is of an "orgasmic" type. It is the "flash". This is followed by a sensation of euphoria, then drowsiness, accompanied sometimes by nausea, dizziness and slowing down of the cardiac rhythm. In cases of repeated use, the intense pleasure of the first instances of consumption does not generally last for more than a few weeks. This phase could be followed by the need to increase the quantity of ingestion; it is the frequency of the doses, which may help to obtain the desired effects. The importance given to consumption, and therefore to the purchase of the drug, will considerably modify the everyday life of the consumer. Various disturbances, especially anorexia and insomnia are manifested. The heroin addict oscillates between "euphoric" phases, when he is under the effect of heroin, and phases of abstinence, when he appears anxious and agitated.

142. All the derivatives of opium provoke an organic and psychological dependency, which is serious and rapid, lasting for some days. The consequences of stupeficients on the vital organs of the body need not be demonstrated. The brain, the liver, the heart and the kidneys are those most hit by the repeated use of opiates. The weakening of the individual in the face of viral and microbic attacks is directly related to the lessening ability of the organism to fight the infectious germs.

143. The organism has a limit in its capacity to assimilate the opiates that the addict injects, often several times a day. And so, after an overdose the saturated organism may find itself in a critical state. It therefore responds with the rapid slowing down of the respiratory system, which causes coma and the risk of death.

*An excessive dose
may be fatal*

144. When a person depends on heroin, a reduction or even a suppression of the dose of the product causes a crisis of abstinence. Strong pains, especially in the stomach, kidneys and head, accompany the crisis. When there are no more opiate doses, of any type, the crisis may last from five to eight days and is always accompanied by anxiety and insomnia.

145. If the heroin addict does not succeed in reaching abstinence in order to mitigate the effects of weaning, he may benefit from care, psychosocial assistance and substitutive treatment. The latter has the objective of stabilising and regulating the dependency in a legal and medical way. Treatments of this nature, which use products like methadone or subutex, are administered orally. There remains, however, the essential problem, since one treats a dependency with another one, and thus the risk of not helping the person to break his relationship with drugs. There are certainly other methods, as we shall try to demonstrate further on.

*Necessity of
rehabilitation*

146. At the social level, dependency on heroine bares behaviour that considerably modifies the relationship of the individual with the environment that surrounds him, modifications that could for some lead to a process of alienation. A serious deformation of the personality and social relationships progressively begins, accompanied by an increase in aggressive behaviour. The pleasure of the "flash" and the constant search for it, totally occupy the mind of the individual.

*Alteration of the
personality*

147. We could continue to describe other drugs and their effects on the individuals who consume them; we could also mention products like alcohol and tobacco that have

acquired a kind of social respectability; besides, it could also be opportune to point out the doping practices in sports and professional life, or the utilisation of psychoactive medicines for purposes different from the therapeutic ones for which they are destined. It may suffice, in just mentioning them to at least remember these different elements. But now, the moment has come to look into what pushes certain individuals into taking drugs and alienating their freedom.

2. The unbridled search for pleasure hides the difficulties of living

Multiple motives

148. Why does one take drugs? This is not a new question and numerous writings have already tried to respond to it. At the point of departure, as appears in the use of any product, there is the curiosity of trying new sensations of infringing prohibitions, of searching for immediate pleasure and attempting to get out of an interior malaise in which one ends up and for which no solution is in view. In this perspective, drugs and drug addiction present themselves as symptoms of a very precarious personal and social situation, which needs to be made intelligible in order to help the consumers, even when they do not care to question themselves on the origin of their behaviour. It is exactly because of this that we will examine some essential questions tied to drugs, within a society where toxic products are increasingly in use.

2.1. From the first consumption of drugs to the state of dependency

Unhealthy curiosity

149. When one questions young people who take drugs occasionally, they often admit having started for no apparent reason, even neither having any particular attraction to toxic products. Mostly, they found themselves in situations when someone or a group initiated them into this world and its associated feelings, which they had heard others speak about. In such situations, they were reluctant to refuse the proposal. Some other individuals point out that

they started using drugs in order to escape from difficulties in life, from suffering, or from an incurable pain. None of them, therefore, deliberately decided to take drugs, in order to become drug addicts. Furthermore, when someone takes determined products, it is possible that he does so without being aware that he is cultivating a drug habit. Nevertheless, the consequences are evident and drug addiction is the result of such behaviour.

150. One has to note, however, that such conditioned individuals often remain attuned for regular or daily living while developing more or less frequent or temporary habits of addiction. The day may arrive when they fall into the category of those with an addiction which determines the pattern of their personal and social lives, even to the point of including an inclination of searching for drugs. They will progressively direct their lives towards searching for the product and in a certain sense, they will exclusively live for taking drugs. If it is possible to say that several individuals begin to take drugs out of curiosity, to divert ones mind or to try to eliminate an evil in life, it should be recognised that the risk of falling into the practice of drug addiction is great, and this therefore becomes a motivation and a centre of interest for assistance. The person enters into a dreadful circle, wherein one closes in on himself.

*Deceptive escape
from problems*

*Taking drugs could
become the reason
for living*

151. Whatever be the situation of each one and the element that leads to the consumption of determined toxic products, as a rule the motivation is the same. The product is sought because one holds it sensible to be kind and do good, gain greater confidence in ones relationships and greater internal and exterior freedom. This search, undertaken through the consumption of toxic products must pose questions to all institutions of education and to the entire society; in effect, it shows with evidence that there is in the individuals a deep search which has not been attended to, that the ways of proceeding in personal and social life do not succeed in satisfying people; the same is said of the malaise that exists in civilisation. The drug addict tries to resolve his or her problem by resorting to artificial expedients.

*Search for pleasure
in the use of drugs*

Drug addiction causes organic and behavioural alterations 152. Contrary to what individuals who make use of drugs expect, experience shows that regular consumption of toxic products has a bearing on their equilibrium, and they will develop dependencies on these products, which will, little by little modify their cerebral functions, their behaviour and relationships. They can, for example, start to smoke a product like cannabis, presented sometimes as a soothing substance, with the intention of gaining support in their daily lives, or they will participate in convivial settings, such as on the occasions of meetings and at leisure times. Such simple beginnings will lead into the adoption of lifestyles, which will greatly influence their lives and personalities, and they will become more individualistic, more dependent on chemical substances, which they will use to try and regulate both their interior life and the difficulties pertaining to regular living.

Levels of drug usage: occasional dependence 153. In relation to drugs, three types of behaviour can be distinguished. First, the fact of "taking drugs", that is every now and then using products and drugs that do not immediately have consequences. Secondly, the fact of "becoming accustomed" to the repeated use of them, which causes then a physiological and psychic need. And thirdly, the fact of being a "drug addict", dependent on a product to the point of not living other than for it. The common factor among all these attitudes consists, in the search for feelings that we may call "an internal trip", and an idealised universe that has no relationship to reality and the riches that originate from the development of the interior life.

People with a weak psychology: subject to risk 154. We have to question ourselves a lot more about drug addiction, because we know that the consumption of drugs often causes modifications of the perception and the awareness of things, to the point of making profound and serious personality transformations. Experts on mental hygiene have observed certain intrapsychic conflicts or certain fragile organisations in the personality. These normally could be contained, given the quality of a cultural and religious life, pending the maturation of the person, especially of young individuals. The alternative, associated with drugs, is

the development of personalities in violent ways without any possibility of treatment.

155. Certain *borderline*⁶⁶ personalities have fallen like this into more delirious states, while others have seen their depressive state become accentuated after the consumption of cannabis or another drug. In effect, "psychotic reactions, which correspond to a loss of contact with external reality, can arise unexpectedly when a fragile consumer believes he has lost control of his mental state".⁶⁷ The emotional experience is sometimes so strong that the person develops feelings of alienation and not being able to exercise self-control. He feels dominated by sensations, emotions and interpretative thoughts that lead to a depersonalisation. The individual experiences a kind of psychic fracture that could make him temporarily lose his internal coherence and contact with both himself and external reality. A slightly psychotic nucleus, latent in certain personalities without disturbing their relationships with others and with reality, sometimes can be advanced, awakening unresolved internal conflicts related to the history of the individual, which lead to serious mental disorders.

156. Psychoactive substances expose people who use them to unexpected psychic and pathological difficulties, especially in those with fragile psychic structures or serious

*Drugs increase
psychological
difficulties*

⁶⁶ Cf. Bergeret, *Narcissisme et les états limites*, Dunod, Paris 1987. The terms "border-line" (V. W. Eisenstein, 1949), or "limit-states" designate psychic structures that correspond neither to the neurotic type nor to the psychotic type. This notion has been diffused thanks to the works of Jean Bergeret (Lione, France); cf. J. Bergeret, *Psychologie pathologique*, Masson, Paris (1972), 1994. *Border-line* personalities show a fragile psychic organisation; they are very narcissistic and seek dependency relationships with others or with objects of reality. They manifest an affective immaturity, which gives to those around them the impression of being in the presence of a teen-ager adult. These personalities try to hide their anguish and live defending themselves from a sense of danger. The danger from which they protect themselves is that of depression, that is, the constant inability to invest in reality.

⁶⁷ Cf. Observatoire Français des Drogues et des Toxicomanies, *Note*, 1996, in <http://www.ofdt.fr/>

personal difficulties. These substances produce behavioural and irreversible mental disorders, given that drugs act as a rousing factor, given their impact on the central nervous system. For this reason, it is not possible to accept the conclusions of those who hold that this or that product does not create physiological dependencies, and have no consequences. The effects on the human body are not always measurable or predictable in the same measure. It is therefore, not possible to think that certain drugs do not have fateful effects on the organism and even less on the psychic and relational life of individuals.

*Harmless drugs do
not exist*

*The complexity of
the problem
according to WHO*

157. The distinction made by certain people between physical and psychic dependency does not correspond to recent discoveries, which prove that "all the effects of drugs on the individual are potentially comprehensible in biology". For this reason we consider here the definition of WHO, regarding drug dependence. It encompasses a "group of behavioural phenomena, both cognitive and physiological and of variable intensity, in which the use of one or more psychoactive substances become a high priority. The essential characteristics are an obsessive desire to procure and use the substances in question, and the permanent search for them. The determining factors of drug dependency and the problems deriving from it can be biological, psychological or social, and they habitually involve an interaction".⁶⁸ In the context that concerns us, we must add the problems of the moral and spiritual life.

158. No toxic substance is trivial or harmless, and it does not matter what may be considered a drug, even tobacco or alcohol. Nevertheless, there are products that are more harmful than others and certain substances that can serve as a base for the production of psychosedative drugs or psychostimulants, which become highly toxic products. Heroin for example, is useful and can under the control of a physician alleviate the pains of seriously-ill patients, but in a drug-addicted context, it becomes a destructive substance.

⁶⁸ Committee of experts on drug dependency (WHO), Twenty-eighth report, Vienna 1998, cf. 2.2.1, Dependence.

159. Many studies limit themselves only to a neurobiological description in order to judge the state of dependency that a product provokes. The scientific results are often partial and they end up spreading falsehood, allowing for legalisation favouring the use of drugs, particularly of cannabis. In reality, these studies neglect the psychic, moral and social aspects. They are more interested in the chemistry of the brain than in the attitudes and behaviour of the individuals. In effect, when the repercussions of cannabis or tobacco on the dopaminergic system (the neurobiological system of pleasure) are compared, tobacco can surprisingly appear as the most dangerous product.

It can certainly cause dependency and well-known consequences on health. But, if one considers all the elements of the life of an individual, affirming that tobacco is more dangerous than cannabis bares the risk of muddling the message of prevention.

*Research does not
take into considera-
tion the psychic and
moral effects*

160. The danger of a drug and its psychic, social and psychopathological effects cannot be reduced to only the neurobiological aspect. The latter is not able to account for the complexity of the psychic repercussions and the behaviour, which are related to the use of toxic products.

2.2. *The effects of cannabis*

161. Cannabis⁶⁹ has to be drawn in a particular way to the attention of educators. For this reason, we refer again to the present trivialization of its use. Cannabis, consumed by both young people and adults and even children, whatever their social environments, circulates easily in educational institutions, sometimes in the face of the indifference of adults. Social talk, that finds an echo in the media, tends to praise its worth, inciting young people in a certain sense to buy and use it. Some individuals will stop at temporary or

*Never to trivialize
the use of drugs*

⁶⁹ Cf. H. Loo – J.M. Roux – A. Benyacoub, *Le médecin face aux toxicomanies*, Collection de psychiatrie pratique de l'encéphale, Doin, Paris 1997; M. C. d'Welles, *Et si on parlait du baschich!*, Presses de la Renaissance, Paris 1999; J. Bergeret, *Toxicomanie et personnalité*, Collection "Que sais-je", Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1995.

even regular consumption, without going to extremes. For others, it instead constitutes an entry to drug addiction, and a search for stronger products that are even more harmful to health.

From curiosity to habit

162. More people are coming to esteem cannabis and minimise its effects, due to the fact that as a rule it does not provoke physiological dependency. To take a "joint" one day for curiosity can have a soothing effect. This can be the beginning of a continuous practice and habit, which becomes dangerous because it induces a growing need for such feelings and relaxation, which the individual has already experienced in taking a toxic product. This favours an escalation in consumption. In fact, cannabis generates a psychological dependency that can be irresistible in cases of regular use, with fateful effects on the organism.

No drug cures from a discomfort

163. Cannabis is a psychosedative product that has physical and psychic effects, including a reduction in vigilance and concentration. It certainly favours relaxation and sometimes a state of gratification, giving the impression of an internal ease and of having good relations with others. But when the anaesthetic effects have passed, the individual finds himself with the same problems as before, to the point of even seeking more of the product. Cannabis also provokes a distortion of the perception of time and sounds; for this reason it is often used on certain musical grounds, at various social events and at discothèques.

† Perverse effects of the mixture of different drugs

164. Depending on the state of health of the consumers and their behaviour, the fact for example of associating more products (cannabis, tobacco and alcohol), often causes secondary effects,⁷⁰ like inhibitions, sometimes slight mental confusion, short-term alteration of the memory, auditory and visual troubles, slowing down of the reflexes with consequent street and job accidents, an increase in cardiac rhythm, a temporary cessation of testosterone secretion in men, an alteration of the mechanism of fertilisation

⁷⁰ Cf. Observatoire Français des Drogues et des Toxicomanies, 1996, in <http://www.odft.fr/>

in women (in case of pregnancy a delay of foetal growth is noticed, prematurity, and congenital anomalies), the development of troubles in the new-born of an addicted mother (neurological problems, like certain abnormal responses to visual stimuli, trembling, screams), states of anxiety and irritation and depressive demonstrations. A prolonged use of cannabis strikes at the abilities of concentration and intellectual assimilation. It is often a factor in scholastic failure.

165. Besides, in terms of the quantity of tar or other ingested substances, one "joint" is equivalent to four or five cigarettes. Hence the actual risk of lung cancer, bronchitis, emphysema and of other pathologies of the aerial tracts. Intense consumption can also depress the immune system and render the consumer more sensitive to opportunistic viral diseases. Furthermore, one "joint" corresponds to the drinking of two glasses of whisky. Cannabis also provokes disturbances of the working of the immediate memory, favouring what is called cannabic drunkenness. A greater number of consumers are seeking this "drunkenness" on the occasion of parties at which one has to get drunk at all costs, "unpack", "estrangle oneself", as it is often understood. It amounts to not having consciousness of oneself anymore.

*Intensive use can
depress the immune
system*

166. Alcoholic drunkenness is as much a danger and could provoke in dependent individuals serious disorders like loss of vigilance, of moral sense, of self control and also the development of aggressive and violent attitudes, the tendency to estrange oneself from reality, psychopathological problems, liver diseases, etc. In many societies wine and alcohol form part of dining; obviously, since these products are not completely free from dangers, they can become drugs, provoking serious illnesses and very high rates of mortality.

Alcohol

167. What is undoubtedly decisive in the approach to the problems of drug consumption, and has to be drawn to the attention of educators, is not only the quality of the products that are sought, but also the motivations that lead individuals to consume them.

*False distinction
between hard and
soft drugs*

168. We have used the example of cannabis in order to stress the impact it can have on human behaviour and the problems that are caused by its current consumption. We could do as much with other products. But cannabis is often used in society as an emblem of liberation, with some urging the freedom of its consumption. This is not far short of an insidious promotion of the liberalisation of all drugs. It is therefore, important to briefly underline certain interpretations that trivialise this product, preparing for an eventual liberalisation, which would result in a legislation that proposes a fallacious distinction between "hard drugs" and "soft drugs". This creates serious confusion in society and leads to an increase in drug addiction.

*It is impossible to
change the behaviour
of the drug addict
without having a
global vision of the
problem*

169. As we have already underlined, the apparent neurobiological effects do not include all the consequences of the use of a toxic product on an individual and on his relationships. It is important to identify as far as possible, all the repercussions of drug addiction, and therefore to consider the individual's best interests, in order to help him have a fully human attitude, in conformity with his dignity. Besides, we cannot limit ourselves to the question of the physical dependency on a toxic product, because the forms of dependency are many and they are not necessarily tied only to the physiology of the individual.

170. The reflection has to be more global. People of our time, especially the young, deserve a coherent message without confusion, so as to help them refuse any practice of drug addiction, proposing to them a form of life that conforms to the model they are searching for in the depths of their being. Educators must therefore have clear information about drugs, in order not to make the youth and adults remain in a situation that in the long run turns out to have no outlet and cannot at all constitute a pedagogic and therapeutic relationship.

2.3. The search for pleasure

171. Many, consumers of psychoactive products say that the consumption of these substances is done in order "to

be well with oneself " or for the sake of pleasure. The search for a means of relaxation, a stimulant and a feeling of enjoyment represent therefore the motivation that drives individuals to start taking drugs. Having experienced the desired effect the consumer is unable to free himself from drugs, which often become the mainspring of his action and the primary desire of his existence.

172. The search for pleasure, so often the starting point of this dependency, without doubt is done in the secret hope of liberating oneself from life's difficulties. In a deceptive way, taking drugs means trying to take shelter from what seems unbearable in life, in something more serene. It is a vicious circle. There is the formula, almost classical, which says if there are no "happy drugs", the search for joy is no less active and imperious. Most studies on drug prevention insist on the importance that pleasure has in the relationship between the drug addict and the product.

*Pleasure at all costs
and drug addiction*

2.3.1. Pleasure in a psychological sense

173. Pleasure appears psychologically as a way of satisfaction. It is tied to internal processes and to the realisation of unconscious desires. These desires may be related to childish fixations that try to repeat themselves in a disguised way. Thus, the need to take drugs is linked with the oral pleasure of a child that experiences a harmonious relationship with the mother and with the environment that surrounds it. The individual also nourishes in himself the illusion of wanting to possess everything and be in a state of permanent tranquillity, without having to face the frustrations inherent in living. In this case, pleasure is above all a system that pushes one to act immediately, that is, without any form of discernment that calls for an elaborate mental operation. The unreal character of this form of pleasure-seeking contradicts objective necessity and opposes the principle of reality. The pleasure-seeking, is in radical conflict with the principle of reality, which is the principal regulator, balancing all the forces at work: the subjective interests of the individual, the demands of reality, the vital needs of the individual, and the moral rules. Because of education

*Conflict between
reality and the search
for pleasure*

and the progressive maturation of the individual, pleasure will appear as a consequence of an action and not as an end in itself. It is for example the consequence of a project brought to a conclusion, a successful relationship or a suitable answer to a situation.⁷¹

2.3.2. *The finality of pleasure*

174. Pleasure is the primordial element of the psychic life. A child is often led by pleasure until he or she discovers the necessary limits to his or her psychological growth. For a child, all the desires ought to be immediately satisfiable, and therefore pleasurable. We have here a sense of the omnipotence of an insatiable desire, which is deceptive and baleful for the individual. At the psychological level, every drive seeks its own satisfaction to the detriment of the whole personality. The child will have to learn to control itself, to distinguish the nature of desires, know how to defer or abdicate them in order not to become impulsive. He will therefore have to organise his existence according to the principle of reality and learn to put it under the primacy of the intelligence, which allows for discernment and judgement, and under the primacy of the will that is the driving power behind a free and responsible action.

Equilibrium, pleasure and discernment

Education: integrate pleasure in relational life

175. Obviously, desires and pleasures fulfil an important function in the internal organisation of the individual, and they constitute the dynamics upon which human psychology is based. Neglecting or ignoring them is often dangerous for the equilibrium of a person. An asceticism that would like to suppress them or a hedonism that tries to exalt them damages the person, whereas establishing a hierarchy between desires and pleasures is of paramount importance. For this reason, education has to take the trouble to teach the child how to find satisfaction in the world

⁷¹ For more discussion on the concept of pleasure, it could be useful to consult the article *Fruitio* in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, as well as the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, I-II, especially questions 11 and 31-33.

through his activities and relationships, and not in a selfish life. In this way, he will above all experience pleasure that will enrich him, because it will be a fruit of the gift of himself, and not the result of an unbridled subjective search. Such pleasure is the result of one's efforts and from the joy of existing in relationship to the reality of the world, with others and with God.

176. Many individuals, and especially young people have difficulties in engaging themselves in handling the maturing of their desires. When an activity becomes difficult, they react with an emotional answer, which is a sign that they have not yet succeeded in organising and sufficiently unifying their personalities. They are discouraged, impatient at not getting rapid results, and fail to accept that there are inevitable frustrations in every existence. They seek to live according to the criterion of immediate pleasure.

*Drug addiction:
a shortcut*

177. Thus, for certain young people the experience of drugs or the increasing use of tranquillisers or sleeping pills have the purpose of arriving at a state of pleasure like the one just noted. The consumption of psychotropic medicines, necessary in the state of depression and other abnormalities, becomes then a means of trying to regulate the strength of the desires, to the detriment of an internal work that mobilises the reason, the will, the "powers" and the "sensitive" parts of the soul² of a person. Very often, individuals do not have the necessary psychic resources, nor do they readily find adults capable of helping them deal with family problems, disappointments in sports, scholastic difficulties and sentimental disillusionments. Similarly they have difficulty in finding help to change after probable error or guilt, in coping with problems of social and professional insertion, also the problems posed by illness, loneliness, death, as well as the insistent questions that are trans-

² Cf. what St Theresa of Avila writes on what one should ask for in prayer, *The Way of Perfection*, chapter 30; St John of the Cross, *Climbing Mount Carmel*, book I, chapter 1; *The Obscure Night*, book I, chapter 8.

mitted from generation to generation in order to discover the meaning of life.

Bad use of medications

178. Medications are often called on to mitigate personal. ity troubles, leading our society to expect the answers to profound human, moral and spiritual difficulties, from a whole series of therapeutic cures and chemotherapy. Such situations and states of mind already create the favourable conditions for drug addiction. Thus one witnesses an increasing number of parents who easily resort to medications, when faced by the failure of their listening resources or their educational methods. They simply do not know what to do with their children who are going through emotional states like excitement, aggressiveness or sadness or even crises of relationship in the family or with the external world.

3. The claim for drugs

179. Paradoxically, drugs sometimes are a symbol of freedom in society, to the point of bringing about legislation that is in contradiction with present customs, customs that every public authority ought to respect. Certain promoters of the liberalisation of drugs affirm that the civil law penalising the private use of illicit products, denies certain principles of democracy, like that of individual freedom whereby a person ought to be able to live his life in the way he chooses.

3.1. The freedom to take drugs

Ambiguity of the freedom to take drugs

180. Claiming the right to the freedom to take drugs is an expression of one of the numerous deviations in contemporary thought concerning the very truth of freedom. While freedom is an incontestable good, which Christian thought never ceases to promote, an absolute and irresponsible freedom that makes mockery of the fundamental values and exposes people to serious risks is a form of unacceptable tyranny over people and their dignity. The individual and his behaviour cannot be the only ethical and social criteria in

moral or legislative decisions; individuals cannot promote legislation that answers only to a personal desire of freedom. Such would establish an incentive for closing oneself into egoism and a rejection of human relationships. In this case, the individual constitutes himself as the criterion of social life, alienating his true freedom, even running risks with his physical and mental health. In this way the costs and consequences of his action weigh upon society. Conceiving freedom to take drugs as something that ought to be part of law is contrary to the very dignity of the human person.

181. In this context, Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letter *Veritatis splendor* underlines the scarcity of an ethical sense and lack of moral sensibility, in most countries. He draws attention, especially that of decision-makers and people who hold responsibilities, to the necessity of finding a balance of law and freedom, of conscience and truth, of values and daily behaviour. Abuse of freedom quickly turns into individualism and subjectivism, whose tyrannical aspect is well known. It seriously jeopardises the common good, with the obscuring of conscience neutralising the ability to evaluate fashions and tendencies. The refusal to question oneself on transcendent values, which are objective and do not depend on the good will of the subject or on a situation, has often made people think that behaviour has to be inspired by the opinion of the majority or by the desire of the individual rather than by universal values. On the contrary, the latter are at the basis of moral actions of the individual, since they furnish him with objective standards both for his reflection and action. They make him aware of the fact that he cannot decree personal laws on the exclusive basis of his subjective interests and they protect him in a certain way from a life regulated by the simple criterion of pleasure. Moralists and educators can justly interpret the desire to take drugs as an expression of the absence of values and rules in individuals.

*Searching for the
equilibrium between
conscience and truth*

*Taking drugs is
a sign of the absence
of values*

3.2. *The use of drugs and the sense of law*

182. Within a period of thirty years, the distinction between licit and illicit products, just like the borderline

*Prohibition of the
use of drugs by
civil law*

between medications with a therapeutic function and those that will sometimes be sought after entirely for relief purposes and comfort, has progressively been exceeded. In most societies, civil law prohibits the consumption of stupeficients or substances classified as drugs, because their fateful effects on the person and on the public health jeopardise both the equilibrium of the individual and social cohesion. Besides, delinquency and crime often develop from the basis of the drug business. Consequently, society that has not always taken adequate measures, for which it is indeed overhung by drug related phenomena, must be able to protect itself against them and sanction what ought to be sanctioned, even though we ought to remember that suppression of the consumers alone cannot resolve the numerous problems caused by the use of drugs. In this field, just as with all that enters into social life, the civil authorities have the duty of reminding people of the prohibitions that protect the life and dignity of individuals. Otherwise, they run the risk of facilitating the development of the phenomena of violence, witnessing an increase of delinquency, especially in the young generation, whose personal and relational future would then be seriously jeopardised, mortgaging at the same time the social fabric of cities and their suburbs.

*Law assumes the
protection of life*

*To re-establish the
limits of what is
permitted and of
what is forbidden*

183. It is evident that certain young people commit crimes under the influence of drugs, without fully being aware of acting badly and without realising the suffering and damage they cause to others, because the drugs have removed the customary inhibitions. We therefore have before us young people, who develop asocial and amoral behaviour. We cannot allow this situation to perpetuate itself, otherwise we shall be witnesses to the ruin of these children, whom society has been unable to accept, love and educate. It is up to adults to remind them of the indisputable reasons or motivations for what is permitted and what is forbidden, motivations which for teenagers are necessary for the building of their personalities and of their socialisation. Such do not at all constitute an impediment to dialogue and to a method of education that is respectful of the personalities of the young. In the same way, when

treating drug-related phenomena, it is important to develop a comprehensive pedagogy for people; it is important as well to use language that shows steadiness and develop adequate repressive means.

184. It is clear that any decriminalisation of drugs cannot regulate drug related problems. Would it not be better to work on basic objectives that ensure the future? In this way, education, instruction, cultural transmission, coherence between the social tie and the law, will protect the family rather than destroy it. Learning self-control and forming moral conscience, are among the many perspectives that ought to be developed in order that children and young people develop psychologically, morally and spiritually, and become less fragile in the face of the inevitable difficulties of life, like drugs, which are partly a reflection of the crisis of education.

*Decriminalisation
does not solve the
problems*

185. We remind authorities of their duty to guide the destiny of the nations, and all people who carry out social functions, such as parents, and educators and all people of good will, that now more than ever, it is necessary through suitable and coercive legislation to see to it that the networks of drug-marketing are no longer in place. This is applicable both for individual and public health. Besides, it is up to the protagonists of social life to help all those engaged in the education of youth, to ensure that fundamental values are transmitted to them without confusion. Society as a whole cannot be ambivalent showing on the one hand a certain repressive intent towards drugs, which are almost always forbidden, and proposing on the other, or allowing the development of networks for the supply and consumption of drugs. There are many liberal attitudes that cannot but incite traffickers to continue their actions and the consumers being their victims.

*Necessity for
repressive laws*

186. While it is right to distinguish between one who simply makes occasional recourse to drugs and a verified addict, we cannot nevertheless reject a law that protects society and the individuals from what represents the danger. Nor is it appropriate to only provisionally support a

*Laws alone cannot
eliminate the malaise*

law on the pretext that it would be broken in numerous situations or that certain individuals desire to take to drugs, or for various reasons would like to be diffusers of drugs. Besides, the solution depends on the conditions of life offered by society helping young people develop in a dignified way, finding sense in their existence, as they are inserted into a desired network of relationships.

4. A Society that promotes drugs

4.1. The risk of legalising drugs

*Strike the
illegitimate trade*

187. In the context of drug addiction, production, marketing and consumption of toxic products, many forms of delinquency seem to be sanctioned in various countries; delinquency extends from the organisation of the supply networks to the recycling of dirty money obtained through trafficking. We affirm that the suppliers and traffickers ought to be pursued first, because their actions are illicit. This does not in fact exclude the necessity of taking action with regard to the consumers. Moreover, among the consumers we often find individuals or people with social problems who are already subject to judicial action. Without wanting to be laxists, it is however necessary to question the injustice that reigns in this field.

*Re-establishment
of justice*

188. One could also question the fury with which certain "small" distributors or more or less occasional consumers are pursued, and the relative impunity granted to people from the media, political or artistic worlds, who publicly declare in interviews their regular consumption of drugs, thus implicitly inciting their admirers to imitate them. The same can be said of certain pressure groups or activists favouring drug addiction, who deliberately parade their consumption and vindicate their right to use toxic products without being checked, especially regarding cannabis.

*Cannabis
lobby condemned*

*Favouring the use of
drugs is morally illicit*

189. In the light of this thinking, sometimes explicitly expressed, it becomes so easy for people to speak favourably of "sweet drugs", some in terms of freedom,

making themselves spokesmen of the public powers on this subject or assuming positions or roles in the community, to whom young people can turn. Entrusting the duty of educating youth, with the related task of giving example, to individuals who are in one way or another tied up with drugs, constitutes a real danger and renders the struggle against the diffusion and consumption of toxic products difficult, if not impossible. Every action that favours the diffusion or consumption of drugs morally represents a serious complicity with the cartels, which draw exorbitant financial and economic advantages from the trade. Government authorities and international organisations are called to be continuously vigilant and to always act with greater severity against organised systems, which cause the death of so many human beings, and destroy psychologically, socially, morally and spiritually such a great number of people, especially the young and individuals who are already rendered fragile in other ways.

190. We need to be able to identify and recognise the importance of drug lobbies, as well as the pressure they place on civil authorities and within the whole of society, in order to fight them with the various weapons at our disposal: political, economic, and judicial; and at the national, regional and international levels. In particular, it would be wise for all civil authorities, to set in place laws and norms to effectively fight at all levels the networks of drug, refusing to decriminalise any use of them. Decriminalisation opens the door to total liberalisation, leading only to the perpetuation of drug addiction.

*Necessity of rejecting
decriminalisation*

191. In these matters, international organisations also have an important role to play. International co-operation, in the establishment of a juridical arsenal, and collaboration in eliminating concrete situations, is an important element in the dismantling of all channels of trade. At the same time it is necessary to help people who are caught up in drug addiction or the diffusion of drugs, taking into consideration their personal, family, economic and social brittleness; such people need to be understood welcomed, in order to help them come out of the dreadful circle of

*Receive the drug-
addicted people*

drugs. The Church's reflections, her educative and pastoral actions fall exactly within this description, since she wants to help people in difficulty, encouraging the search for constructive answers to the problems posed by drug consumption and the delinquency that accompanies this phenomenon.

Pastoral role of the Church

192. In a solemn declaration, the Pontifical Council for the Family underlines what is at stake in such a project. "Is it acceptable to create an inferior class of underdeveloped human beings, as it happens in cities where drugs are freely available? [...] The legalising of drugs involves the risk of effecting the opposite of what is sought. In effect, what is legal is regarded as normal, and therefore as moral. Legalising drugs does not as such liberalise the product, it instead legitimises the reasons that lead to its consumption. Nobody can now deny that taking drugs is an evil.

Contradiction of certain public powers

193. [...] Besides, when the law recognises this behaviour as normal, one wonders how public authorities can meet the duty of educating and caring for people at risk? [...] One has then to consider also the social relapses of such legalisation. Will development of crime, dependence-related illnesses, and increases in road accidents due to the easy access to drugs be confronted without fear? Are citizens ready to professionally entrust themselves to people who are addicts? Can they be assured of employment safety? And does the state really have the financial means and the personnel to deal with increased sanitary problems, which the liberalisation of drugs will inevitably bring about?

The state, guarantor of the common good

194. Given these questions, the state has the duty above all else, to safeguard the common good. [...] The state also has the duty to watch over the well-being of its citizens. The help it gives to citizens must be according to the principles of equity and subsidiarity: that is, it must above all protect, perhaps also against themselves, the weakest and the poorest of society. It has no right to abdicate the duty to protect people who have matured and are potential victims of drugs. Besides, if the state

assumes or maintains a courageous and consistent position on drugs, fighting them in all their forms, this policy will at the same time help in the struggle against abuses of alcohol and tobacco.

195. The Church would like to point out the implications of this phenomenon. It must be remembered that in the legalisation on the sale and use of products that favour drug addiction, it is the destiny of the people that is at stake. For some, life will remain weakened, if not broken, while others perhaps without falling into real dependence, will jeopardise their juvenile years without really developing their potentialities. [...] The behaviour that leads to drug addiction has no possibility of being corrected, if the products that strengthen it are put on free sale".⁷³

196. The parents, supported by educators, do not want their children to take drugs. They know the damage of drugs, and through the state they ask society to help them in their educational tasks. Sanitary means and substitutive products alone will not be able to resolve the problems, if they are not accompanied by the will to educate so as to influence the causes that lead to drug consumption. The principal problem of drug addiction, as we have already said, does not entirely reside in the drug itself, but in all the attached elements that lead the individual to take drugs, which ought to be modified urgently.

197. In order to live, a person needs to discover a proper sense of existence, finding reasons for living, developing the possibilities and the talents assigned by the Creator, for one's own happiness and that of others. It is exactly in this perspective of the well-being of the individual and of society, that the Church desires to continue its pastoral activity and so offers its contribution in the prevention and struggle against drug addiction.

*The voice of the
Church against
legalisation*

*Improve the
environment in
order to fight better
against drugs*

⁷³ Pontifical Council for the Family, *Liberalizzazione della droga?*, in "Enchiridion Vaticanum", n. 16, pp. 35-39.

4.2. *Social and economic consequences*

*Radical cultural
changes*

198. There is a close relationship between an ever-increasing consumption of drugs and the type of society in which we live. Drug addiction is induced by objective conditions that attract one to the consumption, especially of toxic products. These conditions are political, economic, cultural and psychological, and they have serious consequences for public health.

199. 1 – Political and economic realities, amidst a variety of factors too, call into consideration the numerous drug-consuming and also drug producing countries, where people often have no other means of sustenance. There is in place a monoculture of drugs, whose benefits are enormous, even though this is more for the cartels than for the producers themselves. In many countries traditional crops, which are difficult to sell on the international market, and for which remuneration is so poor, have been replaced with plantations that will give a great variety of prime material for drug production. These growers would be ready to return to the cultivation of fruits, citruses, coffee and cocoa, if these products could make them live in a dignified and decent way. Other countries take advantage of the present climate, which is favourable to drug addiction, to develop drug crops and in this way finance political parties, the purchase of weapons, civil wars etc.

200. 2 – From the cultural point of view, an ideology founded upon a simple sociological observation makes one think that we have to become accustomed to living with drugs. This is one of the consequences of contemporary individualism, which holds that each one may behave in a way solely pleasing to oneself.

*Danger: ideology and
individualism*

201. 3 – Finally, from the psychological point of view, each person becomes so preoccupied with self, without always taking support in values that foster internal personal development or those interpersonal communication, resulting in a search for deceptive happiness in the consumption of toxic products. The metaphors used by drug addicts –

such as *cling to* – show the need to be connected with something. This illustrates the deficit of relationships with others, as well as the weaknesses of the individual's internal life, especially that of young people, elements that the educators should particularly consider in their pedagogic work.

202. When a consumer uses psychoactive products like drugs, his or her behaviour will have social consequences. There will be health problems and the relationship that the individual establishes with others, risks creating a deleterious and crime climate. It is up to the government of each country and international organisations to help the citizens to be aware of the effects produced by drugs and the dangers that weigh upon the general public. In this field, it is necessary to build new solidarities. It is in fact necessary to help and take care of every person, whatever be his or her situation. But we need also to say it clearly that ruining one's health with drugs is an irresponsible gesture, which shows a lack of a sense of the common good, because others will then have to offer financial, social and psychological help, and develop forms of assistance at great costs.

*Social damages of
drug consumption*

203. Non-consumers are concerned at the variety of drug-related problems. Some will be exposed to the smoke of tobacco – starting with children subjected to parental tabagism – or in professional circles, inside offices or laboratories. Others will suffer the violence and the deterioration of relationships due to alcoholism, a cause of crime and mortality, especially within family structures. Drugs will also complicate the existence of people on the economic level, because the purchase of these products is onerous and requires funds that lead certain people to steal, rob from family members and commit crime repeatedly. Sometimes families think that they can quickly resolve their problem by providing the money, which their addicted member needs to purchase drugs, under the pretext that this will be the “last time”. These promises are deceptive and educators know from experience that you never should act this way with drug addicts; it only compounds the attitude of an addict. Certain families, who are so much tried by the state of their son or daughter, some-

respected and recognised in its dignity. Science can respond to various needs and resolve certain problems that were up to now unsolvable, without however, denying the dignity of the human person, nor seriously mortgaging the future of a given individual or of future generations, or exhausting resources in the frenzy of the exploitation of nature's goods. When societies become conscious of the meaning of their history, they will then preserve their heritage and prepare future generations, thus avoiding leaving them a precarious inheritance.

*We need to take
care of life*

210. A restrictive vision of man and society, which reduces life to chemical needs, excessive individualism, with a kind of illusion of immortality, leads people to believe that it is possible to take advantage of life without having to worry about others, the future or eternity. Existential difficulties are "solved" through resorting to products that make one forget problems, calm the restless, and in a certain sense, give the impression of living a life that is almost perfect, even though it is very unreal. According to this same logic of the search for comfort, some are at times tempted to end their lives or that of others, by either suppressing it from the moment of its conception or taking the way of suicide or death facilitated by others, because the greatness of the gift of life is either seriously diminished or not perceived.

*To form the integral
person*

211. In the use of medications and toxic substances, there is a need to distinguish between what falls within treatment and what falls within tolerance to medicines or highly toxic products, which are not indispensable for the life of the individual, or those which belong to a real situation of drugs. The last two situations are signs of a difficulty to accept existence and its meaning, often due to the lack of development of the internal life and a proper development of the personality, leading to the unification of the person. One must conclude that in such situations education did not achieve its goal of leading a person to a profound formation of the reason and will, and to a life recognising the fundamental principles of the moral and spiritual life.

212. Drugs are not a fatality and cannot be reduced to a mere problem of demand and supply. Numerous causes favour the consumption of stimulating and inhibiting products. There are therefore determinative factors in the use of drugs, especially those that render personalities fragile, like the lack of education and certain social conditions, which do not allow young people to find their place in society. The lack of education to freedom and responsibility leads to the search for dependency in order to disguise personal vulnerability.

*Lack of true
education, root
of dependency*

213. Drugs are symptoms of ill-living, of a search for pleasure that at times cannot be found in daily life, and of a society that is inhuman in its operations. Our societies often "idolise" young people while at the same time it despises them by not offering them a coherent education which helps them to build themselves up, discovering a sense of life and hope that opens to the future. If the consumption of drugs is a revealer of the difficulties of the person in the face of the inherent frustrations in life, it is also the barometer of the state of society.

214. Drugs are the expression of a double symptom: that of the aspiration of every one seeking happiness and pleasure in living, and that of existential problems, which some people try to reduce, resorting to various kinds of narcotics.

Chapter III

BECOMING FREE

*Spiritual dimension
of every life*

215. Today, in a world of many problems, hoping in a future is difficult, where one may seem not to count for much, where one is rendered powerless in the face of globalisation, thus raising the tormenting question among youth: "What am I to do with my life and how can I develop its interior capacities?". Unemployment, personal, scholastic and family failures, relationship difficulties, conflicts in the neighbourhood, urban violence, and impoverishment of a part of the population, are some of the elements not favourable to personal development, nor do they open a way for having confidence in oneself and in the future. The Church's respect for man, her proposal of a community and Christian life, and her announcement of Jesus Christ and the Gospel of universal Salvation which He alone can give to the world, are meant to help the people of our time discover the interior and spiritual dimension of life. If accepted they permit one to develop a mature way, discover a sense of existence, love and suffering, change his opinion on his destiny, be able to have a glimpse of the happiness to which all people are called, and accept hope.⁷⁴

1. The dignity and integrity of the human person

216. The Christian conception of man is founded upon biblical revelation, which affirms that the human being is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. *Gn 1*). Man participates in the life of God and receives the dignity of being a human person as a gift. Exactly because of this, recalls the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, philosophical and theological reflections have recognised in the intellectual faculties of man, his reason and will, a particular sign

⁷⁴ Cf. *Letter of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Elderly*, Vatican City, October 1, 1999.

of his affinity with God. In fact these faculties, render man capable of knowing the Lord and establishing a dialogue relationship with him. These are prerogatives that make the human being a person. But it must be specified that it is a "whole human person". Therefore, not only his spiritual soul, with its intelligence and free will, but also "the human body, shares in the dignity of "the image of God": it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit".⁷⁵ "[...] this dignity entails the demand that he should treat with respect his own body, but also the body of every other person, especially the suffering: [...] 'Do you not know, the Apostle writes, that your bodies are members of Christ? [...] You are not your own. [...] So glorify God in your body (1 Cor 6, 13-15. 19-20)'"⁷⁶

217. Precisely because man is a person, his dignity is unique among all creatures. Every individual man is an end in himself and can never be used as a mere means for reaching other goals, not even in the name of the well-being and progress of the entire human community. By creating man in his own image, God wished to make him share in his power and glory. When he entrusted him with the task of taking care of creation, he took into account his creative intelligence and his responsible freedom.

218. The Second Vatican Council, delving into the mystery of man in the light of Christ's words (*Jn* 17, 21-22) opened up to us horizons inaccessible to the human reason. In the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, the Council explicitly mentions "a certain parallel between the union existing among the divine persons and the union of the children of God in truth and love" (n. 24). When God looks at us, the first thing he sees and loves are not the deeds we succeed in doing, but the image of God himself; an image that makes us "able to know and love the Creator"; and therefore we are "set by Him over all earthly creatures that we might

⁷⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 364.

⁷⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1004.

rule them, and make use of them, while glorifying God » (n. 12) For this reason, the Church recognises the same dignity in all human beings, and the same fundamental value, regardless of any other circumstantial consideration.⁷⁷

219. Among other evils, drugs contribute to the destruction of the integrity of the person. They are also the symptom of a serious crisis of the sense of life. They make the individual remain in a state of restlessness, because, under the influence of drugs he does not in fact find all the elements that will enable him to face life's problems, which are certainly present in life, neither does he succeed in overcoming inevitable crises (affective crisis, necessary efforts, relationship difficulties, failures, illnesses, grief, etc.). Instead of finding the necessary resources in a spiritual life, which relates them in love with the Creator, and in a way of living enlightened by the Word of God, and through moral order that enables them to direct their behaviour and choose actions that are correct and in conformity with human dignity, certain people resort to drugs in order to have the experience of enjoyment, forgetting or avoiding feelings of discomfort. By using drugs, they hope to find answers to their questions and a fulfilment of their expectations. By consuming these chemical products, the effects are that behaviour is no longer guided by the reason and will. As already noted, there is a crisis in comprehending, which is one of the causes of the development of drug consumption. Life questions are not always properly addressed, leaving certain adults, and above all young people in bewilderment, especially when they are in search for words that can free them and open the future for them, and which can exhort them to have hope. Only the Gospel opens up God's way of hope, from whose foundation human existence takes all its meaning.

*The Church protects
young people*

220. Drugs are for many, a way of escaping from existence, instead of accepting it and becoming the author of

⁷⁷ Cf. John Paul II, Address of November 30 1996, to the participants at the XI International Conference organised by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, in *Dolentium Hominum. Church and Health in the World*, n. 34, 1997/1, pp. 7-9.

one's own daily life. At the same time, drugs do not allow people to make free choices, based on the fundamental human and moral values, because they hamper the intelligence, judgement, will and the energy. True freedom is a fruit of education, both in the family and at school and in the various movements to which young people join. Just as with many other situations, the Church cannot allow young people to ruin their lives, by inflicting serious damage on their health, even putting their own lives in danger. Neither can it accept that the phenomena of drugs strikes and renders an increasing number of young people dependent. She refuses to give in and leave some people imprisoned by toxic substances. Together with all people of good will, she desires to find solutions for the good of individuals and for the whole of society. With her pastoral action directed to individuals and environments struck by the drug phenomenon, she tries to restore to them their dignity and freedom.

221. John Paul II teaches that drugs tend to enslave the person, assail his dignity and lead to a lack of freedom. In turn, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State, on the occasion of the Symposium "United for Life" held in the Vatican in 1997, emphasised what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, that "the use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offence (CCC 2291)". Surely – the cardinal adds – the intention here is not to make judgement on subjective responsibility, given the fact that many people, once they enter this dreadful dependency they also become, at least partly, incapable of the necessary radical choices, needed to emerge from this dreadful slavery. However, the moral principle, clearly stated is not only a norm, but also a help to the conscience in acquiring strength and coherence".⁷⁸ Those people who

*The personal
responsibility*

⁷⁸ Cf. Angelo Sodano, *The Opening Address of Cardinal Secretary of State, Angelo Sodano, at the Symposium "United for Life" promoted by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers* (9 October 1997), in "L'Osservatore Romano", 11 October 1997, p. 4.

spread drugs through clandestine production and trafficking are seriously guilty of scandalous practices. Regarding the real drug addicts, though there is an initial responsibility in the consumption of toxic products, one needs also to consider that they become at least in part, incapable of free and voluntary choices, by which they might escape from this dreadful slavery. Their conscience and their will are, so to say, anaesthetised and nullified.

222. It is important always to bare in mind the “moral principle” that a person is not to assail one’s own personal integrity. This “norm” is a point of reference, from which a person reflects on and evaluates behaviour, especially in the area of drug addiction. It is also a supporting point for educators and pastors, indicating the context in which they will have to operate.

*Compassion without
complicity*

223. Even though we have a pastoral attitude of acceptance and understanding of those who take drugs or who are drug addicts, it does mean that compassion should become complicity. If we take the initiative in helping addicted people, we do so, with the intention of leading them to a more authentic way of life and freedom. We must not forget that pastoral pedagogy is morally based on the fruit of wisdom and on close examination, of the word of the Gospel and on a long ecclesial Tradition. These anthropological and moral principles, drawn from the Gospel, are the foundation of our personal and social development. They are not, as the supporters of subjectivism think, an imposed limit on the individual and on his choices. On the contrary, they represent an invitation to enter into a reflective discernment, in order to choose what is right on the basis of objective criteria and transcendent truth concerning man, that exceeds the individual himself.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, 6 August 1993, nn. 51-53, 54-64, 71, *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 1991-1993/13, EDB Bologna 1995, pp. 1415, 1421, 1423-1439, 1453-1455, cf. also the Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, 14 September 1998, on the role of reason in the search for truth, Chapters II and III, *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 1998/17, EDB Bologna 2000, pp. 929-963.

224. These principles are destined to be founts of civilisation: in particular the concept of the dignity and integrity of the human person, which Christian faith deepens and appreciates. When they are rejected, then the feelings of the moment take the upper hand and neutralise discernment, judgement and will.

*Truth above any
subjectivism*

225. The Church has a global concept of the human person and the value of his dignity. In fact, "man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the greatness and the inestimable value of human life. [...] Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognise in the natural law written in the heart (cf. Rom 2, 14-15) the sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree. Once this right is recognised, there rests the foundation of every human community, and the political community itself. [...] For this reason, man – living man – represents the primary and fundamental way for the Church".⁸⁰

Human life is sacred

226. The natural law is understood as the ability of human intelligence to progressively discover and understand the objective moral truths and all that is common and universal among human beings. Such is the base of human dignity, of respect for every being, and is at the origin of human acts.⁸¹ Through forming one's own conscience, one learns to perceive the natural law and put it into practice. A moral sense is an answer to the gift of God's love, which enables man to live.⁸²

⁸⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March 1995, n. 2, *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 1995/14, EDB Bologna 1997, pp. 1209.1211.

⁸¹ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 6-17

⁸² Cf. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, 4, 20, 7.

2. Treat and stimulate a sense of responsibility

*Maturity means
responsibility*

227. The drug addict needs care. This will include guidance in social life, concern about the dignity of his person, and his progress in becoming responsible for his actions. He needs to become free internally, formed as an integral being who reaches a certain maturity, and inserted into a network of social relationships. Responsibility for himself and his own actions is a sign of maturity, and indicates a good level of social participation. Sometimes a false compassion towards drug addicts may show up. One wants to be near and concerned with the addict, though respectful of a correct distance in order to truly help him. False compassion in fact risks suppressing the fundamental needs and the growth of self-responsibility, which then hinders every progress towards true freedom and real autonomy. Viewing another as having dignity and as one who is responsible for his own life, is fundamental in any programme of rehabilitation.

2.1. Therapeutic practices in harmony with the dignity of the person

*Combining
maturation and
autonomy*

228. Self-awareness, freedom, the exercise of the will and autonomy are realities that education and prevention against drug addiction should never lose sight of. Sometimes, there are ways of educating, and measures of prevention or reintegration that are contrary to proper procedures of re-education and of correct moral principles. Some are very brutal or they take on the aspect of sectarian practices within a group that is totally isolated from society, based on identification with a leader, who through applying an excessive affective dependency does not leave room for the maturation and progressive autonomy of the person.

*Reject substitutive
products*

229. Other methods, under the disguise of being painless solutions, are more pragmatic, based on the logic of a dependence on alternative products, which are said to be substitutive. However, the latter is all the same a drug, even if the procedure takes place within a therapeutic perspec-

rive. In this perspective, it is certainly possible to enter into the logic of weaning from a product that the organism may need, a logic that will also enable one to proceed more serenely at the psychological level; but when this treatment is generalised and extended also to light forms of drug addiction, it is no longer a question of a therapy that aims at the liberation of the drug addict. It becomes a way of ingesting toxic products that are accepted both by society and medically. Resorting to a lenient practice allows the individual to continue with his consumption, but it is difficult to establish a way of proceeding that will little by little enable the drug addict come out of the relentless cycle in which he is entangled. It is always important to ask if there could be other therapeutic ways that would help one recover physical and psychological health, and so return to a normal social life, without resorting to substitutive products.

*Favour interventions
that liberate*

230. Other experiments consist of legally controlling, the marketing of drugs, in order to have some control over their diffusion in the circles of people who are more at risk, especially among children and youth. These experiments were started with the purpose of reducing crimes committed by such people who seek money for buying drugs. But such experiments have in most cases led to failures and show the ambivalence of society in the face of the sale and use of drugs.

*Failure of the politics
of drug liberalisation*

231. We are aware that there are forms of drug addiction that are extremely resistant to any type of intervention. They demand a lot of creativity in order to help people undertake a therapeutic programme that can lead to recovery. Besides it is a serious error to think that when drug addiction is associated with a serious form of depression, weaning would be an immediate and decisive measure; instead, it could lead to a more serious crisis with dramatic consequences, like suicide. For very particular cases, weaning of the individual, has to be done with caution and over time, with the help of therapy and psychological support, which may well help the drug addict to progressively liberate himself from drugs.

*Gradual process of
disintoxication*

232. "Drug addiction consists in the incapacity to preserve an acceptable state of physical and mental well-being without taking recourse to drugs".⁸³ Drug addiction is therefore an infirmity, an illness caused by a functional imbalance, which finds in the drug its balancing element. When this element is missing, there is a crisis of abstinence with a dramatic succession of symptoms, which without opiates or other drugs could lead to death or serious psychic disturbances. In this sense, drug addiction is not different from the crises of a diabetic insulin-dependency, caused by the lack of insulin.

*Receiving the drug
addicted patient*

233. It remains true that unlike this last illness, drug addiction is freely adopted, and as such is a "vice" of the one who falls victim, with an impact on his moral responsibility, rendering him open to the social brittleness. Whatever be the origin of the illness, whose determining factors are often many, the kindly attitude and affectionate reception from the carers, the family and the surrounding environment, ought not diminish. It is necessary to listen and to treat the drug addict socially, humanly, morally and spiritually accompany him both as a person and patient in need.

*Ensuring a team that
is endowed with
varied competence*

234. The Church cannot but support programmes that first of all try to promote an action aimed at freeing people from the influence of drugs, in line with the individual's dignity. It is evident, that in the face of the complexity of the problems represented by drug addiction, those who ought to intervene in order to participate in the treatment are many. It is so necessary to be sure of the possibilities offered by medical therapy, and be equipped with medico-psychological advice, while guaranteeing that the individual be considered as the true protagonist of the treatment to which he submits himself, respecting his conscience, responsibility and dignity.

2.2. Stimulating the sense of responsibility

235. We must not have to forget that drugs, even in minimum quantities, alter the use of reason, freedom and will.

⁸³ Definition given by the World Health Organisation 1973.

Therefore, pastoral action should be in accord with these different dimensions of the person in order to realise prevention and help the drug addict to modify his behaviour.

236. From the moral point of view, using drugs is illicit, because they diminish the dignity of the person. But this moral reference does not mean a condemnation of the person who uses drugs, and almost always experiences a life deprived of freedom, a condition from which he would like to free himself.⁸⁴ For this reason pastoral action must multiply its efforts with the aim of working for the liberation of the person and bringing him out of the social network of drug addiction. In fact, the environment in which drug addicts are found is often one that holds them imprisoned in a relentless cycle.

*The use of drugs is
immoral*

237. Unlike civil laws, moral values never condemn the person; rather they aim at stimulating his or her sense of responsibility in relation to these values. It is important to transmit through responsibility training, those moral values which point to the good way and illuminate the conscience on the choice of human behaviour. The sanctions that results from moral transgressions have the objective of working on the renewal and conversion of the person. God does not want the death of the sinner but that he converts (Lk 5, 29-32). The moral law is at the service of the good and the truth. Christian ethic is the law that enables one to have freedom rooted in a confident relationship with God and with ones brothers and sisters.

*Leading to renewal
and conversion*

238. Exactly because of this, education in a sense of responsibility is fundamental. We are however dealing with a notion that is interpreted variously in the our times. The sense of the words "freedom", "conscience", "autonomy", "responsibility", is not always understood in the same way. In the contemporary world of individualism, all these notions are understood as the right to self-determination in all fields of life. Sometimes we hear of the "right"

*Autonomy, and then
moral law*

⁸⁴ Cf. Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, op. cit., n. 94.

to take drugs, and of the right to be treated in the face of the drug consequences. Certainly it is necessary to offer treatment and be concerned about the social reinsertion of drug addicts, but not to respond in the name of the right to take drugs.

*Drug addiction is
detrimental to the
common good*

239. It may be paradoxical, contrary to the civic spirit, and even immoral to vindicate the right to deliberately take drugs, something that leads to a form of self-destruction, while burdening the community with such a heavy load. It is neither reasonable nor just to think in these terms, while it is possible to avoid the consumption of drugs and therefore also its consequences. The right to take drugs goes against the common good. If society, really holds such a claim as a right, then in a certain sense it raises questions about its legislative and judicial power, as well as the praxis and ideology of the social and political order, in relation to drug addiction.

*Responsibility
and values*

240. According to the present mentality, the sense of personal and civic responsibility is often interpreted as the right to act on the basis of one's own desires, without being obliged to consider a fuller picture. The slogan that justifies this attitude is commonly expressed like this: "I do what I want, it's my own problem". It is true that it is up to every one to make his own choices and take responsibility for them. But this slogan, represents the opposite of true personal responsibility, which consists both in the exercise of one's own reason and with respect to moral law. Every one is called to be responsible both for himself and for the consequences of his choices and actions. Responsibility is always valued according to the criterion of moral law, goodness, virtue and truth, and not just as a function of individual interests.⁸⁵

*Educate to
responsibility*

241. Many contemporaries believe that this view constitutes a limit to freedom and spontaneity in living the present moment. But to act purely in the instinctive order, manifests above all a primary and compulsive attitude in

⁸⁵ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, nn. 74, 77, 78, 95-97.

response to an immediate injunction of a feeling or drive, a sign that the individual is totally imprisoned by his or her desires and indicates what in him is absolutely neither controllable nor rational. Educators have to form in young people a sense of responsibility and judgement, in exercising their will in line with moral obligation and self-discipline in the area of drives. Otherwise the individual will be guided by the emotional part of his being, to the detriment of a healthy use of the intellect and will. It is absolutely necessary to educate people to control their desires.⁸⁶

242. Taking care of drug addicts and giving them confidence by stimulating them to a sense of responsibility is a way of manifesting our respect for them. This is in contrast to the disesteem experienced by certain drug addicts. Such disesteem makes one suffer and reveals a lack of love for oneself, as well as contempt for one's own image. By approaching people who take drugs with a different outlook, helps them emerge from their negative image and allows them to emerge from the isolation they are experiencing.

*Restore self-esteem
and responsibility*

3. Freeing oneself from deadly behaviour

243. The free disposal of one's own body – which could go as far as destroying oneself – is proposed by certain people as a fundamental right. But the body is not a simple object at one's disposal; it is part of the human being in his entirety.

244. The right to dispose of one's own body by taking drugs, as some people claim, is not legitimate. It is rather the expression of serious confusion often disguised as simply giving-up. Society cannot but promote life; it has the duty to help every one have reason for living and hoping. Drug addiction, which increasingly invades society, is not

*You cannot dispose
of your body in an
absolute way*

⁸⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Fight the Personal Sin. Allocation at the General Audience of August 25, 1999*, in "L'Osservatore Romano" [French edition, n. 35, 31 August 1999, p. 12].

an accidental phenomenon. The trivialisation of drugs is the result of currents of ideas that have, in the name of the freedom to dispose of oneself, contributed to making death the solution to serious problems of the individual, as is testified by the increase of juvenile suicides in certain societies.

Fighting indifference

245. Sometimes, in the absence of dialogue, yet with great indulgence, some young people are permitted to take drugs. Thus they slowly but inexorably prepare themselves to abandon life, almost in the face of the indifference of society. However, it is necessary to remember that research shows that most of the young people who use psychoactive substances do so in order to calm stress, anxiety, difficulty of living, and many other symptoms that could to a large extent be attenuated or eliminated, if people and society as a whole paid attention to personal and relationship difficulties of individuals, especially youth.

*Not to nourish
illusions in young
people*

246. The only vision of life that society offers to young people who take drugs is "sanitary" and "hygienist". Prevention campaigns are organised for them while at the same time an ambiguous message is given: "You can take drugs, there will always be someone to take care of you". This paradoxical attitude is especially expressed in discos, concerts and big gatherings where, mobile medical teams from humanitarian associations are present, who explain the nature of the products, the risks and the minimum use that can be made of such products. This kind of intervention is without doubt necessary, if it is intended to avert young people from the dangers they face and cause for others when they take drugs. However, this procedure is largely insufficient, even risking producing effects contrary to those sought, especially because it tends to make young people think that healthcare legitimates drugs. This does not at all put the devotion of the medical and social teams into question, but it underlines the lack of general education and a certain form of permissiveness on the part of society.

To avoid laxity

247. It is evident that the less society intervenes to help show young people the limits inherent in personal and

social life, the more laxity extends and opens the way to drug consumption. It is equally worrying to observe the passivity with which society allows its children to kill themselves through intoxication. Legislation and regulation are demanding in matters of road safety, so as to make people respect the road code, thus avoiding deaths, but societies do not always have the same vigilance about drugs in schools, in public places and places of amusement, and sometimes also in families. Yet the consequences are extremely serious.

248. Such indulgence can be attributed to at least three factors.

249. The first factor is the general attitude in society that promotes the use of pharmaceutical products, under the pretext of medical assistance, to help people in difficulty live better, without however resolving their problems. From their youngest age, children are at the same time witnesses and object of these practices. In fact, it needs to be underlined again, that when certain parents and educators do not know how to regulate the behaviour of a child through an educational relationship, they consult the physician so that he may prescribe a sedative. The child therefore learns very soon to face his or her moods and emotions by taking recourse to a pharmaceutical product, rather than by learning to control himself, through an educational process, with the help of his parents, the whole family, the social environment and the adults around him. Excessive use of medications by young people will, in the course of adolescence, stimulate them to search for other products, in order to regulate the crises that they face, and overcome the inevitable difficulties of life, rather than learn to check their affections on the basis of elements offered by the psychic life and the moral conscience.

*Unconditional faith
in medicines*

250. The second factor is the excessive attention to young people and to youth models in ways which society has turned them into points of reference. They have become the models of contemporary society: in music, television, and fashions of specifically teen-age attire.

*Ideological
idealization of youth*

All these invade the world of adults, who end up thinking, speaking and dressing as if they are in this transitory stage of life, when the personality is unstable because it is still being moulded. Society organises itself around youth to the point of ever more identifying itself, in its clothing styles for example, according to the styles of the young. Since it is increasingly rare to find edifying models in the world of adults, young people have no other possibility of reaching a true maturation other than through an ongoing modelling of themselves on the young people. They therefore, suffer a lack in internal development and social insertion. Adults, then, increasingly are no longer points of reference, are incapable of intervening, and above all neither can they remind the youth of the necessary prohibitions when they are attracted to drugs. Since they are no longer models nor examples, they are unable to propose healthy ways of maturing.

Challenging death

251. The third factor consists in placing some young people in the danger of death. The issue here is not desiring death for the growing generation, but the inability to protect this generation from death-bound behaviour. Fortunately, most young people avoid infringing certain rules, because they have assimilated certain moral values or because they do not want to cause sorrow to their parents and family, nor disappoint them. Their way of behaviour is thus regulated by the respect they receive from those close to them, the patient, careful and cordial love of the parents and other members of their family, especially in the most difficult periods of their growth. This allows them to exercise their freedom, knowing that their family is an essential point of reference, that their relatives and society are interested in them and will be hurt by the idea of a misfortune in their lives. In this way they develop trust, when they discover that others have trust in them.

Ambiguity on the right to life

252. When society transmits ambiguous images on the question of the right to life and death, a right that society takes to itself regarding the unborn child, the sick or elderly, some young people unconsciously think of themselves as "survivors" or also think of themselves as being in

an environment that does not respect nor value life, and which shows contempt for every person. In this case, they risk adopting a "deadly" behaviour, perhaps to reassure themselves and become convinced that they are living, trying to experience intense borderline sensations. Certain young people use drugs in a paradoxical way, both to perceive their own being, and to contemplate their exclusion from life by coming close to death. The scarce respect for the human being in the different phases of life, especially the beginning and the end of life, and the minimal valuing of life do not lead young people to self-respect, not to a respect of their own life. The first task consists therefore in developing, according to the invitation of John Paul II,⁸⁷ a culture of life in the face of a "culture of death" that is destroying many points of moral reference.

4. Moral law at the service of life

253. Contempt for the sense of life, nourished by eugenic conceptions of existence, explains without doubt the ambiguity societies have towards the drug addiction of young people, who in this symptomatic way express their serious life discomfort. One thus witnesses escape into drugs and suicide. Death is often considered as a normal solution for a person in difficulty. It could also happen that some young people consider suicide as a courageous or heroic action. Adults should educate them to a sense of true courage, in order to manage the battles of life, so that difficulties might be resolved in a different way than by an act that brings death.

4.1. *Knowing how to say "no" in order to become free*

254. One of the first elements in education, is for parents to say "no" to a child, in order to mark a frontier when he dangerously exposes himself to inconsiderate risks or when he exceeds limits that could be harmful to him. The child is then consciously or unconsciously reassured by the fact of

*Educate to
renunciation*

⁸⁷ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 2.

knowing that there are prohibitions that are not to be infringed. He can then perceive the space in which he is called to move, and build his moral life on certain fundamental prohibitions to discover better his freedom. The fear to say "no" so apparent in many adults who are afraid of reducing the freedom of expression of their child, in reality prevents the latter from becoming really free. Obviously, it is not a question of subjecting the child to injustices, nor adopting rigid and arbitrary attitudes, but knowing how to help him become aware of the moral norms, by stimulating in him a right and true sense of human freedom.

*Transmit the sense
of limit*

255. "In this sense, the negative moral precepts have an extremely important positive function. The "no" which they unconditionally require makes clear the absolute limit beneath which free individuals cannot lower themselves. At the same time it indicates the minimum which they must respect and from which they must start out in order to say "yes" over and over again, a "yes which will gradually embrace the *entire horizon of the good* (cf. Mt 5, 48). The commandments, in particular the negative moral precepts, are the beginning and the first necessary stage of the journey towards freedom".⁸⁸ When a person has not interiorised a sense of limits and does not know how to say "no" he often finds it difficult to say "yes".

256. On the moral level, it is particularly important that a child understand the necessity of not abusing his own integrity and of cherishing his own life. Prevention campaigns that are entirely "sanitary" are largely insufficient to fight against the phenomenon of drugs. Prevention should not only underline the effects of drugs on health and social ties, but it must also address the behaviour of individuals in the moral and spiritual spheres.

4.2. *The prohibition against harming oneself and others*

257. Society ought to unceasingly remind its members of the prohibition on certain crime behaviour. Even though

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, n. 75.

there is in place a police surveillance of drug traffickers, distributors and addicts, it should however be noted that very few children and young people are told that it is against the law to take drugs. Television, as well as comic strips, feed the imagination of young people, often showing plays in which robbery, suicide, rape and murder are trivialised. The offenders and the criminals in these series are "heroes" who resist the police, the last and only defence of society against the destroying folly.

258. Moral values are rarely presented to the young people as fundamental. Very often the parents, educators, teachers and other adults, do not know anymore how to assume their proper roles before children. Adults and children are considered to be on the same footing, yet the younger ones still need to learn from the older ones, how to behave in life and how to respect fundamental demands, both in personal and social life. Many parents and educators think that the child can alone discover these demands or that they will be transmitted to him or her by other "adults". In this way, a considerable number of young people decreasingly looks to adults as points of reference, with whom they can establish educational relationships that are both edifying and constructive.

*Presenting values as
they truly are*

259. "The commandment 'You shall not kill' thus establishes the point of departure for the start of true freedom. It leads us to promote life actively, and to develop particular ways of thinking and acting which serve life. [...] The commandment 'You shall not kill', even in its more positive aspects of respecting, loving and promoting human life, is binding on every individual human being. It resounds in the moral conscience of everyone as an imperative of the original covenant of God the Creator and mankind. It can be recognised by everyone through the light of reason and it can be observed, thanks to the mysterious working of the Spirit who, blowing where he will (cf. *Jn* 3, 8), comes to every person living in this world".⁸⁹

Loving life

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, nn. 76-77.

*Re-establishing the
spiritual sense of life*

260. It is important to remember that the diffusion and use of drugs, gradually developed among young people, when among others, moral education as well as religious education were disregarded. Society always has less consideration for the spiritual and moral dimensions of life, sometimes reaching the point of even denying the religious and spiritual foundations of its traditions.

*Man is unhappy
when passions are
his or her only
incentive*

261. In a way, drugs have become the indicator of a society which, instead of proposing the values of life, encourages escape into a pleasant and deceptive state of euphoria, attainable through the use of drugs. One passes from the curiosity of trying out a new product into the relentless cycle of drug addiction, from which it is difficult to liberate oneself. It has to be affirmed, that drugs do not contribute to the well being of a person, nor will they regulate, in a short or long term, difficulties of any type. Simply responding to impulses, the individual remains and will always be unhappy. Each one is called to find a positive way of living, founded on internal resources and relational life.

4.3. The civil law obscures the moral law

*Fighting ethical
relativism*

262. To love and accept life, while learning to be free, depends first all on knowledge of the truths that are at the foundation of the values of life. "The basis of these values cannot be provisional and changeable 'majority' opinions, but only the acknowledgement of an objective moral law which, as the 'natural law' written in the human heart, is the obligatory point of reference for civil law itself. [...] It is true [affirms the document earlier on] that history has known cases where crimes have been committed in the name of 'truth'. But equally grave crimes and radical denials of freedom have also been committed and are still being committed, in the name of 'ethical relativism'".⁹⁰ "Ethical relativism" encourages individuals to vindicate a "moral autonomy in their choices", not based on moral principles, but on totally subjective desires, and to ask in the name of personal freedom that specific rights be recog-

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, n. 70.

nised and protected by law. "Individual responsibility is thus turned over to the civil law, with a renouncing of personal conscience, at least in the public sphere".⁹¹

263. Both drug distribution and its consumption are supported in part by this "ethical relativism", as well as by the weak formation of the moral conscience, and its exercise. It must be noted that today the civil law and also certain largely diffused practices, become the equivalent of moral law or they even replace it. Independently of the criterion of conformity to the good, the behaviour of many individuals becomes the norm, leading to a sort of abdication of moral conscience. Thinking that civil law and widely diffused behaviour can replace the moral law does not favour the acquisition of a real moral sense. Only to the effect that civil law is in harmony with the moral law are individuals helped to understand that it is on the basis of moral values that civil law and individual human behaviour is regulated.

*Laws do not replace
the conscience*

264. In other words, as John Paul II emphasises in his encyclical letter *Evangelium vitae*, the civil law does not automatically have a moral character. It depends on the values that it embodies and promotes. Moral values are the basis of all human actions and social rules, such as "the dignity of the human person, respect for inviolable and inalienable human rights, and the adoption of the "common good" as the end and criterion regulating political life. [...] The real purpose of civil law is to guarantee an ordered social coexistence in true justice. [...] For this reason, civil law must ensure that all members of society enjoy positive respect for certain fundamental rights which innately belong to the person, rights which every positive law must recognise and guarantee".⁹² For this reason, "in no sphere of life can the civil law take the place of conscience or dictate norms concerning things which are outside its competence",⁹³ which consists in ensuring the

*Even law has to be
founded on moral
values*

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, n. 69.

⁹² *Ibidem*, n. 70-71.

⁹³ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Instruction *Donum vitae*, III. *Moral and Civil Law*, in "Enchiridion Vaticanum", n. 10, pp. 885-886.

common good of the people together with the acceptance and protection of their fundamental rights, the promotion of peace and public morality.⁹⁴

265. Drugs endanger the life and integrity of every person, starting with younger people, who consume them with a certain amazing "innocence". Society has to protect the young from themselves, from their psychological brittleness and sometimes from their lack of moral formation.

4.4. *The issue at stake is also spiritual*

266. Morally, we must take into account the importance and value of a spiritual approach, on the basis of which it is possible to conduct one's search in depth, instead of hurling oneself into superficial pleasures, that do not lead to happiness.

*The horizon of
eternal life*

267. Biblical history reveals that God draws near to us, he calls us to live in communion with Him and opens to us the hope of eternal life. The God who reveals Jesus Christ to us is not made by human hands, he is not a product of imaginary constructions of the human mind. He calls us to life and frees us from dark terrors and from the fear of being made the object of evil influences. The living-out of the Gospel message enables us to fully realise our humanity and to enjoy a fulfilling and beautiful existence. A close examination of the scriptures allows us to identify those values which will contribute to the progressive organisation of society, founded upon an unconditional respect for the dignity of the person.

To look for God

268. To assume a spiritual approach means that one has a true insight possibility opening out into the future, including the hope of true happiness without end. The spiritual approach sets us on the search for God when we can say with St. Augustine "You were within me and I was outside, and there I sought for you".⁹⁵ The crisis about the interior

⁹⁴ Cf. Ecumenical Council Vatican II, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis humanae*, n. 7.

⁹⁵ St. Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions*, Book X, Chapter 27.

life which characterises the present generation, means they are denied an insight into what is an ideal in life, which is needed for forming oneself and occupying ones place in society.

269. The Gospel is the source and foundation of the values of life. Discovering Christ means really discovering life. Christ reveals that God loves us and that our response to this love must be part of our daily life. Life can be difficult and at times hard, but it is our duty to always try to respond by seeking what is right and true. We are dealing here with the question already asked by the young rich man: "What good deed must I do to possess eternal life?" (Mt 19, 16). Only in the answer to this question resides true happiness. Justice, truth, goodness and true love are the most important criteria for the moral evaluation of human acts. The spiritual approach is founded on the acceptance of grace and on the will to engage in life on the basis of a relationship with Christ the Saviour.

Discovering Christ

270. Thus, catechesis has to concern itself with the formation of a Christian understanding in young people, so that they may draw from Scripture and from intimacy with the Lord, those necessary elements for the nourishment and development of their interior life. Such information has to include a true human and moral education aimed at a clear transmission of fundamental values. Spiritual life enables one, therefore, to place his or her own earthly existence in a perspective of hope for eternal life, and as such brings out the ultimate sense of every life. The lack of teaching on eternal life doesn't prepare one to live the present time fully, recognising the greatness of life, and of every individual life.

*Catechesis, a place
for a human and
moral formation*

271. It is important to discover the face of Christ, who gives us his word, the source of life: "...no one who drinks the water that I shall give him will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up for eternal life" (Jn 4, 14). The Lord also reveals that man is made for eternal life, "...for God did not make death, he takes no pleasure in destroying the liv-

*Moral values have
their foundation
in God*

ing. To exist – for this he created all things; [...] For God created human beings to be immortal, he made them as an image of his own nature” (*Wis* 1, 13-14; 2, 23-24). Christ invites us to unite with him, because he wants to free us from the fear and suffering that prevent us from living; suffering and fear of living that show up in the behaviour of people marked by drug addiction. Moral values have their deep roots in a confident relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The beatitudes (*Mt* 5, 1-12) are its most perfect translation.

272. In the precariousness of human existence, writes John Paul II, Jesus gives a sense of fulfilment to life. “The experience of the Covenant is renewed in the experience of all the ‘poor’ who meet Jesus of Nazareth. Just as God who ‘loves the living’ (*Wis* 11, 26) reassured Israel in the midst of danger, so now the Son of God proclaims to all who feel threatened and hindered that their lives too are a good to which the Father’s love gives meaning and value. [...] It is above all the ‘poor’ to whom Jesus speaks in his preaching and actions. The crowds of the sick and the outcasts who follow him seek him out (cf. *Mt* 4, 23-25) and find in his words and actions a revelation of the great value of their lives and of how their hope of salvation is well founded.

273. Revelation progressively allows the first notion of immortal life planted by the Creator in the human heart to be grasped with greater clarity: ‘He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man’s mind’ (*Qo* 3, 11). This *notion of totality and fullness* is awaiting to be manifested in love and brought to perfection, by God’s free gift, through sharing in his eternal life”.⁹⁶

5. The Confusion between pleasure and happiness

274. As we have repeated several times, the drug addict makes use of products or drugs with the purpose of attain-

⁹⁶ *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 32, 31

ing deceptive pleasure and happiness, above all in order to reassure him or herself. But can one speak of true pleasure or true happiness?

5.1. *The different interpretations of the sense of happiness*

275. The meaning of the word "happiness" has varied throughout history and in cultures. We can mention here some ideas on happiness.

*Definitions of
happiness*

276. 1 – Happiness is sometimes interpreted as the search for the myth of the golden age idealising the past, as it is better than the present time.

277. 2 – Happiness is also considered as the valuing of nature (to the point of deifying it), rural and pastoral life in reaction to an industrial and technological world.

278. 3 – Happiness is also seen as being in harmony with oneself and with the universe. It does not depend on a personal bond between God and man, or on the decisions of the individual conscience, but on an unchangeable relationship between man and the world.

279. 4 – For others, happiness arises from the success of business. A flourishing business, multiplication of wealth and the possession of many goods, assures a "happy" life.

280. 5 – Happiness is also seen in the context of politics and systems of government, where law enshrines all that pertains to happiness.

281. 6 – Or, the individual finds happiness in the world of sentiments and feelings. Life is a matter of pleasant feelings, and the more these are present, the more one is happy.

282. In most of these descriptions, happiness is often confused with economic, social and political comfort, and with the absence of tensions or conflicts in nature or in the psychic life, or even in terms of personal integrity. The Christ-

*Confusion between
material comfort
and happiness*

ian conception of happiness is set in another perspective, since it depends on the relationship between God and man, and on the eternal life promised to us.

5.2. *Spiritual meaning of pleasure and happiness*

*True pleasure is
something more than
mere feeling*

283. Pleasure is often considered solely under its physical and psychological aspects, as the satisfaction of the affective life through pleasant emotions. But there is also a moral sense in the person who tries to live in harmony with the fundamental values of life. Pleasure is not just a sensation to be experienced and felt.⁹⁷ When it is sought in an exclusive way, it inevitably produces dissatisfaction and impoverishment, because it is self-serving. True pleasure is that which is about the gift of oneself, freely given.⁹⁸

*For the Christians,
happiness is the life
in communion with
God*

284. Happiness, it is worth repeating, is often confused with physical, psychological or material comfort. In the Christian understanding, happiness has its source in Christ, who came to reveal the Father to us and bring salvation to us, the “news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people” (*Lk* 2, 10). It is also the purpose of human existence, the last end, the eternal life promised by Christ, which together with the beatitudes (cf. *Mt* 5, 12) represents the beginning of his teaching.⁹⁹ Every human being is at the pursuit of happiness. “This same wish to seize and possess happiness is found in all human beings”.¹⁰⁰ True happiness is in the possession of all good,¹⁰¹ which can only be realised in God, because “no one is good but God alone” (*Mk* 10, 18). It is the answer given by Jesus to the rich

⁹⁷ It would be useful to make reference to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 31-34, where the issue of pleasure is widely discussed.

⁹⁸ Cf. *The ecstasy of St. Theresa of Avila*, Bernini’s work in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.

⁹⁹ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 1-5; cf. also the words of Augustine of Hippo in the *Confessions*: “Lord, you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you”; cf. also, Augustine, *De Sermonibus Domini in monte*, I.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate*, II, 13.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Boezio, *De consolazione philosophiae*, 3, 2.

young man (Mt 19, 16), who asked him what "good must I do to possess eternal life".

285. Pope John Paul II, commenting on this passage of the Gospel, affirms "To ask about the good, ultimately means to turn towards God, the fullness of goodness. The attraction leads man to the source of goodness, God himself. God alone is worthy of being loved 'with all one's heart, and with all one's soul, and with all one's mind' (Mt 22, 37). He is the source of man's happiness. Jesus takes the question about morally good actions back to its religious foundations, to the acknowledgement of God, who alone is goodness, the fullness of life, the final end of human activity, and perfect happiness".¹⁰²

286. In the Christian faith, both pleasure and happiness are two realities of the moral and spiritual life, which are necessarily transient and limited experiences in comparison to what it will be in eternal happiness. There is pleasure in fulfilling the good and there is happiness in living in harmony with what is true and right, when human reason is inspired by divine Wisdom. Obviously, one needs to realise that certain people live in ways that are contradictory to Gospel values and to the final goal of existence. It is up to the pastors to know what are human boundaries and the limits for the individual, and that which is sinful.

*Pleasure and
happiness:
characteristics of the
moral life*

287. The pastors will thus be able to provide points of reference to those people who, hurt by life, search for God and walk their personal history according to the law of graduality,¹⁰³ so that they may slowly improve and eventually be converted in order to enter into "the reality of Christ's redemption. *Christ has redeemed us!* This means that he has given us the possibility of realising the entire truth of our being; he has set our freedom free from the domination of concupiscence"¹⁰⁴ Christian morality aims at gladdening the heart of man, it is not an ethic of oppres-

*Christian ethic: is
that of love*

¹⁰² *Veritatis splendor*, n. 9.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, nn. 102-105.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, n. 103.

sion, neither is it a dramatic ethic; it is an ethic of happiness that includes a certain number of demands. It is founded on the love of God, on love that gives life, which is stronger than sin. The latter is instead a rejection of God, a negation of the dignity of the person.

288. In the law received from God, "love and truth" meet and in this way reveal the objectivity of the moral law and the "appropriate allowance made both for *God's mercy towards the sinner who converts* and for the *understanding of human weakness*".¹⁰⁵ From time immemorial, though in different ways, man has always had a perception of his destiny, which is that of being able to love and experience happiness. However, man has, at the same time always been aware of not having fully realised this destiny. In any culture, in whichever form of expression, man has always been bothered by the search for a life crowned by success, by a fullness of love.

The law of love

289. The best possible statement of personal relationships is the biblical expression "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength" (*Dt* 6, 5) and "You will love your neighbour as yourself" (*Lv* 19, 18), taken up by Jesus when the Pharisee questions him on the greatest commandment: "'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus said to him, '*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself*'" (*Mt* 22, 37-39).

290. Jesus Christ has also revealed to us that our love is in response to the prime love of God, the source of all life. Man, who is aware of being loved by the God of Love will no longer live the same way. He will ask God for the grace to help him live in justice and truth. Firm in this conviction, he will say with the apostle Paul: "For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, n. 104.

nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, nor any power, nor the heights nor the depths, nor any created thing whatever, will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rm 8, 38-39). Man cannot realise this love alone; he has to accept it and receive it from the person of Jesus, who gave his life on the cross for those he loves. The search for pleasure and the pursuit of happiness have their meaning in this love of God and in relationship to him. Nevertheless, the search for pleasure and happiness as understood by contemporary man remains an open question.

5.3. *Confusion between strong feelings and happiness*

291. In the culture of our time, the ideal seems to be feeling good and at ease in one's body, working without strain and living in a carefree atmosphere. The use of drugs fits readily in such a culture. Thus, social gatherings, such as weekend festive frenzies, which promote occasions that are somewhat passive, dispose young people to take drugs, which are sought after in an attempt to free themselves from constraints and worries of life. Thus they feel sensory and hallucinatory experiences. The night clubs and rave parties, which bring together numerous young people, where drugs like ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamine, and different mixtures of very toxic products are sold, have become places in which individuals search for personal and relational emotions, to the extent of physical and psychic exhaustion.

*The use of drugs
gives the illusion
of comfort*

292. It is as if the search for pleasure could not be realised in any other way other than through physical exhaustion and intellectual annihilation. The nature of pleasure seems to be reduced to the fact of experiencing strong and vivid feelings. In an atmosphere of great tolerance and exaltation of the body, one realises that the search for pleasure and happiness must first and foremost be centred on bodily experiences, which in the final analysis lead to a great disappointment. This also leads the person to confining himself and isolating himself from a network of relationships, looking only for self-gratification.

*The use of drugs
as an egoistic
withdrawal*

5.4. *The escape from limits and suffering*

*Man's desire is
satisfied by Christ*

293. Certain people tend to let themselves be driven by desires, which they think have to be permanently satisfied. Desire is insatiable, and man must accept the reality of the inherent deprivation of his condition. Some may try to reject it by accumulating goods and riches that may after all be necessary or through seeking pleasure and enjoyment. In his own way, the drug addict tries to compensate this sense of deprivation, and it is not surprising that drugs exercise a certain charm on young people, because they give them a feeling of omnipotence. Instead, the perfection of Christian life consists in the abandonment of all wealth to follow Christ. "If you wish to be perfect – says Jesus to the rich young man –, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come follow me" (Mt 19, 21-22). You cannot reach the fulfillment of life without making some renouncement, and this makes you more or less suffer. Certain people fear suffering, and so they tend to respond immediately to all the desires that come across.

5.5. *Exalting pleasure in order to eliminate better the desires*

*Exasperated pleasure
destroys the desire*

294. Such is the paradox and the contradiction at the heart of the personality of a drug addict: excite pleasure at all costs and at the same time free oneself from one's own desires. So, in discovering the pleasures of life, the drug addict destroys them. Pleasure is awaited as the extinction of desire and pleasure itself. For this reason the drug addict is capable of making promises, which are not kept, even though they affirm that this is the last time they will use drugs. This is the precise moment of an illusion, thinking that once drugs are consumed the "desire" for drugs will definitely disappear. The "logic" is "I will not be subjected any more to the pressure of those desires; I will be freed from them by pleasure". The pleasure obtained from the use of drugs is unhealthy and leads to disregard for the body, which is disfigured and destroyed by the action of the toxic products.

295. Happiness and pleasure are therefore not found in drugs. The latter has more or less become "the opium of happiness". Toxic products do not bring the peace that is sought and hoped for; on the contrary, drugs promote insecurity and loss of freedom in the individual.

*Drugs, opium of
happiness*

5.6. *Desiring: always means being able to wait*

296. By wanting to realise desires immediately, and just as they are, the drug addict tends to deny their function. He then follows the easy and instant forms of pleasures, which are sought for in themselves. It is not a question of hoping for a good, with the pleasure projected into the future, and passively wait for it. Waiting is hard. In the light of the Christian faith, we know that when the pleasures of life come from good and true relationships with others and with reality, we are preparing ourselves in the present life to live the final beatitudes in communion with Christ. The satisfactions and the gratifications of the present world are provisional in comparison to the goods that await us in eternal life. For this reason the Christian is turned toward the future without forgetting the present, because thanks to faith, he knows that eternal life is prepared for, through daily good actions. The love of God, gives him this hope.

*Pleasure, fruit of a
relational life*

297. Christian faith seriously considers man's desires, his vital needs and his need to be loved, in the knowledge that he is not alone. He understands his desires in the light of the word of God, allowing him to enlarge his interior space. The dialogue between man and God as the Bible testifies, helps to mature the internal life of believers in an unusual way; the internal life is the place for an intimate meeting with the Lord. Christian reflection urges people to undertake a close examination of their interior life, and therefore of their humanity in relation to God, in order to respond to his love. Meditation on the word of God, *lectio divina*, personal prayer, prayer in common,¹⁰⁶ understanding the truths of faith, liturgical and sacramental celebra-

*Desire broadens the
interior space*

¹⁰⁶ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, 6 January 2001, n. 39, in *La Traccia*, IEI (February 2002/1) pp. 33/I-34/I.

Man has become
more and more
selfish

tions, and also examination of conscience, acknowledging and confessing ones sins with contrition, and living the faith are many practices that allow the development of ones spiritual life, so empowering a person to take responsibility for ones own actions. Art, literature and music have translated this refinement of the interior human life into civilisation, thanks also to the contribution of Christianity.¹⁰⁷

298. The Christian faith recognises sense enjoyment as a legitimate pleasure, opening up to present and future joys. It is not that one looks for pleasure to protect himself from life, but one finds gratifications, which are the consequence of a life founded on Gospel values.¹⁰⁸

5.7. Individualistic happiness

299. The considerable emphasis on individualism and individual freedom, sometimes exercised without discernment and without a critical spirit, has come about at the cost of a dysfunction of the symbolisation, perception of truth and moral sense. Before, children could transform their prime aggressiveness (fear of others and the feeling of being threatened) with the help of the resources found within cultures and in the relationship with others; now they have to effect this operation with no other support but themselves. The individual has shifted his place of investment from culture and social ties to his own individuality, taking himself as the only object of reference depriving himself of religious and moral resources. One therefore understands, why every child primarily has a narcissistic vision of himself, elaborating his feelings and imagining on less elaborate aspects, which constitute his only model. In order to grow, he must search relentlessly for his identity and in the symbolisation of his drives. It is not surprising that the teen-ager finds much difficulty living and as previously noted, develops behaviours of dependence and

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Letter of Pope John Paul II to the Artists*, 4 April 1999, Vatican City 1999, in *La Traccia*, IEL, n. 1 (February 1999) pp. 33/IV-341/IV.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Fruitio*, in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*; cf. also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 142; I-II, 2.11; 31.

escape from himself, as well as forms of denial of his desires.

300. In such an individualistic context, where the subject takes himself as the only moral reference, the relationship with pleasure and happiness is modified; both pleasure and happiness are sought and lived in the immediate instant. In the more elaborate psychological sense of the term, pleasure is not manifested, since it does not appear as the consequence of an activity or a relationship. As for happiness, which is in this case confused with well-being, it is often forgotten that it does not form part of psychological language, but rather of philosophy, ethics and religious practice.

*Loss of the link
between life and
ethics*

5.8. *God wants the happiness of man*

301. Happiness and pleasure are concepts that are also tied up with the moral and theological life. Christianity insists on the happiness to which men are called right from now, without forgetting that of the after life. The charter for happiness is defined in the Beatitudes (Mt 5, 1-12); it constitutes the entrance door to a moral and spiritual life founded on a relationship with God; a journey of a moral and holy life. In the Christian tradition, one who tries to do good unites himself with God, because "God alone is Good",¹⁰⁹ and he feels joy in observing God's law of love. Being "happy" or, in the ancient sense of the term, to be in "happiness", means living in the peace and joy of the Gospel. Thus, "*The moral life presents itself as the response due to the many gratuitous initiatives taken by God out of love for man. It is a response of love*".¹¹⁰ Pleasure is a joy that is born out of grace and the excess of the fulfilment of the good.

*Novelty of the
Christian ethic*

302. Joy does not consist in being excited and in permanent nervousness, but in knowing how to live in harmony and in the understanding of what contributes to what is

¹⁰⁹ John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, n. 11.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, n. 10.

good and true. There are therefore certain objective situations that go against the happiness of man because they are in contradiction with his or her good. The Christian faith is a religion of happiness. God does not only call us to life, but also to put into practice, in our existence the values of life. Evangelical ethics translates these values in terms of the love of God, oneself, neighbour, freedom, responsibility, and the dignity of the human person. When these values are neglected, the person risks carrying the consequences himself. Happiness lies in the fact of wanting to live basing oneself upon these values, thanks to the moral response through the practice of the virtues.

Relevance of virtues

303. The term "virtue" does not enjoy popularity and in the mentality of many people of our times, it seems obsolete. Nevertheless, in a world that lacks points of reference and does not know how to educate the young people to a moral sense, virtues are relevant. Education should have the objective of establishing a link between the wisdom of the moral values of life and the situations in which they live, offering each one the means of judging and discerning what is good, in order to act in a free and responsible way. Virtues present themselves as many other answers on the basis of which it will be possible to establish a moral action. In fact "a virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but also to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions".¹¹¹

5.9. The sense of the good is inscribed in the heart of man

Theological virtues

304. Certain thinkers make a mistake of contrasting the self-styled idealism of values that come from heaven with a materialism that does not recognise their transcendence. The materialistic concept, which is not new, does away with God to affirm that all values are the fruit of the human reason. Biblical history instead teaches us that the law of God

¹¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (CCC), n. 1803.

is inscribed in the spirit and heart of man (*Dt* 4, 7-8; 6, 4-7; *Rm* 2, 15). "Whereby we understand what must be done and what must be avoided. God gave this light and this law to man at creation".¹¹² The human values and the evangelical values are not the fruit of idealism in contradiction with reason and neither are they an invitation to escape from reality. On the contrary, these values are both common to the whole humanity and accessible through reason. It is what the Church defines as natural law.

305. The moral virtues and the theological virtues "dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love".¹¹³

306. "*Prudence* is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it".¹¹⁴

307. "*Justice* is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give what is due to God and neighbour".¹¹⁵

308. "*Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good".¹¹⁶

309. "*Temperance* is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction to pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honourable".¹¹⁷

310. Biblical revelation shows us that "the moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts".¹¹⁸ "The human virtues are rooted in

¹¹² John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, n. 12.

¹¹³ CCC, n. 1804.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, n. 1806

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, n. 1807.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, n. 1808.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, n. 1809.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, n. 1804.

the theological virtues, which adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature".¹¹⁹ "The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of a human being.

Theological virtues

311. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity".¹²⁰

312. "*Faith* is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he said and revealed to us, and that the Holy Church proposes for our belief".¹²¹ Man finds the sense of life in God.

313. "*Hope* is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises, relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit".¹²² There are never desperate situations in God.

314. "*Charity* is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God".¹²³ "The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God".¹²⁴ In God, love is the source of relationships and realisations.

*Happiness unites
with hope*

315. Happiness is tied to the theological virtues because it is the object of the virtue of hope. In fact "the virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, n. 1812.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, n. 1813.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, n. 1814.

¹²² *Ibidem*, n. 1817.

¹²³ *Ibidem*, n. 1822.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, n. 1828.

that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity".¹²⁵

316. Happiness and true pleasure develop on the basis of hope in God, which opens the future to those who would be tempted to despair of themselves and reject life, living only for ephemeral satisfactions. A desperate person is one who does not accept dependency upon God and denies being mortal. In other words he does not accept his limits. Happiness is then reduced to calmness and immediate emotional gratification. These two feelings cannot free man from the blind alley of conceited self-sufficiency and the impulse of suicide that we often verify in drug situations. There is without doubt the attempt to find happiness in living and the pleasure of taking drugs, but this attempt remains vain and is a source of unhappiness. As shown by experience, the failure of this "happiness" and "pleasure" is also a symptom of the lack of well-being that society and the world of adults do not always assure, since they do not know how to transmit to their children through appropriate education, the means of leading a beautiful and worthy existence.

317. The person who takes drugs is in conflict with himself and does not accept life. Pleasure that is sought for itself, becomes unwholesome. We therefore need to denounce this pleasure and speak about that which can be the true pleasure in existence, through a life with others, doing good actions and cultivating attitudes that allow one to participate in the construction of the world. In order to involve oneself in this way, it is indispensable that one learn to love life.

*God, key to the
future*

*The drug addict
rejects hope*

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, n. 1818.

Chapter IV

EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

*The Church
collaborates in the
construction
of society*

318. Out of her pastoral concern for individuals, families and the entire society, the Church is involved in the prevention of drugs and addiction. She desires to continue this work together with people of good will, in the light of her global vision of man and his life. She wants to develop scholastic, health care structures, and institutions that are open to all, as well as to create within parish circles meeting places, educational clubs and centres of prevention, which will enable her to fulfil her mission to the community, especially to youth. Through this kind of action she makes specific contributions to society. These structures are not to be intended as temporary institutions, which society will also eventually take over, but rather as the full presence of the Church, at the service of the common good, proclaiming hope and salvation. Through these activities the Church seeks to show the love of God towards people in difficulty.

*The Church
encourages all people
who help drug
addicts*

319. When, emergency situations appear, the Church has to double her efforts in order to safeguard the quality of peoples' lives, especially of those in greatest difficulty. They depend on the quality and stability of family life, on the quality of their relationships, on job and economic security, and on their openness to God. Well-being and formation in the spiritual life are integral to the evangelisation and wholeness of people. The Church works for the promotion of people, in accord with their intrinsic dignity. In response to new needs, the Church has created numerous institutions, in order to help those people who are afflicted by various evils, like drug addiction and AIDS. Those people who work with interest and generosity for them, deserve recognition and thanks.

*Drug addict, a
pauper to be loved*

320. The duty of the follower of Christ is to bring the *Good News* to all the poor (Lk 4, 18-19) without distinction. The drug addict is *a pauper to be loved*, because he is incapable of valuing himself and life. He has a poor self-

image and little respect for society. But, "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible to himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This, as has been said, is why Christ the Redeemer 'fully reveals man to himself.' If we may use the expression, this is the human dimension of the mystery of the Redemption".¹²⁶

321. Care of others is the principal objective of *Evangelium Vitae*. It is also fundamental to every civilisation, and to those who are responsible for the common good. "It is therefore a service of love, to ensure to our neighbour, that his or her life will be always defended and promoted, especially when it is weak or threatened. It is not only a personal, but also a social concern which we must all foster: a concern to give unconditional respect for human life. We are asked to love and honour the life of every man and woman and to work with perseverance and courage so that in our time, marked by all too many signs of death, one may at last witness the establishment of a new culture of life, a culture of truth and of love".¹²⁷

322. The love and respect of neighbour, the love and promotion of life and the love and support of each other: is the great principle that animates the pastoral action of the Church. This inspires the activity of all those in the Christian community, who work for the prevention of drug addiction and the liberation of those who have a dependency.

*Promotion of life
against the culture
of death*

1. Learning to face life and its difficulties

323. Education in self-control, perseverance and moral discernment has not always been imparted in the best way. The lack of appropriate encouragement and support to

*Educate to
self-control*

¹²⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris hominis*, n. 10.

¹²⁷ *Evangelium vitae*, n. 77.

young people renders them fragile, exactly at the moment when they are entering their adult life. At this moment, they often happen to lack an interior structure, because they have not received a sufficiently solid formation in their person, conscience, moral sense and will. They have not been prepared or made strong enough to face various personal and social life situations. Pastoral work has a special role to play here, because it can help in the maturation of personalities.

*Experience life
in a group*

324. Youth movements are important for the acquisition of self-esteem for developing healthy attitudes to relationships, to community life and common property. They allow young people to socialise, acquire a sense of the other and of moral values. If this happens in the light of the Christian faith, young people will find many elements that they need to psychologically, morally and spiritually build their personalities. It is the long tradition of the Church that pastoral pedagogy helps young people develop their possibilities with patience and perseverance. Taking Christ as the model, they are stimulated in the light of the Gospel to a sense of truth, responsibility, trust and fidelity.

*Catechesis, personal
prayer,...*

325. As part of their growth youth should have the opportunity to deepen their interior life through an ever close relationship with God and with their brothers. They can be helped in this especially through catechesis, personal prayer and spiritual direction. This allows them to learn about spiritual and moral discernment, the Eucharist, the sacrament of reconciliation, and acting charitably. Along with catechetical activities, parishes, catholic schools and youth movements are invited to put more emphasis on education to the interior life and on motivating young people. It is a basic objective of pastoral activity. In fact, their ability to have self-control, to learn to develop their spiritual life and to live their vocations with fidelity, depends on the extent to which they have been able to mould healthy interior lives.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 38.

2. Education to the sense of pleasure and the presence of adults

326. As we have already underlined, the attitude of seeking pleasure for its own sake, arising out of unchecked and uncontrolled affective emotions, paves the way for all forms of drug addiction. The supposition is that the person is incapable of taking care of himself, and of managing his own affective life. The answer, therefore, is found by resorting to chemical substitutes. But true solutions depend on the person's own thinking and on his spiritual life, his will and freedom and sense of responsibility, and on a style of life capable of finding points of reference in religious and moral practice. Medications and drugs, which are considered capable of bringing an internal calmness, simply establish a "magic relationship" with the recipient.

327. Immediate and childish pleasure is thus sought when either the person does not commit him/herself, or has not earned to make healthy renunciations through disciplined behaviour. Such discipline is necessary for every life which St. Athanasius calls "the martyrdom of the heart".¹²⁹ In order that a child may grow and mature him/herself, it is necessary that he or she learns to say no to physical pleasures in preparation for a better future life. Educators are to tell children or teen-agers that what they desire is not appropriate for their age, and that they still have a whole lifetime before them, and that they still have to mature and also bring their desires to maturity. Do the educators have enough self-control to set limits and invite the young to temperance, as part of an ordered growth into adulthood?

*Learning the
"martyrdom of the
heart"*

*Convinced and
coherent education*

328. The juvenile stage is a time for programmes of maturation, and not of premature action that risks opening into failures for tomorrow's adults. It is true that young people may negatively perceive this argument and interpret it as a limit to their personalities and actions, exactly at the moment when they feel several potentialities developing within them. They believe that adults (parents, teachers,

¹²⁹ St. Athanasius, *Vita S. Antonii*, 47, 1.

educators, etc.) form a league against them preventing them from developing and emancipating themselves. They think that all limits or prohibitions are obstacles to their freedom. Some in life retain the idea of having been oppressed rightly or wrongly. But a framework of education offered by adults, marks stages to be reached progressively, and laws to be respected.

*Knowing how to
dialogue with young
people*

329. There has always been conflict between youth and adults, so their communication is made difficult when it is a matter of adults helping the younger generations. Nevertheless, there are points of reference that young people need. "Conflict" can mean an abandonment of young people to their immediate desires, which are exacerbated, becoming the absolute and only rules of life. This is clearly shown by the phenomena of violence that exists almost everywhere, especially in the suburbs of big cities. When they are abandoned, some young people develop paroxysmal behaviour, showing that they are driven by impulses without a minimum of reasoning and understanding of situations.

*Absence of adults,
brittleness of young
people*

330. Overmuch freedom given to children and youth, and the fact that parents and other adults are not with them all the time, leaves youth exposed to dangers. In fact, such situations can become the sources of affective insecurity, damaging their self-image and their relationships with adults. They develop feelings of having nobody but themselves to depend upon for their development, and that their parents just, like other adults, cannot do anything for them, nor least of all understand the difficulties and the internal conflicts they are facing. Resistance of education, as well as the ever-widening generation gap add to their confusion: children have to precociously live as adults, while the adults assume childish attitudes. This means that young people do not have the possibility of a warm human environment they can rely on, and due to the lack of this point of reference so necessary for the strengthening of their personality, they end up seeking substitutes, particularly drugs, hoping to affirm themselves in this way. The more a person finds himself facing difficulties, especially those he doesn't

understand, it means he will be tempted to escape by taking recourse in pleasures that isolate him from the real world, making him live in fantasy.

3. Prevention does not replace education

331. In recent years, preventions from the risks that endanger the life of the individual and that of others have been developed in various fields; especially against road accidents, violence, AIDS, alcoholism, tobacco and drugs. It is undoubtedly necessary, and has in several cases reduced those activities that endanger the health and life of many people, and of society.

*Necessity of a
balanced educational
environment*

332. Yet, we have to ask, what is the true role of prevention? Today there is the tendency of insisting only on prevention, as if it were not possible to begin a prior and real education on the subject. Education is lacking if it consists only in preventing risks and dangers to life, without transmitting to young people the patrimony of traditions, of social codes, of culture, of morality and of religion. Such a narrow and fragmentary vision of education does not form the mind, the heart and the moral conscience of youth. True education supposes a global conception of the person and of life. Exactly because of this, the multiplication of preventive measures – no matter how useful they may be – is also a symptom of the lack of education in many young people, who are not given conditions that would allow them to accept themselves, have self-control, and act with clear-sightedness.

Role of prevention

333. Preventive measures not based on a comprehensive education of the whole person, generally have limited effects on people and on their behaviour. Yet they require great resources, including funding. If a person has not discovered a sense of respect for himself and for others, a sense of freedom, of responsibility and the value of a moral life both in private and public matters, prevention that is based on health issues will be insufficient to treat drug related problems and other problems of society. The

*Role of educational
principles*

multiplication of preventive measures in all fields of life is in fact a sign of a certain failure of education in our present society.

4. Education is above all an attitude

Crisis of educators 334. Besides being a matter of financial, material or pedagogic means, education is first and foremost an attitude of adults. We must admit that for many generations, adults have had difficulties in occupying their position as educators. In recent years, new forms of pedagogy, are largely non-directive and centred on the person of the child. But it liberates itself from the transmission of knowledge and values, being a form of education that is considered too coercive. The new pedagogy consists first of all in trying to avoid influencing the child in his choices, thus respecting his freedom.

Crisis of non-directive pedagogy 335. Though good-intentioned, such a pedagogy lacks moral and developmental content, as well as a vision of the progressive development of the child. Soon, the supporters of this pedagogy called "non-directive", who complained of the excessive intervention of adults, produced in adults themselves an attitude of doubt and fear that they are interfering in the lives of children. These young people were then put on equal level with adults, as if they possessed all that they needed to develop themselves. Moreover, children were considered free from their birth, with an almost absolute freedom. Such a vision lacks good sense, because children are not born free: they become free with the help of the education they receive, an education that is tied to a concept of an integrated human person and his life.

Freedom is to be learned 336. Freedom is intimately related to a long maturation and to the integration of moral norms, up to the point when a person is able to take responsibility for himself and for the consequences of his actions and behaviour. A child cannot develop on his or her own without the assistance of adults, especially the parents, who are the first

educators and who cannot be deprived of their role, unless for serious reasons. Other social agents have their function only in terms of the principle of subsidiarity. The educational role of adults is important for children, because they guide them in life and provide models for imitation.

337. It is exactly because of the love of their parents, the early training they give, the initiation into morally good behaviour, the good habits of learning and the transmission of the Christian faith and moral values of life, that children awaken to a fuller human life, and so develop themselves. By living what they transmit, adults help children to structure themselves with the desire of living what they learn and see practised by others, which is a source of profound happiness. It must be noted that certain contemporary pedagogies that are too much centred on the freedom and autonomy of the child, forget that the development of children starts from what psychologists call the process of identification. The young person cannot integrate a culture, religious outlook and moral responsiveness, if it is not valued and loved by adults around him or her. A young person needs the reinforcement of adult leadership and example.

*Parental love is
essential for moral
life*

*Process of
identification*

338. Parents and adults in general are not always aware of the need to show disapproval to children when the latter are aggressive to them. It indicates that children and teenagers depend on them and need their presence as they develop. Dialogue is still the best way for developing a relationship in which a child feels recognised, this is not to deny the inevitability of some tensions.

Dialogue

339. On the score that in order to properly develop, one needs autonomy, contemporary society sometimes diminishes the value of adult example to children and adolescents. But this autonomy risks estranging the individual from the rest of the world. It is not surprising then that some young people, in order to build their personalities, try to develop ties through every type of dependency, starting with drugs.

Drugs as a refuge

The power of testimony 340. Adults who value education, also know the importance of their influence. It is not a matter of being "models of perfection", imposing themselves and constraining children; rather they know young people form themselves, discovering the realities of life, the experience of God and the practice of moral values through the example of adults. The child observes them attentively to verify if they practice the moral values and the Christian demands. Consequently many children, and because they do not see adults practising their faith in God and in moral convictions, do not always know how to concretely live the interior demands which they naturally sense as good. They could even be tempted to give into a form of life without constraints, based mainly on fantasy and not on reality. Aware of their influence, adults know that their attitude and words do have an impact on children.

5. Young people need to be educated

341. In the last decades of the twentieth century, transmission of moral values and a strong sense of the value of education, requiring a serious involvement of adults, have been, to some extent abandoned in western countries, because of the preference of non-directivity, and also because the world of adults has a tendency of abdicating the roles of adult and educator. It is therefore urgent that a new type of educational relationship be created, especially between parents and children, and also between adults and children.

The adults have to reassume their responsibility 342. Many people in developed countries tend to identify with the young people, even taking them as points of reference and as identity models. As a result, adults misunderstand their educational responsibilities. They need to be conscious of adulthood, before occupying the place of an educator of youth. The family, school and places of entertainment sometimes lack the presence of adults, as if they have nothing to offer, nor to transmit, or to demand,

even giving up reproaching when it appears objectively necessary.

343. Many young people left to themselves, feel that adults are disinterested in them, that they do not count and that society does not try to help their personal and social development. Should we then be surprised that some young people develop aggressive and criminal behaviour, asocial attitudes, loss of ideals; that they refuse to follow a normal school career, that they get caught up in gangs where drugs and suicide reign? Thus, they create a juvenile society with its own laws and social norms.

6. Liberating ourselves from educational passivity

344. There is a growing habit in some cultures, of relaxing with children, as it were, on equal terms. There is a fear in adults that by having expectations of children, they are intruding on their "freedom" in matters of moral and religious standards. So there is a rift between the generations, young people being left as world unto themselves.

345. Catechesis has also been affected by changing educational techniques. Some Christians have let themselves be conditioned by this trend, such that they do not baptise nor catechise their children in order to give them the possibility of eventually making the decision themselves. This view presumes that the child has an inborn possibility to retrace alone the course of human life and think up everything starting from nothing. Some adults have thus dissociated themselves from preceding generations and from history. Future generations will certainly blame the passive world of adults, for having interrupted the chain of transmission. Today we have to be aware, and this is one of the lessons we should draw from the various meetings of the *World Days of Youth*, that a renewal is now underway. Young people expect a lot from adults, and desire that they transmit to them the values for life and also teach them what is necessary for achieving happiness.

*Restore different
relationships
between different
generations*

*Dialogue as a
privileged method
in catechesis*

7. Attitudes to develop

The objectives of education

346. Education should teach everyone about self-control, about maturing in the understanding of one's personal depth and unity and in the knowledge of how to give correct answers to different situations as they occur. Impulsive behaviour creates a favourable ground for falling into drug consumption. For this reason, prevention, or rather education, should aim at developing alternative attitudes.

7.1. Learning self-control

Sense of self-control

347. It is necessary first of all to educate the will in children and in teen-agers, so that all their human acts may be under their control. Education of the will, means helping the child to know how to reflect on him/herself, to be able to discern what is right to choose and do, to know how to control his or her impulses and transform them, to accept realities in life keeping in mind the need for proper constraints. The intervention of adults is important to encourage the efforts of the child's will. Education of the will and freedom is a sure instrument for fighting all forms of dependency, including drugs.

7.2. Recognising and identifying the limits

Recognising ones own limits

348. In the prevention of drugs, some educators refuse to take into consideration any form of prohibition. They claim that youth need to learn about the nature of the products, their benefits and dangers, the hygienic conditions for their use, thus leaving them to make personal decisions. However, this argument is sometimes interpreted differently by young people as an invitation to take drugs. They even think that they are protected by having knowledge of the products, giving them a freedom to consume drugs. Such a mentality, simply means doing what one wants.

7.3. The areas for pedagogical support: will, reason, freedom, responsibility

Rediscovering the virtues of the interior life

349. Prevention is strongly related to a proper education in the use of reason, freedom, will and responsibility:

350. **reason** is the means by which people recognise the truth, the beautiful, and the good,¹³⁰ in order to judge and distinguish between the objective and the subjective;

351. **freedom** is concerned with making decisions, behaving freely and making choices in life. Such is done according to the values and norms that the individual perceives in the depth of his or her being through conscience;

352. after the judgement about the action, the **will** allows one to do it. The movement is from reasoning and discernment to decision and concrete realisation; at this stage one perceives the greatness of human freedom, demonstrating that the individual is not simply subjected to determinism or drives that induce particular actions in him;

353. **Moral responsibility** means people freely undertake actions which therefore have positive or negative consequences; the acquisition of this capacity supposes a maturation of the individual, who is then able to judge the moral goodness of his or her actions.

7.4. *Developing the virtue of temperance*

354. As we have already noted, it is helpful for children and teen-agers to reflect on the virtues in the light of the Gospel, so as to discover values and points of reference that help build themselves.¹³¹ One virtue of singular importance in this context is temperance. This virtue helps one learn to moderate the draw to pleasures and to balance the use of the goods of the world. It is not about renouncing pleasures, thereby emptying life of all joy. Rather, temperance is the art of knowing how to use one's capacities with intelligence and wisdom, in respect to the good. Practising the virtue of temperance indicates the interior freedom of a person. It is about ownership of one's desires, rather than being enslaved by them. The exercise of temperance empowers one to tame what is most difficult to control.

*Temperance:
a treasure to be
rediscovered*

¹³⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, nn. 36-42.

¹³¹ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Virtues", nn. 1803-1845.

Thus the individual remains master of himself and is not made a victim of an unrestrained search for pleasure.

*Personal equilibrium
and temperance*

355. It is difficult to lead a balanced life, if one does not learn to develop the spirit of temperance and the value of self-control. Intemperance is a sign of a malaise in an individual, who is incapable of mastering oneself, a slave of one's drives.

8. Promote a global education to fight drugs

Global education

356. There are three forms of prevention of drug addiction, which shall be included in an educational project based on the dignity of the human person.

*Anticipating the
risks*

357. **The first one is prophylactic**, in that it tries to prevent the dangers, assess the risks, avoid baleful consequences, make people behave responsibly, stimulate healthy attitudes, give a quality of life that risks being lost when adults are not demanding and coherent enough. Prophylaxis against drug addiction is ensured by a global educational programme, taking into consideration all the aspects required for the child's self-development. These include: harmony of family life, the example of commitment, fidelity and an authentic human attitude. Also the spiritual and moral quality of adults, the development of reasoning and judgement, the transmission of moral values, the use of the word of God to nourish and develop the spiritual life, and the experience of a social and ecclesial life are other important factors for the formation of a free person capable of discerning good and evil.

*Restoring the sense
of dignity*

358. **The second is therapeutic**, aimed at taking care of, treating and curing the sick person. Education can also have a curative function, restoring the dignity of the person, his or her self-respect and trust, through a relationship of help and support. By experiencing the warmth of relationships and a sharing in his or her own problems, an individual can discover the pleasure of living and find the internal energy to come out of difficult situations, especially

when one is surrounded by people who find their joy in a simple and beautiful daily life, which does not in fact exclude all crises and problems.

359. **The third is social**, inserting the drug addict back into the social fabric, be it in a family context, in a group of friends, or in professional life. In other words, there is a re-entering into a network of relationships that any individual normally seeks. It is particularly important to avoid discrimination of people, which already happens because of the drug phenomena. Socialisation can come about through creating temporary groups or communities, or even through regular therapeutic teams in open circles, in which people with different roles help the drug addict to find a more enriching rhythm of life.

Social reintegration

360. The experiences of therapeutic communities conducted by numerous religious congregations, demonstrate good results. The method used in therapeutic communities appeals to the freedom of the person, to his collaboration and participation, in respect to the rules and demands of the therapeutic team who seek real weaning. The philosophy of these communities is founded on the Christian concept of the human person, who is called to develop himself, and become more and more free, discovering the meaning of the love of God, alongside ones brothers and sisters.

The therapeutic communities

361. Other interesting experiences with good results are conducted by religious communities that take in drug addicts, who seek to free themselves from their dependency. They live in a demanding environment patterned by work, organisation of community and liturgical life, without the obligation of having to opt for monastic life in the long run. Meditation, prayer and eucharistic celebration help them to enter a spiritual journey that places them before God, and which allows them to have a richer interior life, self-acceptance and trust. With the passage of time, one sees a positive change, when the drug addicts become more active and responsible, establishing positive relationships with others.

The work of religious communities

362. Of the three forms of prevention, the first is the most important, because its focus is the root of the individual's development. Promoting attitudes and actions that favour the well-being, the health, the moral equilibrium, and giving a taste for life of relationships is decisive for the future of young people. A healthy education helps to check the factors that predispose one to the consumption of harmful drugs, which result in harmful dependencies. In this respect, it is possible to effect specific measures that:

Specific measures

363. 1 – stimulate the development and acquisition of the necessary abilities for personal growth and the taking of legitimate pleasure;

364. 2 – promote self-esteem, development of the individual, self-love, and the acceptance of frustrations, without allowing them to destabilise the person;

365. 3 – promote self trust, in order to become ever more responsible for one's choices, actions and their consequences;

366. 4 – strengthen the interior ability of the person to know how to face the inherent difficulties in life, and develop proper attitudes and means to overcome them;

367. 5 – allow one to develop the capacity to resist the pressure and influence of people in similar conditions;

368. 6 – encourage social insertion and the cultivation of an ideal that helps one look to the future with serenity;

A well articulated pedagogical itinerary

369. In order to avoid all that leads to drug addiction, it will be particularly useful in this pedagogic work, to pay attention to the following:

- providing information on the consequences of drugs;
- promoting awareness of what leads a person to take drugs;
- learning to say “no” to a request;

- learning to communicate with others knowing how to express one's thoughts, reflections and feelings, in order to avoid isolation;

- developing personal abilities to resolve conflicts;

- being able to sustain tensions;

- being able to liberate oneself from the tendency of dependence on others and succeed in living independently of group requests, in order not to be always tempted to imitate others;

- living in an atmosphere of respect and development, and knowing how to contribute to its creation;

- acquiring self-trust and security little by little.

370. This educational process requires that educators, parents, teachers, pastoral workers and catechists have a human and spiritual, an ethical and pedagogical formation, that helps them to distinguish between what respects the person and what jeopardises his development, between what frees and what oppresses, between what is an expression of love and what is selfish affirmation, and between what is essential and what is accidental.

*Diversified
formation of the
educators*

9. Mission of the Church

371. The Church has on several occasions come out strongly on the issue of drugs. She has also shown her commitment to deal with the problem, as can be seen from the numerous pastoral experiences undertaken by local communities throughout the world. These initiatives need to be further developed and supported by the Episcopal conferences of every country. The Church has a particular responsibility in the face of the scourge of drug addiction, for she wants to help every individual to live freely before God in this world. Following the example of Jesus, the Church has a predilection for the poorest, the sick, the afflicted, and those excluded. From his first teaching in the synagogue, Jesus came to announce the liberation of men, "to let the oppressed go free" (Lk 4,

*The role of Episcopal
conferences*

16-21). The Church has always tried to respond to the problems faced by humanity, according to the needs of the time. While aiming at the promotion of the value of life and the dignity of every human being, she has often had to oppose the mentality and fashions which are in conflict with fundamental human and moral values, and her anthropological vision.

*The Church against
discrimination*

372. The Church is called to work with all people of good will against the discrimination of drug addicts: their social exclusion into poor and degraded quarters, and the fear of meeting with and helping drug addicts. There is a tendency to prejudice their behaviour, an inability to accept them professionally and socially sustain them, an insecurity caused by spontaneous crime organised by drug addicts and by small distributors. These are real problems that weigh heavily on society and on pastoral practice. They create an uncomfortable climate, which the educational relationship must deal with, to transform it.

*Intuition of the great
educators*

373. Local churches have to come up with basic initiatives and intuitions in matters of education and instruction on basic health pedagogy, in order to deal with these problems. The canonisation of Father Marcellin Champagnat in 1999, who consecrated his life to the education of poor children, indicates one of the ways to be followed. The Church created the first schools, the first hospitals, and the first orphanages. She founded organisations of charity and solidarity, from the first centuries of Christianity. And in the period nearer to us she has been present through the works of St. Vincent de Paul in the west, and in the assistance to the sick by St. John of God brothers. The Church, "experienced in humanity",¹³² has always tried to contribute by educating, caring for and helping people, aiming at promoting their integrity. She continues to offer these services to humanity by giving assistance to drug addicts, according to the following educational perspectives:

¹³² Paul VI, *To the participants of the General Assembly of the UNO*, in *Documentation catholique*, 72 (1965), col. 1732, n. 1.

374. 1. Educating the whole person. A person progresses and is transformed depending on the values transmitted to him and accepted by him. He then learns to choose good actions and benefits for himself, thus participating in the harmonisation of his personality.

375. 2. Educating the human person to transcendence, never forgetting that a human being cannot be reduced to a simple biological datum, for he bears infinite and divine aspirations within himself.

376. 3. Educating to become an adult person, through a progressive maturation of the whole being; physical, psychological, intellectual, moral and spiritual, so that he progressively becomes more responsible for himself, knowing how to handle his own desires.

377. 4. Proclaiming "the Gospel of grace" as a gift full of life, in view of community and personal fulfilment. Christ, the ultimate truth of man, is the prototype of every authentic fulfilment of self. "To proclaim Jesus, writes John Paul II, is itself to proclaim life. For Jesus is 'the word of life' (1 Jn 1,1). In him 'life was made manifest' (1 Jn 1,2); he himself is 'the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us' (1 Jn 1,2). By the gift of the Spirit, this same life has been bestowed on us. It is in being destined to life in its fullness, to 'eternal life', that every person's earthly life acquires its full meaning. [...] This involves, above all, proclaiming *the core* of the Gospel. It is the proclamation of a living God who is close to us, who calls us to profound communion with himself and awakens in us the certain hope of eternal life. It is the affirmation of the inseparable connection between the person, his life and his body. It is the presentation of human life as a life of relationships, a gift of God, the fruit and sign of his love. It is the proclamation that Jesus has a unique relationship with every person, which enables us to see in every human face the face of Christ. It is the call to make a "sincere gift of self" as the fullest way of realising our personal freedom. It also involves making clear all *the consequences* of this Gospel. These can be summed up as follows: human life, as

*Educational
perspectives*

*Sure guide of the
magisterium*

a gift of God, is sacred and inviolable. [...] Society as a whole must respect, defend and promote the dignity of every human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person's life".¹⁰⁹

378. Every human being seeks personal unity and harmony and it is the grace of the Lord Jesus that enables one to walk in this way.

10. Education and pedagogical provisions

*Modes of evangelical
pedagogy*

379. Following the example of Christ in the Gospel, the Church works for the well-being of people. The pedagogical principles that she follows enable everyone to have a dignified life, while developing his or her personal spiritual life in communion with God. God calls all people to life and freedom, and this vocation confers on them a special dignity. This is expressed through the promotion of the human person, in education to relationships, openness to life, development of personal autonomy, discovery of the word of God, and the sacraments received in the Church and learning prayer. Such are the many objectives to be realised in an evangelical pedagogy.

10.1. *Criteria for pastoral action:*

380. In this regard it is important to act in line with the following criteria:

381. 1 – Help young people to live free of drugs by showing them that these products seriously interfere with the fundamental issues of life, and equally seriously interfere with personal attainments, and development. Drugs ruin the body and limit the possibilities of the person.

382. 2 – Offer models of behaviour by creating new opinion currents, and exhorting them to avoid imitating certain styles of life and behaviour. Also by lending support to other forms of personal and group affirmation.

¹⁰⁹ John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, nn. 80-81.

383. 3 – Help them to cope with the stress of daily living by developing their interior abilities so that they may know how to face the inevitable difficulties of life. Teach them to reflect, meditate, pray and listen to the word of God in a way which will favour their internal development.

384. 4 – Spur them onto loving life and relationships with others, the enrichment of their sensory and sentimental life, through music, poetry, meetings with friends and stimulating community experiences, as well as through the search for silence which favours self recollection in a quiet and peaceful atmosphere, so ideal for personal growth. Such a formation in inter-relationships and in coping with oneself is particularly important in educational settings. It is especially important in programmes for drug addicts, who have difficulty developing their interior lives and maintaining relationships with others.

385. 5 – Support families so that their homes may be tranquil and stimulating, building good relations between generations, because couples in crisis also provoke crises in their children. The togetherness, dialogue and understanding among family members is of vital importance for the children.

386. 6 – Understanding that young people have their own opinions, and in case they are different from those of adults, the latter could well learn to open up to other aspects of life, thanks to their children. Dialogue is an essential element of the educational relationship.

387. 7 – Help young people to develop their intelligence, so that they may not be dependent on diffused opinions, according to which all ideas and all models of life are of equal value, and the latest popular thought holds more truth than all the others that have come up in the history of human reflection. Sometimes young people lack the knowledge, the culture or the character, that would help them guard themselves from fleeting intellectual conceptions. Therefore, young people need to be stimulated to have a critical intelligence, so that they may be able to withstand requests that would be a hindrance to them.

10.2. Educational meeting places to be developed

- Suitable educational structures* 388. The criteria described here ought to be part of educational structures that should be created in support of the existing ones (the family, the school, the parish, the catechism group).
- Family groups* 389. 1 – Promote regular family reunions within the parish or in the context of catechesis for the children, to reflect upon education and the different problems faced by parents. This reflection should aim at helping parents and adults to specify the appropriate pedagogy in matters of religious education and moral formation of children and teen-agers.
- Courses for parents* 390. 2 – Create, in the parishes a kind of “school for parents”, which could offer them an itinerary of discovery, and educative and pedagogic support. Many adults need to know their function as educators and be encouraged to take on their roles as educators of their children. It would be possible to create space in the parish for meeting and listening to all those who need (alone or as a couple) reflection and sharing on difficulties faced; and also to receive systematic formation with the participation of various experts: psychologists, educators and religious.
- Prevention in schools* 391. 3 – In Christian schools and in the neighbourhoods of institutes, there is need to pay attention to fragile personalities and to possible transgressive behaviour in young people. In fact, the consumption of drugs starts at an age between 11 and 15 years. There is need in schools, therefore, to stipulate norms that regulate work and social life, teach the civil laws upon which society is organised and lead to the discovery of the moral values that are the basis of behaviour. Educating to a sense of the law, which is sometimes forgotten, is one of the responsibilities of parents, teachers and adults in general. There is need also to teach moral values, and as well, respect for the law, for adults, for teachers, for oneself, for the goods that belongs to others and to society, and develop a sense of solidarity, of human dignity and participation.

392. 4 – Establish suitable places where young people can gather during their leisure time in order to avoid disreputable behaviour and the temptation to form gangs, which often commit crimes, especially in the suburbs of big cities. With the help of adults, such places can offer a variety of games, sports, education and academic support to the weak ones and counselling to those who have started isolating themselves.

*Prevention through
creating healthy
places for leisure time*

393. The Christian community has to embark on prevention against drug addiction, in a spirit of acceptance and guidance, helping the addicts and assisting those who are trying to reinsert themselves into society. Christians must be able to work with the means that are proper to the Church. The Church welcomes all people without distinction and proposes to them a spiritual context that helps them to discover the love of God.

11. Organisation of orientation programmes and pastoral structures

394. Some Christian communities in many countries have set up programmes of prevention and reinsertion of drug addicts into society. Depending on the social context of each country, it is possible to take a lead from some principles in order to create structures that respond to specific local needs. We suggest the following:

*Programmes for
prevention and
reinsertion*

395. 1. In welcoming a young person in difficulty into a group that is purposely created, the educators have to propose to him to accept the imposed limits, sobriety, a more relational style of life, be responsible for his own development and respect certain values: co-operation with others, self-respect and a sense of participation. This style of life aims to help the individual become freer in controlling himself and managing his life.

*Style of life and
respect for values*

396. 2. This work of education involves formation of pastoral workers, as well as the support of pastoral teams. Regular formation and support are indispensable for all who

*Formation and
support of the
pastoral teams*

work with drug addicts. In fact, for most people who are in regular contact with people under strained situations, this work is difficult and even very fatiguing. The pastoral worker may be overcome by a sense of impotence and discouragement. One must avoid being alone in facing the questions from drug addicts. A psychological appreciation of what the educators experience and feel is as important as conducting spiritual research and reflection, or being experts of a particular pedagogy. The formation and support of experts and experienced people are necessary and sustaining long-term effective work on behalf of drug addicts.

Basic course for the operators on the field

397. 3. The Episcopal Conference of each country can organise a basic formation of the members of the pastoral teams which work in those areas that are particularly susceptible to the drug phenomena. Besides their own formation, it is necessary that these pastoral workers who are in direct contact with drug addiction, receive a human and Christian formation, so that they may be open and welcoming to all, after the example of Jesus who came for the salvation of all. Furthermore, the pastoral worker has to have a spirit of openness in the face of new social problems.

398. "The preferential attention of the poor, the outcasts, and the immigrants is a necessary priority today. The priest has to really be a 'father' to them".¹³⁴

Sensitisation of future priests

399. 4. As well as the formation received in the seminary, it is useful for the future priests in urban dioceses, who are called to exercise a specific ministry with youth, that they be offered the chance to participate in the activities of a centre for drug addicts, so that they may understand the therapeutic process and be sensitised to the assistance of these young people.

400. 5. Priests who work in parish communities among marginalized young people or with addicts, will have to

¹³⁴ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery on the 50th Anniversary of my Priesthood*, Vatican Press, Vatican City 1996, (The "cura animarum").

meet regularly together in order to devise strategies for the entire parish community so that there may be more concerned and activity in this field.

401. 6. The various religious congregations, especially those founded on the charism of charity, will certainly put their members at the service of this new need, so that they may offer their contribution by involving themselves in the activities organised in the parishes or within their own structures.

402. 7. None of the programs for educational, pastoral, therapeutic assistance or social reinsertion should involve physical, verbal or psychological violence. Rather they should follow the spirit of the Gospel. The word of the Gospel invites us to be close, and full of compassion, in our relationships with others, and also to be sincere and energetic in facing the demands of life. It is important that the methodology sets the objective of establishing among youth, as well as between youth and adults, that brotherly love, in which all take care of the other, establishing a bond of communion and initiating a journey of hope which are tangible signs of the Church.

403. 8. The Church has created residential therapeutic communities in many countries, which however are not the only answer to the problem of drug addiction; there are open places and other types of experiences, which could be developed in accordance with local needs. In all cases, it is important to tell the person asking for help that: "The desire to liberate yourself must be yours, but you will not do it alone. Others will accompany you on this journey".

404. There are new drugs and alcohol used a lot by adolescents in some countries. There is need to aim at prevention of those, because the regular and occasional consumers of these drugs do not consider themselves drug addicts and therefore do not see the need of being liberated.

405. 9. The pastoral leader, together with his group of volunteers work through the educational process with the

*Taking inspiration
from the Gospel*

*Encourage the
process of
maturation*

*Phases of the process
of reinsertion*

young person, especially during the phase of reinsertion into society.

406. It is advisable to hold every month a complete reunion of all the families with the specific people dealing with these young people, so that they can review the past month and experience mutual support.

407. If the young person is on rehabilitation, the parents and family members have to follow a parallel process, in order to reflect on their attitude, so as to rebuild relationships. In a parish or in a group of parishes where there are families with problems of drug addiction, it is good that they meet periodically and have discussions together.

408. One can also organise every year a "parish or inter-parish week of solidarity and participation". Direct or indirect testimonies can be offered on new social problems and on the efforts of various parish groups, associations and movements, to encourage the parishioners to participate more actively in the brotherly assistance to the most needy members.

*Providing facilities
for formation*

409. It would be beneficial if dioceses, parishes and religious congregations that have suitable facilities, place them at the disposal of non-profit pastoral groups working with young people in difficulty, for use in the phases of social reinsertion of drug addicts and alcoholics.

410. In order to operate with maximum efficacy, it is necessary:

411. 1 – to collaborate with the public services, respecting at the same time the specific character of the work of the Church;

Data bank

412. 2 – to organise a data bank at the level of national Episcopal conferences, and centres for study and documentation with the purpose of making a follow-up to the evolution of drug addiction and the problems of youth. This service should be the responsibility of the Commission

for pastoral assistance to health care workers in the Episcopal conference of each country. The chairman of this commission could thus establish a working relationship with the Ministry of health that is responsible for the problems of drug addiction, and also with the representative of certain international organisations, like W.H.O.

413. In order to better co-ordinate efforts, and sensitise the whole local Church, it is useful that one person in the diocesan office for health pastoral care take responsibility for drug problems. Also at the regional level, relationships could be established between juvenile institutions and the State services that deal with assistance and treatment of drug addicts, in order to study the possibility of co-ordinating the educational activities of drug prevention.

414. In order to draw more attention to these social problems, it is useful to observe in different parishes the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illegal trafficking, which is organised every year on June 26 by the Programme of the United Nations for the control of drugs.

*Committees for the
new social problems*

*International day
against drugs*

Chapter V

PASTORAL ATTITUDES FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE PERSON

Jesus is a therapist

415. The human person is at the centre of pastoral reflection and action. In the Gospel, Jesus shows himself as the therapist and liberator, par excellence. The help that believers receive and give must draw inspiration from the Lord, who is at the same time the foundation of their being, the source of their action and the model for their behaviour. His style of relating with others must inspire us, as we carry out the mission entrusted to us.

*Christ came for
the sick*

416. The concept of duty to oneself, leading to responsibility, does not alone express the complete perspective of the Christian life, whose goal is meeting God and participating in eternal life. Nevertheless, it contains and proposes a view of man that indicates the horizon of the liberation willed by Christ. It is not by accident that Christ affirms that he came for the sick and not the healthy, for the sinners and not for the upright (*Lk* 5, 31-32). Like all people, drug addicts are called to liberation from what hinders them internally and externally. However, the complexities in their lives often make it difficult for them to progress towards healing, and enter into relationships with others.

1. Behaviour of the Drug Addict

*Drug addicts are
suffering*

417. Drug addicts are faced with numerous demands, which make them behave in a way that is distressful both of themselves and of others:

418. 1 – They tend to hide their actions, maintaining conflicting relationships, playing with their sentiments and manipulate those of others. They are not always honest to themselves and with those around them.

419. 2 – They often have a negative attitude towards themselves and are sometimes incapable of realising that they need help. They despise themselves, and give up at the slightest failure; they isolate themselves, lose confidence in themselves and above all distrust others.

420. 3 – They oscillate between the desire for change and the dream of being strong and resistant to drugs. Their expectation of interior peace and normality, in order to live like others, their inability to accept the daily routine, their rush to free themselves from intense pleasure, intrusive anguish and the aspiration to serenity, are further aspects manifesting a personality that is greatly disturbed internally, full of contradictions and deeply wounded. Drug addicts sometimes feel themselves as being in contradiction to their education.

2. Accepting pastoral work among drug addicts

421. Dealing with drug addicts raises many questions. The hope or even the dream of finding a cause of the problem, makes us think that it is possible to alleviate the deep suffering we see in them, and overcome the feeling of impotence before this kind of slavery. In order to avoid oscillating between the idealism of a strategy and method thought to be automatically effective, and the unexpected discouragement that sooner or later comes due to the numerous relapses and recidivisms, pastoral workers must with infinite patience take a long-term outlook on their pastoral action.

The role of patience

422. Just like fever, drug dependency is a symptom and not a disease. It reveals personal, relational, social and spiritual problems and leads to a particular behaviour. It is therefore important, to accept the drug addict with his suffering, without prejudice or preconceived judgement.

An open relationship will be built-up in order to transform the individual at the right moment, trying to help him with fidelity and tenacity, even when the choices are not taken up, never losing heart or resigning in the face of failures.

*Accepting the drug
addict with his
suffering*

*Authentic faith and
reasonable choices*

423. Adhering to Christian hope in difficult situations, acceptance and listening are indispensable qualities. An entirely intellectual and technical preparation is greatly insufficient for dealing with the phenomena of drug addiction, and in giving the appropriate attention to the drug addict as an integral human being. Its success is based on the choice of a coherent and generous life. An authentic faith, founded upon the permanent search for the face of Christ in the poor and oppressed, and in those with a troubled heart, can help maintain and increase our trust in Christ. The great love for human beings stimulates pastoral practice, and allows one to have a disinterested relationship that puts up with frustrations.

*The need to be
listened to*

424. Every drug addict has a history, a unique experience, and a convoluted life despite all the information and warnings received; he has possibilities that are never really reached. They retain memories of positive moments in their lives, but are nevertheless marked by a negative impression of themselves and their lives, and by contradiction. For this reason, as we have already said, drug addicts need to be listened to, without seeking only for justification of their behaviour. They need to be encouraged and followed with affectionate patience, giving them certain demands that stimulate their potentialities, while at the same time respecting their dignity.

425. The life of a drug addict should not be looked on as a series of problems, but as a life of a person; not as a case to be analysed, but as a being to be loved; not as an individual to be convinced and conditioned, but as a person to be developed, helping him to rediscover his potentialities and the ways of a beautiful and rich life, acquiring real self-respect.

3. A pastoral project: towards a responsible self-acceptance

426. In the Gospel, Christ pays attention to those people who live in situations that are humanly without hope. On

all occasions, Christ listens to the complaints and sufferings, and without minimising the weight of the difficulties, looks at the people with love, and opens the future to them, giving them a glimpse of the mercy of God and a sense of a life liberated of its obstacles (cf. Mt 9, 1-8; 27-31; 32-38; Mk 1, 21-34; 40-42). Basing themselves on the example of Christ, those who assist drug addicts are called to show them the love and kindness of God, so that they may have self-esteem, self-respect, and love of themselves. Besides, they have to create a relationship with the drug addicts, in which the person feels recognised, a relationship of trust, without complicity or compliance, that stimulates the drug addict to undertake new ways of living. The pastoral worker has to operate in the perspective of evangelical acceptance, never losing heart.

Showing the kindness of God after the example of Christ

427. The Gospel is a school of freedom and responsibility. Life is given to us by God to bear fruit. Squandering what has been entrusted to us does not correspond to our human vocation. The priest and the pastoral worker know the way they are to operate long-term, adopting an evangelical orientation. It is particularly important to help the person recover positive relationships with his or her family, school or professional environment; with friends, various figures of society, for the purpose of getting involved in a network of relationships that help promote the individual.

The pastoral worker is guided by the gospel

4. The role of the Family

428. Pastoral action must also aim at providing help and support to the family. The latter has an essential role to play in the education and the recovery of the drug addict. It has the primary responsibility in the process of education and rehabilitation. Because of the milieu that they create, their ongoing availability and their supportive conversations, parents are indispensable in the lives of their family members who wish to leave the world of drug addiction. It is therefore important, that they be highly involved in the recovery process of a family member.

Help to the families

*Support to the
parents*

429. Parents are often disheartened by the addiction of one of their children. They feel guilty and think that they committed errors in the up-bringing of their child. In blaming themselves, they live the situation painfully, closing themselves in silence and loneliness. While in this mood, they are sometimes attacked by their addicted child, who reproaches them for his or her state of life. The parents often take these reproaches to heart, finding it difficult to reflect and act quietly. It is important that society supports them through a legislative and institutional plan, which empowers the family, and guarantees the educational responsibilities of parents. It is also necessary that the social attitude does not discredit the values transmitted by parents.

430. Parents can also be helped by various associations and pastoral structures that can take them in, and reflect with them on the situation and the best attitude to adopt. They will be able to understand better what their children are going through, especially when they accept help in liberating themselves from the dependency on drugs. The addict, who undertakes the process of liberation, will sometimes feel the need of remaining secluded from the parents, having attacked them. They will be surprised by this sudden change, which is common with drug addicts, who take a certain distance from the parents and the family. However, this may help the addict to overcome the resentment and weight of guilt, so as to be placid enough to accept positive criticism. There will develop an increasing desire to re-establish bonds with the family. It is important that the family be sensitised to this need so that it will be welcoming, and not miss this opportunity.

*The person at the
center of pastoral
action*

431. Placing the person at the centre of pastoral action, means respecting his history and treating his family with interest and discretion. By working towards the integration of the individual into the family, with the acceptance of his past, the help given to the drug addict acquires an essential value, because it allows him to unify his existence and contribute to his own stability and internal equilibrium.

432. We should never forget that the family which appeals to the pastoral centre for drug addicts is one suffering from a very painful and prolonged internal conflict. It must be supported and visited by the priest or by a pastoral worker. Through regular meetings they will be able to speak about the difficulties they face and find the proper attitude to help a child in its process of liberation from drug addiction.

Regular meetings

433. Often, family members who have certain convictions will exhibit contradictory attitudes towards the drug addict. Thus the family isolates itself from his environment and limits its relationship. When this happens, it needs to be received into a pastoral setting, without being judged, so that it may speak about its suffering with other families experiencing the same situation, and feel secure in regaining trust. It must be considered as a resource place.

*The family,
a pastoral resource*

5. The role of Catechesis

434. The catechesis of children and teen-agers is central in life education, and therefore in the prevention against drugs. The development of drug addiction occurred alongside a slow de-christianisation that started with abandoning children's catechesis. The lack of incentives in the spiritual life and for a relationship with God, which ought to be nourished by the word of God and the sacraments received through the Church, leaves in young people a great void, which they try to fill through artificial means. Leading children to a knowledge of the Christian mystery, in which we participate through baptism and Eucharistic communion and which open us to eternal life, helps them to understand their life in relationship to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who is love and the source of relationship.

*Filling the vacuum
of faith*

435. Christian communities must consider catechesis of children a pastoral priority. It is necessary that the catechesis of young people be supported by an active community that testifies to faith, hope and charity, received as gifts from God. Young people go where they perceive the existence of

*A living community
for an effective
catechesis*

life, even if they sometimes confuse easy and superficial attitudes with authentic and demanding religious attitudes. In the present social context, they let themselves be deceived by idols. Discovering God, living from his word and sacraments and being integrated into his Church is the primary duty of catechesis. Arousing faith and educating the Christian conscience, helps the child to know that he is loved and wanted by God. He understands that through baptism one becomes a son of God and brother of Christ, and consequently a brother of other human beings. He is given the Holy Spirit so that he may understand the Word of God and witness to it. A strong relationship with God helps him perceive the trust of the Lord and the Church in him.

*Catechist, witness to
the love of Father*

436. Catechists sometimes wonder whether they should talk to children about the love of God our Father, and about the Christian sense of the family, since they live in painful family situations, where they have a bad image of the father or are in a very complex and remodelled family. Nevertheless, they should not be deprived of knowledge about the divine fatherhood, otherwise the Christian vision risks being shadowed by the customs and problems of the time, in which case catechesis would only add confusion to the present troubles of children.

*Education as a
preparation to life*

437. Education to prayer, meditation, celebration of the Eucharist and the practice of the sacraments is fundamental for the development of the spiritual and integral life of the individual; it helps him to enrich and deepen his interior life. Catechetical training must therefore teach young people to assimilate the truths of faith, which will help them understand better their relationship with God. They will have this formation within the Church, in a local community full of warmth, active and open to others, especially to the poorest and marginalized. The whole of this process of stimulation in the spiritual life is a way of laying a foundation, in order to prevent the drug phenomena, ensuring basic education to children and adolescents. Nevertheless, we must be lucid and avoid illusions, because due to human weakness, people may let themselves be carried away by certain behaviour that later on enslaves them.

6. The role of the Catholic School

438. Christians who dedicate themselves to the service of life fighting against drugs, must act in an explicit Christian way, so that the uniqueness of the Gospel message comes across, showing that it is Christ who reveals to us the ultimate sense of life.

439. The transmission of Christian values is a key issue for Catholic schools. Such programmes help the pupils to correctly order their lives towards God "the supreme good and ultimate end (*telos*) of man".¹³⁵ The Catholic school must act in this spirit, imparting knowledge and the tools of learning, which form young people to become active and responsible members in society, educating them to freedom, to relate to others, and to self-control thanks to the human moral values, which are enlightened by the Gospel. The school forms men and women who are capable of controlling themselves, and perceiving dangers involved in certain alienations, such as drugs.

440. A special effort has to be made to form the intelligence: mastery of the language, logic, reasoning and memory, so that youth may acquire a sense of moral goodness and truth. To avoid "moral relativism" young people should be helped to understand the significance of moral values and know those situations that are really contradictory to life's fundamental principles. Literature, philosophy and ethics are rich with texts from authors that are normally studied in school, thus forming the intelligence and moral conscience of the pupils.

441. Learning to reflect on behaviour and analysing it in relation to universal moral values, contributes to a healthy formation and discernment of what is necessary in life. This will progressively lead the child and the teen-ager to look for "the moral good which must be done".¹³⁶ Moral formation in Catholic schools and catechesis is based on

*Catholic school,
place for the
transmission of
Christian values*

*Formation of the
intelligence*

*Learning the art of
discernment*

¹³⁵ John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, n. 73.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, n. 8.

Moral behaviour the deepening of the Christian life. "Certainly, such an ordering is to be rational and free, conscious and deliberate, by virtue of which man is 'responsible' for his actions and subject to the judgement of God".¹³⁷ It is to be remembered that the moral life has to be accompanied by a spiritual experience founded on a relationship with Christ.

442. Moral education is a school for learning freedom. A laxist or unrestrained attitude on the part of adults, distorts the educational relationship, especially within the family, in catechesis and at school.

Respect for the moral law and the school 443. The role of the educator is that of trying to understand the behaviour of young drug addicts, and to find educational solutions. Their attitudes not only challenge the prohibitions, they also reveal a habit that is spreading because drugs are presented in social life as a source of well-being and pleasure. The school is the place where the child should be confronted with social and moral laws, prolonging what he normally should have experienced in the family. An antagonism between what is lived in the family and what is lived at school contributes to the deformation of youth, who then do not know where to find points of reference. For this reason, it is important that within the school the prohibition of drugs should be clearly expressed and any transgression be sanctioned, in order to avoid children or teen-agers becoming marginalized, falling in the vicious circle of drug addiction. In order to ensure this, there is need for commitment and collaboration between adults, parents and all pedagogic teams.

Patience and constancy 444. Finally, within the school, adults will pay particular attention to those who make use of drugs, and have personal or family problems, with the tendency of isolating themselves, being aggressive, being passive, not working, developing antisocial behaviour, and orally or physically abusing other youth and even adults. It is not always simple, nor easy dealing with such situations. Nevertheless, it is important that adults maintain their role of intervening in

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*, n. 73.

correct and appropriate ways. They should not be easily discouraged! The educator must have the patience of watching young people develop slowly. The intelligence and moral conscience mature in a progressive way.

7. The role of Volunteers

445. Just like other deviances, drug addiction is not a problem that can be reduced to a personal or family difficulty. It is a complex problem. It shows the inconsistencies of life styles of the people of our times, the dissolution of social bonds and the break-up of life havens. The pastoral duty that corresponds better to the needs of this time, consists in the creation of networks of communication and solidarity, ensuring a social affiliation of everyone, providing support and help so that each one can have his place in society and feel responsible for others. It is a priority both for pastoral action and for prevention against drug addiction.

446. Pastoral centres for drug addicts were born out of the voluntary work of Christians who wanted to respond to the new challenges of our time. Pastoral centres always try to associate many volunteers, including the families of the drug addicts, taking care of their formation. They offer a precious and disinterested service to others, which deserves appreciation. We cannot but encourage the great number of people who participate in voluntary activity, in service to the poorest of society, especially to those who are marginalized. One of the unique characteristics of the Church right from its beginning, is its special attention to the smallest, who are God's favourites.

*The role of organized
voluntary service*

447. Volunteers offer a considerable help to young people in difficulty. Moreover, they do not hesitate to raise their voices, inviting society to be more concerned with the problems of youth, especially those related to drug addiction. They are always ready to support parents and educators in their duties. They can also mediate among people who risk being marginalized and rejected, and those who

*Intermediaries
between the
marginalized
and society*

live in a social routine. The pastoral volunteers, whose tenacity and courage ought to be recognised, are witnesses to numerous human sufferings, which they try to reduce through various programmes for the education of drug addicts. All men of good will are called upon to unite efforts, in order to resolve the problem of drug addiction, which is one of the nastiest for the youth of our time, on all continents.

8. Spiritual assistance and Drug addiction

*Restore the sense of
dignity*

448. The Church continues the mission of Christ, turning her attention to all humanity and to the most unusual situations, especially those of the poor. Material poverty often prevents men and women from living worthily. But moral and spiritual poverty found in drug addiction, characterised by profound loneliness and depression, cause intense suffering for the addicted individual and the people around him. The duty of pastoral care is to restore the dignity and freedom of the drug addict.

449. The Church takes interest in every individual person, because he has an infinite value. She commits herself to this work through pastoral dedication, loving the people for who they are, desiring to live with them the demands of evangelical love. Christ is near to every person, and wants everyone to listen to his invitation to know and accept the love of God.

8.1. Principles for spiritual action and guidance

450. According to the Christian understanding, the relationship with God allows man to recognise his supernatural destiny.¹³⁸ Man is called to live in the love of God, which reveals to him the depth of his being: only God can totally satisfy human desires. He invites man to participate in divine life, which exceeds man's imagination.¹³⁹ The inte-

¹³⁸ Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel*, DDB, Paris 1991, p. 634.

¹³⁹ Cf. Idem, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, XII, Cerf, Paris 2000, p. 367.

rior life of the believer represents the space in which the supernatural life is developed, in response to the gospel invitation and to the gift of God's grace. The spiritual life is thus the expression of the presence of God in man, starting from the objects of faith and the realisation of the evangelical values in the reality of the world. It is expressed through different forms of spirituality. For this reason, the spiritual life cannot be confused with intelligence, as is the tendency today in poetry, art, aesthetics, philosophy and moral wisdom, when they speak of "secular spirituality". In fact, the Holy Spirit is the teacher of the interior life, enabling the birth and growth of the "interior man" (cf. *Rm* 7, 22; *Ef* 3, 16).

451. Man fulfils himself by opening up to the life of God. Grace sustains the spiritual life and enables its development. The spiritual life enables and inspires the person, in his being and behaviour, and allows him to develop life's values. It is therefore a source of liberation and favours the moral and spiritual growth of everyone. From it is drawn strength, courage and hope to re-establish and save every human life. God is present and never surrenders man to his deviations. His grace is always at work inviting people to a stronger faith, to a more active charity and to a more confident hope, aiming at the renewal of the "interior person". "The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of souls and bodies, who forgave the sins of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health (*Mk* 2, 1-12), has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation [...]"¹⁴⁰ This is the goal of pastoral action.

8.1.1. *Acceptance and understanding*

452. The care of drug addicts must come closer to the world in which they live. It is therefore necessary to know their language, their way of life and their system of operation, in order to reach them and help them come out. It must also be noted that the majority of drug addicts are often ignorant about religion or indifferent to the Christian

*Be understanding
and make oneself
understood*

¹⁴⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1421.

faith, even though they harbour deep spiritual aspirations, and are aware that their way of life is far from what they really seek.

*Listening to the
complaints for the
blame endured*

453. The drug addict manifests mistrust, refuses norms and people who represent society and contemporary culture. Sometimes his mistrust is directed at what he considers as unfair and inhuman in certain social norms. Recognising his claims proves to the addict that his complaint is listened to, and that he is before Christians who are aware of the actual problems of society, and are ready to work on them. In their pastoral action at the service of drug addicts, Christians wish to consider the whole person, including his religious dimension.

Patient listening

454. The priest and the pastoral worker have to make a greater effort in order to be present to the world of drug addicts who, with their rejection of reality or with their way of manipulating it, jeopardise a good number of values and constraints. It is necessary to enter into dialogue with the drug addict, in order to lead him back to reality and enable him to adopt a way of proceeding that will make him be sincere. The gesture, the presence and a sign of interest will pave the way for real dialogue. The drug addict needs such meetings that help him to talk, leading him from the temptation of self-destruction to self-esteem, from dependency to freedom.

8.1.2. *Listening*

*Encouraging
reflection*

455. The drug addict wants to be helped, but at the same time appears sceptical and mistrustful. He hides behind a defensive image that prevents him from manifesting his true feelings. The sense of guilt is strong within the addict, especially in the moment when he is liberated from the effects of the drug. Though he tries to deny "his guilt", he still feels oppressed by it. This is a privileged moment for spiritual and pastoral assistance, because the drug addict needs to give way to this feeling that oppresses him. Such a sense of guilt is particularly marked by the awareness of the unfailing fidelity of his parents – especially the mother –

who despite his negative behaviour and repeated lies, continue having hope, helping him to come out of the inferno of drugs. It is an awareness that can have a double effect, encouraging the process of transformation or at least of stopping him, for fear of possibly deceiving his family again.

456. When the drug addict reaches the stage of a general evaluation of his own life and has had a religious experience, he often asks for the sacrament of reconciliation. Though he may have experienced some interior peace in the course of the various therapeutic sessions and in the pastoral assistance, he still feels a strong dissatisfaction that prompts him to talk to a priest. Given the weight of sin or regret, one comes to realise that the recognition of his own difficulty is necessary for his future life. The confession of the evil done brings a great relief to the drug addict. Being welcomed and listened to with great respect is an attitude that has a great therapeutic value. (Lk 15, 11-32). In a welcoming community, facing one's own guilt and confessing the evil done is experienced as an essential element of healing.

*Facilitate
sacramental
reconciliation*

457. It would, of course, be dangerous, arousing and harbouring a sense of guilt that makes it difficult to change. The priest has to lead to a sense of reconciliation and pardon in a responsible way before God. The drug addict who can express his own thoughts and feelings and translate into words his own sense of guilt, becomes freer; and the sacrament of reconciliation makes the internal healing more complete. Without trying to proceed too much in a hurry at the religious level, every step is a preparatory moment towards greater freedom and a spiritual guide that will help the subject to overcome the various difficulties in the weaning period.

*Every step towards
faith must be
followed with great
attention*

8.1.3. Education to the sense of time

458. The drug addict is a manipulator and his speech is often marked by an intent to deceive. He rarely maintains promises and appointments and has a high ability to lie and

*Invitation to an
objective
examination*

deceive. Such an attitude is explained by the fact that he tries to live outside reality, avoiding most difficulties, instead of facing them. The priest and pastoral workers have to avoid being caught up in this game. They should rather invite the drug addict to an objective confrontation of reality, helping him to liberate himself from his fetters and become more mature and adult. One of the causes of drug addiction, as already stated, is the refusal to grow and the desire to remain in a childish affective world, without having to renounce aggressive relationships. By refusing to grow, the person remains in a psychological state that does not integrate the sense of time and history.

*Education to the
sense of history*

459. Pastoral action should help the individual pick up the thread of his history, and accept being his own age, rather than behaving like a child who has to be dependent. In fact, instead of rebelling against his lack of freedom in the face of a product, the drug addict attacks his parents and those around him, reproaching them for a dependency that they are actually not responsible for. Education to the sense of history will lead to intellectual and affective maturity. With the help of a priest or another guide, the individual will reread the painful episodes of his life and also discover that God is not indifferent to all these events. He has to accept his life as an occasion for experiencing the salvation offered by God. During this spiritual journey, the drug addict who unites with Christ discovers that his life is not lost. Though his history is marked by failure, guilt and sin, there is always the possibility of changing and living differently, in a renewed and free way. The work of changing his history is only possible if there is sufficient trust in the relationship between the addict and the priest.

8.1.4. Meditating on the word of God

460. Though listening is essential, it is not a goal in itself. It is not a question of listening for its own sake, because in the pastoral sector the reception of the word of the other is always a moment for discernment and commitment to what is said. Silent attention to the expressions of another is a necessary condition that allows the individual to formulate

what till now had no words. This word that comes from the depth, and by means of which the person externalises his own pain and his hope for liberation, can be enlightened by the word of God. The priest who instructs but, it is worth emphasising, should avoid proceeding with too much hurry and have no pretension of offering immediate solutions to the spiritual problems presented. It is important that the person undertake a process of liberation according to a personal rhythm.

461. It is also important that he who has the duty to lead, pays attention when proposing solutions or in giving suggestions that risk being interpreted as orders or prohibitions, which might strengthen the internal rejection by the drug addict of all demands, instead of favouring the development of a subject with necessary flexibility. In case of failure or desertion of the given suggestion, the drug addict may collapse and reproach himself for his own failure. Sometimes a feeling of impotence and dependency invades his conscience and makes him regress to the point of relapsing into drug addiction. Before the personality is psychologically and spiritually consolidated, the equilibrium of the individual remains fragile.

462. In such a situations, the priest must be conscious of the sign value of his personality. If he makes inappropriate statements, they will be to the detriment of the Church he represents. The teaching of the word of God must be accompanied by an experience of faith within the community, showing warmth in receiving the wounded person. This cannot happen without a deep personal faith rooted and lived in the Church. The affective relationship with the drug addict, which may appear as a kind of dependency between people, is important and enables the drug addict to accept the word of the pastor. It creates an atmosphere that fosters the building of bonds necessary for a reliable pastoral action. It is appropriate to have catechesis based on various biblical scenes, which enlighten the life of the drug addict and help him sense that he is also called to conversion in order to follow Christ.

*Strong attention to
the solutions and
suggestions to be
proposed*

*Have an experience
of the word of God*

8.1.5. *Stimulation of the sense of prayer and sacramental life*

463. As has been emphasised in this study, pastoral work has to consider all the aspects of drug addiction, and it is the duty of priests and other pastoral workers to offer the primary help of the Church, which is spiritual and moral help.

464. There are many pastoral experiences with drug addicts in open or residential environments, centred on social reinsertion, where the daily life is not only made up of community activities, but also of time for prayer and eucharistic celebrations. Not all drug addicts are prepared to dispose themselves to concentration and meditation on the word of God. They experience the pain of the weaning syndrome, both physically and psychologically. They discover that they have often tried to treat themselves by resorting to drugs. Experience shows that many young people turn to certain religious communities specialised in taking in drug addicts who want to free themselves from slavery. They realise that their request for dialogue, for respect of their personality, and for understanding the problem that led them to take drugs has been taken seriously; and they are conscious of their need for change and liberation.

*Community life,
experience of
freedom*

465. The experience of the community, based on evangelical values and prayer, is one of those circumstances within which the drug addict can become free. The testimony of the people helps him to know the message of Christ and to pay attention to the invitation to live fully in the dignity of the children of God. The celebration of the Eucharist and prayer will open to him new ways of life. There are numerous experiences of this nature, based on the practice of work within a religious community. Every drug addict who asks to stay in these communities has to accept the rules and the demands that will help him become aware of reality. Religious communities have achieved interesting results, using a methodology based on spiritual rehabilitation, characterised by an itinerary of a sacramental and prayer life. Some drug addicts find in these places a right atmosphere

and support that helps them to recover. The organisation may vary from one community to another. There is need to encourage this type of reception, as well as other forms of intervention among drug addicts, always aiming at promoting the dignity of the person, arousing in him the consciousness of his freedom and responsibility towards moral values.

8.1.6. *Transmitting Hope*

466. Working with people who are burdened by a "failure mentality", requires that one be strongly anchored in Christian hope. One must manifest that hope which opens to a future with God, and with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit, makes us desire to find our happiness in eternal life. The Beatitudes trace out for us the journey through the trials that we meet, with the purpose of uniting us to Christ, and start right now living spiritually what has been promised to us. Hope in eternal life enlightens us and we then re-evaluate our lives starting from the risen Christ. Rather than insisting obstinately on the facts of daily life, which might lead us to desperation, we have to understand and direct our existence through the presence of Christ and his message of eternal life. Only in Him and through the aspiration to happiness instilled by God in the heart of every person, do we find the strength to change our way of living. When human beings are left alone in their misery and inclination to error, with nobody to invite them to rise-up again, and receive the word of God which is love, they will always find it difficult to liberate themselves from the image that reduces them to what they do. Man never ceases to project his present situation into the future, yet Christ shows us that we need to change our point of view in order to find life. Imprisoned in the relentless and alienating cycle of drug addiction, the addict is discouraged and loses self-esteem, doubting the possible existence of hope and an alternative to his situation. The condition of the drug addict is certainly difficult; he risks giving in, isolating himself, withdrawing and losing all hope. But how can we leave him in this blind alley without providing him with a

*Everything is
possible with the
grace of God*

Hope therapy

spiritual approach, which can help him discover that before God he is worth more than his attachment to drugs? We know that the virtue of hope widens our view, inviting us to trust in the promises of Christ, whose first effects we can already experience in our spiritual life. Because of the promise of eternal life, our life has meaning and demands to be lived worthily.

467. Given the grace of God, one must believe in the possibility of change and the improvement of the person. This is the point of departure for the recovery of the drug addict. Since most people show distrust towards the drug addict, it is necessary that he finds in the priest and in the pastoral worker, those disciples of Christ, who like their Master do not extinguish "the remaining possibility", and show trust in him. The drug addict has no more faith in the future, and has no confidence both in himself and others. There is need therefore to reawaken in him the hope of "reviving". In the language of the therapeutic communities of Christian inspiration, this treatment is called "hope therapy".

468. Pastoral work, especially among drug addicts, ought to develop a specialised pedagogy that takes into consideration particular situations. It is therefore necessary to take time, without proceeding in too much of a hurry. Evangelisation involves an intense process that presupposes the capacity of the individual to integrate the Gospel message into his interior life. The example of Christ, means calling him to a new way of living, while respecting his individuality. Given the weakness of the drug addict, quickly proposing very high objectives will certainly lead to failure.

8.2. *The Spirituality of the Emmaus pilgrims*

*Spirituality of the
progressive discovery
of God*

469. The drug addict is one frustrated by himself and by all that he has tried to realise. He is occupied with feelings of abandonment. What spirituality can be proposed in such conditions? One of the models that seems more appropriate is that of the Emmaus pilgrims (cf. *Lk 24*).

8.2.1. *Jesus reveals another way of living*

470. The pilgrims are cross and discouraged. After entertaining many hopes they are now greatly disappointed. They did not understand the journey that Christ had to accomplish. After his death, Christ reenters their lives in a puzzling way, walking with them, questioning them on their disappointments and restlessness. "But their eyes were incapable of recognising him" (Lk 24, 26). They keep to themselves, and are blocked by an attitude that prevents them from embracing the new life bought by the resurrection of Jesus, who has conquered evil, sin and death.

8.2.2. *Jesus walks with the disorientated*

471. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus joins the pilgrims who are desperate, and walks with them. He is present at their side. He lets them question him and gives answers. But the disciples, due to their lack of faith, do not recognise Christ, who only reveals himself at the end of the journey in the breaking of the bread, the sign of the real and permanent presence of the Saviour.

8.2.3. *Jesus liberates from sin*

472. The mystery of the cross, through which he accepts the burden of the sin of the world, is at the centre of the Christian message. The Gospel message teaches that man cannot save himself, he needs Christ and the mediation of the Church. The drama of drug addiction, is not only psychological, or a kind of crazy search for pleasure, but it is also spiritual.

8.2.4. *Jesus interprets the events*

473. Jesus Christ is the guide of humanity in its journey toward God. His resurrection gives hope and assurance that pain and death are not the end of human existence. Jesus reminds this to the Emmaus pilgrims, by explaining the meaning of the events that disappointed them. He shows them that it doesn't help to dream. We have to

force them to give into drugs and violence, even to the point of suicide. [...] Too many young people are left to themselves without the concern of others, a stable home and a normal school, nor are they offered a socio-educational programme that urges them to make moral and intellectual efforts, helping them form their will and master their emotions".¹⁴²

484. In turn, the *Charter for Health Care Workers* sees the causes of drug addiction like this: "Drugs and drug addiction are almost always the result of an avoidable evasion of responsibility, an aprioristic contesting of the social structure, which is rejected without positive proposals for its reasonable reform, an expression of masochism motivated by the absence of values. One who takes drugs does not understand or has lost the meaning of the value of life, thus putting it at risk until it is lost: many deaths from *overdose* are voluntary suicides, the drug-user acquires a nihilistic mental state, superficially preferring the *void* of death to the *all* of life".¹⁴³

*The Charter for
Health Care
Workers on the
causes of drug
addiction*

485. From the ethical point of view, the *Charter* reaffirms the teaching of Pope John Paul II, according to which "using drugs is always illicit, because it implies an unjustified and irrational refusal to think, will, and act as free persons".¹⁴⁴ Concerning the recovery of the drug addict, the *Charter* specifies the importance of "the effort of knowing the individuals and understanding their inner world; to bring them to the discovery or the rediscovery of their dignity as persons, to help them reawaken and develop, as active subjects, those personal resources, which the use of drugs has suppressed, through a confident reactivation of the mechanisms of the will, directed to secure and noble ideals".¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² John Paul II, *To the Participants at the International Congress on Drugs*, 11 October 1997, in *Insegnamenti* XX/2, (1997), pp. 532-33, nn. 3 and 4.

¹⁴³ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, op. cit., n. 93.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, n. 94.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, n. 95.

CONCLUSION

*The teaching of Pope
John Paul II*

480. In recent years, Pope John Paul II has called many times the attention of the Church to the phenomenon of drugs, identifying the risks caused by the networks of drug addiction and the drugs themselves, which call for the attention of every person of good will.

*Drugs are a serious
phenomenon*

481. *"The drug phenomenon is a particularly serious evil.* Many young people and adults have died or will die as a result, while others have diminished personal capacities. Young people resort to drugs for many reasons. At critical moments in their growth, drug addiction is to be considered a symptom of problems in life, of difficulties in finding a place in society, of fear of the future and an escape into an illusory artificial life. Adolescence is a time of trials and questions, of searching for meaning in life and for making future commitments. The growth in the trade and consumption of drugs shows that we live in a world devoid of hope, lacking strong human and spiritual prospects. Hence, many young people think that all behaviour is the same, without distinguishing between good and evil, having no sense of moral limits.

*Youth are more
at risk*

*Necessity of support
to the parents*

482. The efforts of parents and teachers *to instil moral and spiritual values in their children*, so that they may behave as responsible people, are very much appreciated. They often do this with courage, but they are not always supported, especially when the media spreads messages that are morally unacceptable, [...] which consider violence, and sometimes drugs themselves, as signs of personal liberation.

483. Fear of the future and adult commitments among the youth, makes them particularly vulnerable. They are often not encouraged to struggle for a good and upright life; they tend to withdraw into themselves. One cannot minimise the devastating effects of unemployment, which victimise young people in proportions that are unworthy of a society that claims to respect human dignity. The powers of death

they propose three pedagogic objectives, on the basis of which we can try to face the challenge of drug addiction: nourishing the interior life, stimulating the moral sense of behaviour, and becoming free.

489. Educators will know that it is important to promote the spiritual growth of every individual, through the example of a worthy and responsible life of adults, who enjoy the confidence of young people to whom they transmit spiritual knowledge. Education in prayer will also contribute to the enrichment of the interior life.

*Formation to
spiritual life*

490. Finally, becoming free is one of the most important objectives of educating a person. The exercise of freedom is learned. One needs to know how to choose in order to accomplish acts that correspond to human dignity and truth. This may require the renunciation of certain satisfactions for a higher good. During the meeting with God, the drug addict may just like any one of us, listen to the exclamation of the Father: "You are my son".

*Educating to the
sense of freedom*

486. Finally, "Using drugs is anti-life. 'One cannot speak of 'the freedom to take drugs' or of 'the right to drugs,' because human beings do not have the right to harm themselves and they cannot and must not ever abdicate their personal dignity, which is given to them by God,' and even less, do they have the right to make others pay for their choices".¹⁴⁶

*The Church makes
her voice heard*

487. The Church sees in the dependence on drugs a degradation of the person, who has difficulty in building his or her own life and accepting his or her own history. The cases implied are many and diverse. For example, some young people and adults with satisfactory conditions of life, abandon themselves to drugs with the hope of finding a better form of life that overcomes the eventualities of daily life. Sometimes the social conditions of many individual lead them to desperation, and it is understandable that they feel the need of liberating themselves from the sufferings of their lives. Unfortunately, they use deceptive means that are incapable of solving their problems. We want to be solidly behind all these people, helping them to find a way of living that is humanly more worthy and spiritually more beneficial. It is therefore important that local communities pay attention and commit themselves to the fight against drug addiction. In fact, the Church that shares in God's love for men, cannot be indifferent in the face of dependence on drugs, which destroys people and seriously damages many families.

*Pastoral action
transmits hope*

488. Christ, the Son of God became incarnate. He reveals to us the love of God, a love that opens to us the ways of eternal life. Strengthened by this Good News, Christians know that they should not despair and that every person can find the way to conversion. In this regard, pastoral action can offer a specific contribution towards fighting the scourge of drug addiction. The practice of moral and spiritual values, offers resources for carrying out the necessary transformations. They are points of reference for shaping life. They are sources of inspiration and renewal. Moreover,

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, n. 96.

APPENDIXES

DOCUMENTS TO HELP UNDERSTANDING AND ACTION AT THE PASTORAL LEVEL

1. PRODUCTS

1.1. *Effects of Inhalants*

491. Inhalant preparations are mostly used by teen-agers or by people who cannot afford expensive drugs.

492. Ether, gasoline, glues, detergents, aerosol gases for dusting computer screens, and nitrous oxide or laughing gas are the most common inhalants. Some of them are concentrated in plastic bags, or even in inflated balls, to facilitate breathing their vapours. These products provoke a feeling of drunkenness, euphoria, visual and auditory disturbance. They also cause headaches, nervous slow down or damage (behavioural disorders and amnesia) digestive, pulmonary, and renal disturbances, cardiac arrest, coma and death. The addict easily becomes psychologically and physically dependent on inhalants.

1.2. *The effects of Cannabis*

493. Cannabis is no ordinary substance; rather it causes cerebral changes and influences a person's behaviour.

Cannabis provokes modification of perception. There is internal relaxation that first and foremost causes loss of self-control, a deceleration of the reflexes, an alteration of concentration, a dissociation of ideas, errors in the estimation of time and space, visual and auditory illusions, and irresistible impulsive behaviour.

Repeated use causes hallucinations and torments, a weakening and demotivation of the personality.

Excessive consumption leads to drunkenness which provokes:

- 1) a phase of excitement and euphoria,
- 2) a phase of mental confusion,
- 3) a phase of complete relaxation, which removes inhibitions,
- 4) a phase of depression when the individual becomes disheartened and apathetic.

In the long run, cannabis causes bronchial illnesses.

It also brings about certain types of depression.

The irregularity of the cerebral cells caused by cannabis provokes serious psychic disturbances and behaviour that may end up in panic crises.

1.3. *The effects of L.S.D.* 25

494. L.S.D. causes very strong hallucinations. It generates serious modifications to visual, auditory and tactile perception. The effects of the product start between half an hour and two hours after its consumption. The psychic effect is an "internal journey", which is a form of delirium, involving three phases:

1) At the beginning nausea, feelings of dizziness, cold and heat.

2) Loss of contact with reality, which is evidenced in a completely deformed vision and perception of colour, and a loss of a sense of time and space. The subject goes through opposing states of conscience: from euphoria to discouragement, from laughter to tears. The hallucinatory effect is so strong that the individual may consider himself to be a bird and decide to fall from the top of a building or fly off a cliff.

3) The return to reality, which is after 8 to 12 hours from consuming the product, is strenuous. The individual is very tired and perturbed. The use of L.S.D. may cause a psychiatric pathology: like schizophrenia or paranoia.

495. Molecules of L.S.D. may settle in the brain, only to be activated some days later causing again another state of loss of contact with reality.

1.4. *The effects of Ecstasy*

496. Ecstasy is mainly consumed in nightclubs, at *rave parties*, and in other evening reunions. The product is consumed in order to keep awake as long as possible, increase efficiency, be able to communicate and relate easily and increase one's sensuality. The physical and psychic dependency is very strong. Ecstasy provokes psychic disturbances for a number of days: memory alteration, anxiety, and violent attitudes. The person may suffer heart attacks. The return to reality is very strenuous, and the individual goes through a phase of depression, which may induce him into consuming other products in order to recover.

1.5. *The effects of Heroin*

497. The injection of heroin produces immediate effects. At first one experiences pleasure, relaxation and great passivity, feeling totally immersed in one-

self. The state of comfort can last for some weeks. The individual will regularly increase the dosage up to becoming completely dependent and enslaved by the product. A part of his life rotates around the product.

498. There are serious fatal effects of heroin on the brain and on other organs: respiratory complications, acceleration of cardiac rhythm, gastric and urinary problems, and pulmonary oedema in cases of overdose, followed by death. The drug addict experiences a crisis of abstinence: muscular pains, diarrhoea, tremors, dehydration, crises of violence, and anxiety. It is necessary to intervene at the psychological level, because the dependent person will find it difficult to free himself. The weaning phase is delicate; the individual must be followed with particular attention and support.

1.6. The effects of Cocaine

499. Cocaine gives the feeling of having increased physical and intellectual powers. The product provokes strong stimulations. Its consumption is followed by depressive periods that induce the subject into seeking even more products. Cocaine produces hallucinations, deliriums, tremors, and cardiac arrests, in cases of overdose.

500. The people mostly attracted to the use of cocaine are those with a psychotic personality.

1.7. The effects of Crack

501. Crack often provokes irreversible effects on the brain. Crack is an addictive stimulant, which prompts a state of excitement and excessive nervousness. The individual becomes very active and violent. He can collapse due to fatigue and enter a phase of depression. Serious psychiatric problems can also occur.

Weaning

It is the action that consists in making a voluntary stop. This involves crises of abstinence, which require medical follow-up in case of serious addicts, particularly in order to suppress the need for the product and the possible side effects.

Overdose

It is an excessive dose or hyper-dose. It is a case of taking a drug that the body cannot receive, often due to the quality, rather than the quantity of the product. An overdose provokes serious physical consequences that may lead to death.

Drug

Generally, a drug is either a natural substance or a product of chemical synthesis, which, when consumed, modifies human behaviour and acts on the central nervous system. This definition includes both legal and illegal drugs. Intoxication also implies the concept of abuse.

Stimulants

Stimulants are products that excite the mental nervous system, regress the physical limits of fatigue and give the impression of an increased intellectual capacity.

Stupefacients

Stupefacients are illegitimate drugs. Their use and abuse are condemned by international conventions and national laws.

Psychotropics

In a broad sense this term refers to chemical or synthetic products (medications, amphetamines, ecstasy etc.), whose classification as stupefacients is variable (prohibited products and medications), but abuse makes them drugs.

Depressants

Depressants are products that slow down the activity of the brain and have analgesic effects on the human body. They may also have an impact on the cardiovascular and respiratory systems.

GLOSSARY

502.

Drug Abuser

A drug abuser is a person who uses stupefying agents in an irregular way.

Drug Addict

A drug addict is one enslaved by the use of one or more products upon which he is dependent; he organises his life around the search and consumption of drugs.

Dependence

Dependence is the fact that the person cannot do without a product. It is:

- physical, often tied to the consumption of opiates (heroin...) or medications (for example barbiturates) that generate a state of withdrawal when one stops taking the product.
- psychological, which appears as the need to repeat the dose of one or more drugs, and involves frustration and anxiety when the consumption is suppressed. Dependence can be both physical and psychological.

Tolerance

Tolerance is the fact of being forced to increase the dose of a product in order to get the same effects. This is particularly true for opiates (especially heroin) or crack.

Addiction or Habituation

It is the standard psychic dependency due to the repeated consumption of a drug.

Habit

This is a state aroused by the repeated consumption of a drug, which produces psychic and physical dependence.

Addictives

They are substances that at first provoke a sort of drunkenness, an excitement, a peaceful ecstasy and a level of cheerfulness.

Uppers

These are products that disturb the activity of the brain. They modify visual, sensory and cognitive perception, provoke a distorted approach to time and space, which sometimes leads to hallucinations.

Precursors

They are chemical compositions, essentially used to transform natural products into illegal drugs or to break-down the already transformed products.

2. HOW CAN ONE INTERVENE?

2.1. *How can one recognise youth in difficulty?*

503. He isolates himself from his family and from his usual friends.
He associates with young people having the same problem.
He is aggressive.
He loses contact with adults.
He is often absent from school.
Withdraws into stubborn silence.
Eats very little and badly.
He has a "swapped" life: sleeps during the day and is active at night.
He is not reliable in what he says, and manifests a certain bad faith in reconstructing reality.
Does not tolerate hearing even minimum criticism of himself.
He is insensitive to the worry and suffering he causes to those around him.

2.2. *Why do youth take drugs?*

504. Young people take drugs:
- to seek relaxation,
 - to have some pleasure,
 - to experience new feelings,
 - to evaluate their own limits,
 - to integrate themselves into a group,
 - to stay well with others,
 - to calm internal anxiety,
 - to escape from their loneliness,
 - out of fear of autonomy,
 - to challenge prohibitions,
 - after the example of their parents,
 - to escape from difficult situations,
 - as a preference for the imaginary over reality.

- to multiply pleasure to the point of self-destruction,
- because of loss of interest in life,
- to compensate for difficulties in socialising.

2.3. *How can one talk to youth about risks of drugs, tobacco and alcohol?*

505. There is need to find the correct attitude for warning young people involved in using drugs, tobacco and alcohol about the risks to their health. They have no sense of time, for they feel that they have a whole life in front of them, and as they wait, they can make use of all products to satisfy their desires; they do not like to renounce immediate pleasures to earn a few more years of life. Prohibitions that are simply announced and stressed on occasions of transgression, without being expressed and supported are not effective; they only incite the teen-ager to react.

506. There are four arguments that young people find more helpful:

507. 1. **The loss of their freedom.** Becoming dependent, not being able to control oneself anymore, not being the master of your own actions under the effect of a product, being possessed, is not liked by young people.

508. 2. **The fact of being manipulated.** Knowing that certain sinister systems become wealthy through the consumption of drugs by young people and that they try to exploit and lie to them, arouses reaction in young people.

509. 3. **That one ends up ruining his own body.** Young people are very sensitive about their physical aspects. They discover that alcohol is fattening, tobacco ruins their teeth and skin and that drugs, make their face appear worn-out and murky.

510. 4. **They become less efficient.** The use of various substances (drugs, tobacco, alcohol) makes them lose their muscular form and their fitness; they become less resilient and less competitive. They feel minimised and usually do not appreciate the fact of being reduced to physical and sporting impotence.

2.4. *What can one tell parents when they discover that their child takes drugs?*

511. In most cases, parents anguish when they discover that their child takes drugs. The family enters into a crisis. The parents have a feeling of failure and are worried about the health of their child. The son, or daughter sees the par-

ents as intruders interfering in their world. The child does not understand the sense of the prohibition laid down by the parents to help him stop using drugs. It is necessary to invite parents, to take the initiative in dialogue, even when the situation of the child in the family is tense. This will undoubtedly be the first time that the youngster listens to a word from an adult on the issue of drugs.

512. Parents must express what they feel: their worries for the health and freedom of their son or daughter. They must clearly state that certain products should not be kept or consumed in the house (which constitutes a transgression of the law), that they prohibit their child from having friends in the house who bring these products as gifts or for sale. The call to obey the law within the family is a particularly constructive element.

513. Drug consumption may be a way of hiding a depressive problem, or of personal low self-esteem, or a fragile personality that is easily influenced. In such cases, parents can advise the child to meet someone who can help him or her: a physician, a priest, a friend who knows drug-related problems.

514. The "recovery" of a son or a daughter who takes drugs may require time: from a couple of weeks to several months. It is important that during this period, parents maintain the same attitude and position, trying as much as possible not to lose contact with the young one.

515. Family life must continue normally. There is need to ensure that the normal rhythms of life are respected: school and work. Parents should never give money to their children for buying drugs, not even in the exceptional case of soothing a state of dependency. They should instead counterbalance with the quality of their presence, purchase of clothing (a way of paying attention to their own bodies), with the preparation of complete meals, involving their child in the life of the family and with friends. But in serious cases there is need also of the help of a physician or a social worker (centres for treatment or places of specialised pastoral care).

3. PASTORAL APPROACHES

3.1. *The existential risks of a drug addict*

516. The drug addict often has difficulty in renouncing certain affective gratifications of infancy, in order to access superior satisfactions related to psychic maturity. To succeed in the latter, it is always necessary to integrate the inherent frustrations of life and not be a slave of perverse narcissistic desires. When this twofold development is lacking (renunciation of infancy and acceptance of frustrations) the dominant culture does not help one deepen the interior life, so the person may not acquire the ability of elaboration and introspection.

517. The consideration of all these different psychological realities brings to light the drug addict's need for spiritual and pastoral assistance. The addiction mentality often arouses attitudes of withdrawal that require education so that the person may open up to life and development. We address these attitudes, as seen in certain tendencies.

1 – Impulsive behaviour: the drug addict wants everything immediately; they neither accept waiting nor tolerate any mental activity that lasts long, and that would be burdensome to them. They try to satisfy desires, which actually cannot be satisfied. This explains their attitude and the obsessive ritual observed when they consume drugs, to which they can also attribute supernatural powers and magic.

2 – Lack of tolerance in the face of frustrations.

3 – Affective instability.

4 – Alteration of identity.

5 – Distorted self-judgement, either due to excessive or defective self-esteem.

6 – An innate state of depression, with a need for dependency on some groups and leaders, and an undervalued relationship with others. This attitude is expressed through a paranoid character in the person.

7 – Easily influenced in one way or another, the drug addict identifies with the opinion of the last person that speaks with him, which is a sign of ambivalence and fluctuation in desires and thoughts.

8 – Restlessness and instability, in that he desires everything with greed, and sometimes with anxiety.

9 – Given that he has little self-respect, he feels very much threatened and under-values his own existence: “It would be better not to have been born”.

10 – The drug addict lives in a state of dissatisfaction and tension caused by his chronic “self-under-valuating”.

11 – He is generally naive, open, generous and incapable of saying “no”, he easily undertakes projects, but leaves things half-done, and reacts as a “spoiled child”, in that he is demanding, selfish, with no sense of guilt.

12 – Lacks motivation: he cannot count on his will, since this is undermined by masochistic aggressions, while his weakened ego generates a feeling of impotence and sometimes rebellion.

13 – In certain individuals the level of understanding is low, due to a limited intellectual formation, since the majority of these people do not conclude their studies.

14 – The drug addict is not convinced of the strength of the good; for him drugs are the only thing he can hang onto in life.

15 – He finds it difficult to show interest in people and things.

16 – His mind is totally occupied by the world of drugs.

518. Pastoral reflection has to consider these different characteristics, not as psychological categories, but as various expressions of behaviour, in order to understand them. However, this understanding cannot be reduced to a passive attitude, rather it invites one to commit himself to a pedagogy that consists in helping the drug addict reconsider his life. The drug addict is often enslaved by what is socially fashionable, which aims at the emotions. In our societies that are dominated by the media, there is strong tendency towards the emotional. It is necessary to think and not limit oneself to feelings,¹⁴⁷ believing that reality is simply something subjective. Realities exist independently, in an autonomous way. It is not the intentions and desires that bring them into existence. Completely limiting the conscience to emotions does not allow one to recognize the distance between the various realities of life and the subject that perceives them. This distance, which ensures the freedom of every individual, cannot be obtained without the use of intelligence and of concepts. Drug addiction is often encouraged by defects in reflection and difficulties in appreciating the symbolic operations of reason.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*, especially nn. 80-89.

519. The formation of intelligence, through the search for a sense of truth and the work of conceptual reflection, is an important step in the prevention against drug addiction. It is up to education to promote the formation of youth in their thinking and personalities.

3.2. Organising pastoral assistance

520. The team made up of a priest and pastoral workers experienced in the problems of drug addiction, should aim at helping a person free himself from drugs. In assuming this responsibility, pastoral workers must aim at formation and also have control of the relationships and activities in which they are engaged. They must also live this pastoral activity in prayer and as a spiritual experience centred on service to those who have a broken life, and depend on drugs. It is a service that aims at restoring human dignity and freedom to these people.

521. We can distinguish three types of assistance offered to young people within the context of pastoral activities (catechesis and others), catholic schools, and initiatives of teachers of religion. These activities could also take place in a pastoral centre for drug prevention.

522. The following are some of the activities that may be organised:

1 – individual meetings with an adult, that enable the young person to speak about himself, his problems, and his consumption of drugs;

2 – group activity: reflections and exchange of views; workshops on the body (health, bodily perception, dances and games for self expression, theatre); creative activity: painting, writing; sports activity: horse-racing, mountain climbing, skiing; staying in a group;

3 – working with an animator who is experienced in the problems posed by drugs.

523. Assistance can also be organised around teams that will meet youth on the streets and in popular places for drug addicts. In this case, two animators go around together and approach the youth, presenting to them their activities, give them the address of the pastoral centre and tell them about the possibilities it offers: meals, a bath, a night under shelter, meeting someone to talk to, receive suggestions, be directed to a medical service, meet a mediator who will establish contact between the young person and his or her parents. In all cases the pastoral workers should approach young people with respect, showing them trust and esteem.

3.3. *Teach and live the change together with the drug addict.*

525. Having described the spirit that should underline pastoral action, we now proceed with a discussion of the meetings that can take place during the weekly get-togethers, either in the residential or semi-residential centres.

3.3.1. *The meetings*

525. The meetings are of various types: individual, in a group, family or community. One can make use of various methods, but keeping in mind that they should always aim at fostering relationships in a group and in community life, as well as helping the person who has to mould his life and relationships in a responsible and autonomous way within society. This is an indispensable condition for awakening self-consciousness and an awareness of others.

3.3.2. *Within a community context or a group of affiliation*

526. Self-knowledge and discovery are important elements in a person for starting a profound change, who may be fragile and often has to face the trials of daily life. The pastoral worker has to teach the drug addict how to deal with the problems of daily life and manage relationship problems. Regular or random participation in community experiences enables everyone to face others peacefully, and also to handle the inevitable demands of community life. This has to do with learning to open up to others and make meaningful decisions both for oneself and for life.

527. Certain factors favour the quality of community life and develop the ability to change. They help the person face objective data and learn to take decisions, basing on the values that are above the subject. They can serve as criteria for evaluating human action. They are listed below.

A clear anthropological vision

528. Having a well defined methodology and applying techniques in appropriate ways is not enough to produce changes; one needs to have an integral vision of man, which opens up to possibilities and hope.

529. Our vision of man is inspired by the Gospel. The human person is called to a blessed eternity with God. He can never be treated as an object. He retains his dignity in all circumstances, even when he gets lost in deviances that may disfigure part of his humanity. The grace of Redemption is for the benefit of

every human being, and it is always at their disposal. In a world that is incapable of forgiving or giving a possibility to those who are estranged from the right road, the Church is a place in which every person feels welcome; she wants to help the wounded recover. Suffering, which is part of every human life, must be understood and shared. In a sense, we are all committed and jointly liable in sharing the suffering of others.

Recognise the need for help

530. The drug addict tends to deny the gravity of his situation and withdraws into himself, or wants to pass for a victim, attributing the responsibility for his state on other people or even on the entire society, thus justifying his failures. A serious dialogue and a demanding common life, enable one to face the truth and acknowledge his own responsibilities.

Learning and recognising, understanding, expressing personal emotions and feelings

531. The use of drugs, represents an intense emotional event, interfering with a proper and sensible relationship with normal life: the beauty of nature, the value of small gestures, and the recognition that one receives when he assumes responsibility. As a result, a lot of situations provoke anxiety or fear. Emotional life weakens, and the subject feels depressed or euphoric.

532. The sense of inferiority, ineptitude, guilt, unworthiness or false safety, the necessity for dissimulation, the impossibility of sincerity or truth, even with those he loves, are the other elements that lead to the inability of recognising ones feelings and making good use of them.

533. Sensibility and affectivity must therefore be re-educated, so that the individual may express what he feels in an appropriate way.

Instead of just passing directly to action, the pastoral worker will also care to teach the individual to speak about his affections, worries, and states of mind. This effort is not done simply at the beginning, especially with people who have the habit of passing immediately to action, without taking time to reflect. The educator has to mediate between what they feel or desire and what is realizable and good.

534. The word he uses is a mediation that enables a connection between the internal life and the external world. Drug addicts do not often arrive at making this operation of detachment that is possible through speech. Because of this

the drug addict often looks for involved relationships. On the other hand, drug addiction develops in people who have not been able to express in words, a part of their emotional life.

555. Speech plays a constructive role in the life of an individual. When this is lacking, the relationship of the subject with himself and with others, becomes difficult. Many people do not know how to speak about what they feel and experience, sometimes completely avoiding speaking. At the beginning it is up to the educator to take the initiative to speak about issues and relationships, and be the mouth-piece for those without a voice. This helps them to express what they feel and experience, but also to transmit the different messages necessary for existence, the codes and norms for good behaviour, moral values and Christian hope. Verbal expression should therefore be promoted in the educational relationship with drug addicts. Taking into consideration the religious and moral needs of the individual, the Church can be a particularly significant place for dialogue. The drug addict, who learns through other people the use of speech, becomes capable of building relationships in which reciprocity and interdependence foster an authentic and reassuring exchange.

Helping the person to change

536. The egocentrism of the addict drags him into ambiguous relationships, which lead to progressive isolation. Changing this way of relating is a particularly difficult task that requires confrontation and constructive criticism, in order to help to modify the attitude of the other without causing damage, by inducing fear. All this involves the acceptance of tension and conflict that may come about unexpectedly in any good relationship, which will have to be dealt with, without just denying them. As the person exercises himself this way in facing different tensions, he arrives at a level of personal confidence and trust.

Strengthening self-respect through participation in a common life and assuming personal responsibilities

537. The effort to create authentic relationships requires a commitment to carry through assumed or delegated responsibilities. This is an unusual situation for the drug addict, who has the tendency to isolate himself from the environment in which he lives, and has a negative attitude of others, especially to those he esteems and who help him, accompanied by indifference and rebellion. Yet he has to learn to live with others.

538. If sharing in the life of a group or a community represents a stimulus for the development of relationship potentialities and capabilities, the assumption of responsibility facilitates the individual's insertion into society. The sharing of common objectives encourages stronger collaboration with others.

Presence of a positive pressure of the peer group

539. The intensity with which people get involved in a common life, the will to reach objectives in personal growth, the degree of honesty and authenticity in relationships, exercise on every individual a positive pressure to change, and overcome negative attitudes in a drug addict. This opens the way for a reconstruction, based on a positive scale of values.

Internalising a system of values

540. An attitude of listening, bearing the burden of others, sharing problems, sufferings and failures, honesty in relationships, a progressive assumption of responsibility, respect for people and attention offered them, acceptance of criticism, the practice of solidarity, the exploitation of daily life, are the many elements that facilitate the integration of fundamental values in every life.

Growth through "crises"

541. There are crises in every journey of formation, which imply the necessity of making decisions and crossing the thresholds involved in change. The return to normal social life is very delicate for the drug addict, because the external environment often doubts both his motives and the decisions he takes. The individual will have to adapt himself to facing the different realities of daily life, enter into relationships with others and observe the rules of life. These necessary constraints can provoke crises that need to be taken care of, and not just be ignored without understanding them as the drug addict does. The confrontation of the addict with reality must progressively free him from the need to shun away from life by consuming drugs. The pastoral team, comprised of educators and a priest, will help him to assess his difficulties, verify his convictions and strength, so that he may break with a passive attitude towards reality, and the dependency on drugs. This is an itinerary that cannot be effected without conflicts, before which educators should not let themselves be upset.

Changing negative attitudes into positive attitudes for life

542. Deep feelings, like feeling incapable and unsuitable, of not having rights, not deserving to be loved, being useless, or even the inability to confide in others, are common to the drug addict; they basically restrain his behaviour in life.

543. Thus negative feelings constitute a serious obstacle that prevents the drug addict from progressing and breaking with drugs. More than anything else, an experience of life in common, a framework of warm relationships, involvement and sharing, help the individual to recover the necessary motivations which will facilitate overcoming his condition. According to experience, the person starts imagining a different future and experiences a new way of living.

3.4. To help families

Self-expression

544. From the pastoral point view, the family ought to be considered a resource for each of its members and especially for the drug addict. Pastoral action has to direct its efforts towards the families and particularly towards those that are in difficulty. They should be offered places for meeting and reflection in the parish, among religious associations and in youth movements. Parents, brothers and sisters often need to talk and know how they can renew the relationship with one of their addicted members. The drug addict himself does not always know how to communicate with the members of his family. In order to reach this objective the following can be of help:

545. The possibility of expressing one's anger, loneliness and suffering in a pleasant, warm and reassuring environment, opens up communication and brings about the desire for change. The family is then ready to probe itself, accepting the suffering that this journey involves.

Clarifying and understanding

546. Acceptance and the possibility of belonging to a group that is both understanding and supportive are not enough to modify family dynamics; it is also necessary to facilitate in the family a new definition of the modalities of relationships (confirming roles, clarifying ambiguous relationships, avoiding substitutions, omitting the accusation of guilt or the inability to decide).

Rereading and deciding

548. Rereading together the actual situation in order to clarify the personal history, becoming conscious of personal feelings, are some of the elements that enable a person to overcome anger, pain, the sense of guilt, disappointments, deceptive expectations, favouring the exercise of an effective power of decision in the family. Making decisions every day, even modest ones, prepares one to make more important decisions.

Discovering the pleasure of change

549. As the family clarifies its relationships little by little and learns to overcome conflicts, a process of self-esteem and respect for others is established. The pleasure of staying together becomes stronger and the willingness to change is also shown. Stimulating this process and maintaining it, helps to reach positive results.

Reconciling

550. Personal and family histories have painful experiences that need to be recognised in order to overcome them and arrive at true reconciliation.

The changes people can make are relatively limited. One needs to learn to accept the differences of others, be tolerant, objectively assess facts without excessive aggressiveness, and agree to coexist. It is therefore necessary to know how to work out agreements without demanding impossible changes between parents and children.

Participating

551. From the very beginning of the process of treatment and recovery in the centres for pastoral care, families should be asked to participate in the different activities being proposed. The family will thus be an active partner in the procedures followed by one of its members. And when the painful experience is over, the family can subsequently take on some activity at the pastoral centre and together with other drug addicts participate in the assistance programmes that are offered. This activity gives to people a sense of usefulness and helps them avoid passive behaviour typical of people who feel assisted, a classical attitude among drug users.

Becoming active

552. Participating in the life of these pastoral centres promotes sharing and solidarity. Being aware of the responsibility to face the problems tormenting society, helps people to participate in finding solutions and also cultivate hope for the future.

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