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The Catholic Position on Drugs

Pope St. John Paul II taught:

"Drug abuse impoverishes every community where it exists. It diminishes human strength and moral fibre. It undermines esteemed values. It destroys the will to live and to contribute to a better society. Drug abuse is indeed a scourge, just as much as a famine, a drought or an epidemic. Every year it reaps an increasing harvest of human lives" (June 4, 1987).

"A correspondence has to be recognized between the deadly pathology caused by drug abuse and a pathology of the spirit which leads a person to flee from self and to seek illusory pleasures in an escape from reality, to the point that the meaning of personal existence is totally lost. Factors such as the breakdown of the family, tensions in human relations, growing unemployment and subhuman standards of living all contribute to this estrangement. In fact, at the root of these evils is the loss of ethical and spiritual values" (June 15, 1996).

According to Pope St. John Paul II, a population of drug abusers is a population that is physically sick, morally sick, weak-willed, and disordered. For every abuser, there is a family that suffers. The drug user pays the price for his drug abuse, but so do many other members of society.

- **Pope Francis** has called those who sell drugs: "dealers of death," and said, "Drug addiction is an evil, and with evil there can be no yielding or compromise" (World Youth Day, 2013, Rio de Janeiro).
- **Pope Francis** has on several occasions pronounced against the legalization of drugs, including marijuana.
- **Pope Francis** teaches that we must oppose drugs that deaden and instead – "say 'yes' to life, 'yes' to love, 'yes' to others, 'yes' to education, 'yes' to greater job opportunities." Pope Francis explained, "If we say 'yes' to all these things, there will be no room for illicit drugs, for alcohol abuse, for other forms of addiction." June 20, 2014.

If Belize were to become a *Marijuana Republic*:

- Family tourism would decrease. The kind of respectful tourists that we want to attract will find other destinations.
- The black market will grow. Other drugs will be more available.
- Increased deaths due to accidents, depression, suicide.
- Government production and sale of drugs will give the impression to adolescents that drugs are not harmful.
- Government production of drugs will increase adolescent access to marijuana.

- Government production of drugs will mean more parents and care-givers will be high more of the time. Drug-impaired parenting is bad parenting.
- Cognitive damage. Lower IQ in users who start young.
- THC in marijuana attaches to receptors in the brain that modulate systems ordinarily involved in healthy behaviours like eating, learning, and forming relationships. And THC — which has been increasing in potency in recent years — throws this finely tuned system off balance.
- Marijuana is used to escape from life; it tends to kill initiative, diligence and creativity.
- Increased homelessness.
- An industry that benefits from chemical addiction of the citizens of Belize and exists to distort their minds will not remain incorrupt for long (and could even end up becoming infiltrated with those disposed to turn to violence to defend their profits).
- There would be a contradiction between God's law and man's law.
- Lower moral standards.
- Increased family and street violence.
- Health complications among users.
- Increased addiction.
- Psychosocial impairment.
- More high school dropouts.
- More work place accidents, injuries, absenteeism, and disciplinary problems.

These are not guesses. This societal decline has happened in places where ganja has been legalized in the last 15 years.

Don't tarnish the jewel; *stop Belize from becoming a Marijuana Republic!*

Most Rev. Lawrence Nicasio
Bishop of Belize City and Belmopan