

THOMAS MORE NEWSLETTER

SOCIAL ACTION GROUP

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Editorial

Issue IDENTIFICATION



Drugs: Harm Minimisation vs Prevention

The recent publication of 'Stuff' by the Victorian Government demonstrates

a focus towards harm minimisation rather than elimination. Costing tax payers \$74 000, 'Stuff' contains advice for young people on a broad range of issues including: being with other people when experimenting with drugs, drinking water when taking ecstasy and avoiding questions when under arrest.

Studies consistently show that such drug taking is not 'safe'. Adolescence is a challenging and often fragile period in life. While social pressures to engage in risk taking behaviour are enormous, drug taking can also signify more than merely misguided pleasure seeking. It can often indicate deeper feelings of confusion, fear and loss of control. The longer term effects can represent a scourge on the lives of individuals and their families.

The Church teaches that our politicians have a duty to educate and protect the community from the socially destructive and life threatening effects of drugs and to address the underlying causes of substance abuse, not to lull vulnerable people into a false sense of safety. This issue is far too complex to allow soft-peddalling by governments wishing to gain the support of younger voters and to move towards more lenient drug policies.

With exams upon us we would especially like to wish all of our Uni groups the very best of luck and thank you for your courage on campus.

Rosy de Castella.

Catholic Social Teachings APPLICATION

Discussion Questions

1. Why does the Church teach that drugs are wrong? Is 'recreational' drug use ever OK?
2. What is the difference between the use of illegal and therapeutic drugs and the consumption of other substances: alcohol, caffeine, chocolate?!
3. What are some of the reasons behind drug use and other risk taking behaviour?
4. What are the effects of drug use and trafficking on individuals, families and the community?
5. What can we (individuals and governments) do to prevent such behaviour?

TMSAG meetings, October.

Doveton
Sat 2nd, 7:45pm
Holy Family
Presbytery
100 Power Rd

Hawthorn
Tues 5th, 7:45 pm
Corner House - 182
Power St

Albury
St Pat's, 14th, 7.45pm

Ballarat
please phone Marie,
5331 9815

University Groups
contact Rosy.

Preston
Wed 19th,
7:30 pm
St Raphael's Pres,
17 Hardy St

Ringwood
Wed 13th, 8pm
16 Leonard Street

Flinders
Wed 27th, 7:30 pm
Our Lady's Parish Hall
1 Foote St,
Dromana

Werribee
Fri 22nd, 7.30pm
St Andrew's hall.

For further details, phone 9326 5757

Catholic Social Teachings READINGS

Address of John Paul II to members of the "Encounter Community"

The Church has said repeatedly that drugs are never a solution. She intends to reaffirm this conviction forcefully in the face of opinions favouring the liberalization of narcotics or, at least, their partial legalisation on the grounds that free access to these substances will help to limit or reduce their harm to individuals and to society.

4. Drugs are not fought with drugs. Those who unfortunately have found themselves caught in the tentacles of narcotics testify that this experience is an escape from themselves and from reality.

Drugs are often the consequence of an inner emptiness: they are a refusal, a renouncement and a loss of direction which often leads to despair. This is why drugs are not overcome by drugs, but an extensive work of prevention is needed to replace the culture of death with the culture of life. Young people and their families must be offered concrete reasons for commitment and must be given effective support with their daily problems...

The Church is grateful to all who render this skilled and unselfish service to life and human dignity

Friday, 20 October 2000 (extract)

Catholic Social ACTION

Deadly and illegal drugs should not be promoted in this shameless fashion. Stuff has been condemned by the Australian Drug Foundation Chief Bill Stronach and police spokesmen, among others. You can call the government to get a copy of the booklet:

03 9627 7126. Or you can see the book online:

http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/cbav/fairsite.nsf/pages/of_stuff

We encourage you to contact the minister responsible to express your concern:

The Hon Christine Campbell MP
Minister for Senior Victorians
Level 22, 555 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
Phone: 9616 7500 Fax: 9616 8866

With an election before us now is the time to contact your local State MP to express your concern and ask them what their position is on the issue.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2291. The use of DRUGS inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offense. Clandestine production of and trafficking in DRUGS are scandalous practices. They constitute direct co-operation in evil, since they encourage people to practices gravely contrary to the moral law.

2211. The political community has a duty to honor the family, to assist it, and to ensure especially:

- the protection of security and health, especially with respect to dangers like DRUGS, pornography, alcoholism, etc.

The Church: Drugs and Adiction

Prevention, as well as education to the meaning of values which make life worth living, and the deep sense of life [and love], will certainly lead to the reduction of this demand and as a consequence the supply of drugs will also diminish... We all have to be seriously involved in the fight against this fatal evil. Politicians are very important in the fight against this scourge. Any results attained in stopping the problem depend very much on their attitude.

Vatican City, 1 November, 2001.

His Excellency Msg. JAVIER LOZANO BARRAGÁN

President of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care

Thank you all for the great success of the launch of the book '*George Pell*'. More than 250 people attended on the night and 15 of our reliable friends of Thomas More were an invaluable help as ushers and servers.

Keep this date free!

7:30pm Wednesday

4th December

Annual Mass of Thanksgiving

Principle Celebrant: Monsignor Prowse
Followed by the Christmas Function at the Camberwell Civic Centre.

Address by Peter Westmore, National President of the Movement.

World Youth Day Pilgrim Testamonies and supper.

If you would like to come or wish to invite others please contact Ellis at the Thomas More Centre.

Labor's Drug Policy by Bill Muehlenberg

The push by the Labor Government to soften Victorians up to a permissive policy on drugs has gone quiet lately (except for a major blunder by the Consumer Affairs Minister – more on that in a moment). But that is to be expected – we are in election mode.

So instead we are getting various election sweeteners, eg. more money on this, more money on that. But voters can rest assured that if Labor is returned to office, the same harm minimisation policy will be promoted.

Harm minimisation policy says that people will always take drugs, so all we can do is minimise the harm, to lessen the dangers. It is the opposite of a much more sensible policy: harm elimination. This policy says mind-altering drugs are illegal because they are dangerous, and they should stay that way.

Prevention is better than cure. Keeping people off destructive drugs in the first place is a much wiser and a much more cost-effective policy than picking up the pieces of drug addiction. But Labor has long ago given in to a soft approach to drugs. Thus we can be sure, for example, that the plan to introduce heroin injection rooms will be back on the agenda



if they return to office.

As an example of the how the government has gone to pot on this issue (pun intended), consider a recent government initiative, funded of course by our tax

dollars. The Victorian Government each year produces a booklet for young people, meant to give them advice and help on a number of issues. Past issues of the book have given pro-homosexual advice, among other things.

The annual booklet for young people is called 'Stuff' and has been distributed to Victorian schools. In the current issue, kids are advised on how to take ecstasy and other drugs. It also tells kids how to avoid answering police queries about drugs.

All together, 80,000 copies of the taxpayer funded booklet were distributed.

The Consumer Affairs minister Christine Campbell says she is "very proud" of the book. One has to ask how a government minister can be proud to offer such advice. Not only is she crossing swords with her own police department, but she is giving young people very bad advice indeed. Many studies have shown just how dangerous drugs like ecstasy are.

Debating the Dangers of Ecstasy

LONDON, OCT. 5, 2002 (Zenit.org).- Concern is growing over the party drug ecstasy. The Spanish paper ABC reported July 7 on a study showing traces of the mildly psychedelic derivative of amphetamine in the bodies of 140 people during the last 10 years. In the first half 2002 just over 900,000 tablets of ecstasy were seized by authorities in Spain, compared with 860,000 for the whole of 2001.

Thirty-eight of the deaths were due directly to the consumption of ecstasy, while in the other cases additional drugs were also detected in the corpses. The report, published by the National Institute of Toxicology, noted that ecstasy users combine their consumption of this drug with other harmful substances: 93.1% with hashish; 91.4% with alcohol; 87.3% with tobacco; and 53% with cocaine.

According to Pilar Sáiz, a medical psychology professor at the University of Oviedo, consumption of ecstasy leads to premature aging, with a deterioration of cerebral functions occurring at a much earlier age in users of the drug.

Party Drug Is Linked to Growing Number of Deaths

Apart from the immediate physical problems caused by ecstasy -- such as interference with the heart, high fever and hallucinations -- the report noted that long-term use of ecstasy is associated with psychiatric problems. Among these are paranoid psychosis, depression, anxiety and panic attacks, and memory damage.

A study of England and Wales by St. George's Hospital found 40 ecstasy-related deaths in 2001 - - twice the 2000 figure, and nearly four times the 1998 level, BBC reported July 29.

In Italy the newspaper La Stampa on Sept. 22 reported on fears about the effects of ecstasy. The paper observed that some clinics in Los Angeles are full of adolescents who, free of their physical addiction to ecstasy and other synthetic drugs, are afflicted with incurable psychiatric problems.

Clandestine laboratories now manufacture large quantities of ecstasy at ever-lower prices -- and often laced with other harmful substances that users are unaware of.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CONVERT LEADS DRUGS FIGHT BACK

Former East End "Heavy" Carries the Fight on Drug Abuse

A former gangster from London's East End is spearheading the Catholic Church's attempt to revive faith among young people in Britain and Ireland and warn against the dangers of drugs.

Today, thirty-seven-year-old John Pridmore carries a rosary and Bible with him. But a few years ago he never went anywhere without a machete and a can of ammonia. Stabbings, shootings and murder were common in this Pulp Fiction underworld. At 6ft 4, and having learnt martial arts, he became increasingly involved in resolving gangland disputes and collecting drug debts.

The son of a policeman, Pridmore grew up in east London. His life started to go off the rails when his parents divorced. Having served time during his teens in a detention centre and youth prison, Pridmore then began providing backstage security at concerts for stars such as Michael Jackson, Simply Red and Whitney Houston. Soon he was into big time drug dealing, attending crack parties, living in a penthouse and driving a Mercedes with a personalised number plate, high on the buzz from drugs, violence, power and reputation, and an endless supply of money and sex.

One night, in 1991, while working as a bouncer in a popular pub in central London, he launched into a man with his knuckle duster and nearly killed him. The events that followed were to turn

Pridmore's life upside down.

Pridmore is now part of Youth 2000, the international Catholic movement, which was singled out last year by Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor as being a sign of hope for the Church.

Pridmore spends his time leading retreats in schools and at parish centres and claims to have spoken to over 100,000 young people. His message is that God can change lives and that drugs lead only to destruction.

John Pridmore's story is told in *From Gangland to Promised Land* by John Pridmore with Greg Watts, published by Darton, Longman & Todd on February 11th

Catholic Communications Service

TMSAG PRAYER

Lord, grant me a holy heart
that sees what is true and pure
and is not frightened at the sight of sin
but creates order wherever it goes.

Grant me a heart
that knows nothing of boredom,
weeping and sighing.

Let me not be too concerned
with the bothersome thing I call "myself".

Lord, give me a sense of humour
and I will find happiness in life
and profit for others

-St Thomas More (1478-1535)

Congratulations are in order for the Monash students, for officially registering the 'Monash Thomas More Social Action Club' Thanks to all those who participated at the Inaugural General Meeting and may we see much more Action in 2003.

Thomas More Social Action Group Newsletter

Editor: M Casanova. Sub-Editors: R de Castella, C Sheehan, A Cappello, E O'Reilly, L McCormick.

The Thomas More Social Action Groups bring together young people to be formed in the Catholic Social Teachings and to move on to activism and evangelisation.

If you are interested in knowing more about the work of the TMSAGs please call the Thomas More Centre on 9326 5757; email: thomasmore@newsweekly.com.au

Hard copies of the Newsletter are also available – simply call the Thomas More Centre. Other journals available from the Thomas More Centre are: *AD2000*, *News Weekly* and the *Thomas More Bulletin*. Please call the Thomas More Centre for subscription details.

PLEASE NOTE: IN ORDER TO CONTINUE THIS WORK THE THOMAS MORE CENTRE WELCOMES DONATIONS- C/O The Director 582 Queensberry St. North Melbourne 3051