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YOUTH AND DRUGS

**A CASE STUDY OF CONSOLATA PARISH IN
WESTLANDS NAIROBI**

An Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree in Religious Studies

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION


I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work. It has not been submitted to any college or university for academic credit. All my sources of information are fully acknowledged.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In 1996, Mary Naliaka approached me at my place of pastoral work and expressed her concern over the issue of drug use and its abuse among the youth as a serious problem in Consolata Parish in Westlands, Nairobi. It came to my attention that this problem required urgently to be addressed to assist our youth that were at risk. The number of young people using drugs was on the rise and what counted was the immediate concern and quick intervention of the Church.

What could I do? The more I thought of this issue, the less prepared I felt to give my contribution. Being a student of theology; what good could theology do on this social issue of youth and drugs? What was the importance of learning theology in a social world where young people abuse drugs? It was the concern I had for the youth and the determination to provide suggestions to them that provoked me to write this essay. I was confident that the Church in Kenya, particularly in Westlands could do something for these youth. My contribution was to create awareness among the youth so as to curb this problem in the parish. This is what this essay is all about as will be discussed in the following Chapters.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Drug abuse among the youth is currently a matter of great concern in Consolata Parish in Westlands, Nairobi. It is now one of the biggest problems facing our youth today. It is a problem that brings with it affliction, addiction and eventually death.

The majority of drug-users are young people and the age of initial drug use is constantly being lowered even to children. In the past the drug problem used to be associated with the 30-age bracket, now it has lowered to twenties and below. Drug abuse

is becoming a cancer and is a devastating and crippling scourge facing our youth. Every now and then we are told about the devastating consequences of the increasing drug abuse, especially among the youth. The menace has reached Churches and Schools. However, it is imperative to mention that drug abuse is most common among youth between 15 and 26 years old. Though we do not have statistics on the extent of drug addiction it is apparent that drug abuse has reached alarming proportions. The greater tragedy is that the youth are the most affected.

Still fresh in our memories are the Nyeri and Kianyaga High School incidents where fellow students set students on fire. One of the reasons cited among others for the beastly acts is drug abuse. Young people are common patients. They would be addicts or victims of (these): bhang, cocaine, alcohol, drinking and smoking. Everybody knows or has heard about drugs and their harmful effects but what our young people do not seem to realize is that the dealers are cunningly enriching themselves and do not care about the lives they ruin in the process. They are cunning in that they know you know they are harmful, so they will entice you into taking the first dose. Drug taking is habit-forming activity. Drugs are wreaking havoc on young lives. The dream of any parent is to watch the children grow into successful and mature adults. Drugs have turned promising young people into zombies. When they do not have money to buy drugs, they will steal, rob, and

X kill to get their supply.

The percentage of drug users is too high a figure to ignore. Young people start taking drugs at the adolescent stage at a time when issues appear confusing. Therefore, the most affected in our society are the youth that are living in this precarious era of drugs where the menace is a constant threat. Illegal drugs are now cheaper and more available than ever before.

The mass media and other means of social communication have also contributed to the increased consumption of the dangerous substances among the youth. It is the very

future of our society that is threatened by drug abuse. Because the youth are our common future, there is no way we can afford to remain complacent in the advent of this menace now threatening to overwhelm our learning institutions.

The issue of people, young or old, taking drugs is not a far-fetched myth. It is a reality; it is a menace in our society. We cannot bury our heads in the sand that everything is well. Never, for the drug problem is within our learning institutions as well as factories, markets and all social gatherings. When learning institutions become a safe haven for drug abuse, then many grave questions beg for answers. For instance, are we as Kenyans or Christians, saying that, as a country or a Church, we have lost the war against drugs? What message does this send to other youth across the country? Drug abuse is no longer the preserve of deviant adults. Our youth, students, and street children are part of the growing urban sub-culture. We cannot remain silent in the drug world where drug-abuse has led many youth to their deaths. It is time we say no to drugs!

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

After talking to across-section of youth from Westlands, Nairobi it has become apparent that quite a significant number are facing a “mild” drug abuse problem. A majority of those interviewed say that they had either taken beer, spirits or illicit brews, hard drugs¹ especially while at school and during their holidays, mainly owing to peer pressure. It does not take long thereafter before they start drinking regularly, particularly in the “privacy” of discotheques or at friend’s bashes (parties).

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives for this work are three:

¹ *Hard Drugs*: are drugs that make the user to go high immediately. They are strong drugs and they cause immense problems. These are drugs such as Bhang, common in most parts of Kenya, Opium, Heroine, Cocaine, and Mandrax.

1. To sensitize the youth in Consolata Parish in Westlands, Nairobi on the dangers of drug abuse.
2. To re-state the position of the Church in matters concerning the youth and drugs in the modern world.
3. To suggest a working paper concerning drug abuse that would be used by our ministers and leaders of our Church in their youth ministry in urban apostolate.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

1. If the youth are made aware of the problem of drug abuse, this will help minimize this problem among them.
2. Given the chance, the Church in Kenya can effectively eradicate drug abuse among the youth in our parish in Westlands, Nairobi.
3. The ministers and leaders of our Church can do more and better to help the young people who abuse drugs.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

i) AREA OF STUDY

In this paper we are going to look at the problem of drug abuse among the youth in Consolata Parish in Westlands, Nairobi. My area of interest will be to examine the predicament of drug abuse among the youth and later the stand of the Church on this issue.

ii) METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Our approach to this issue of the youth and drugs will be pastoral-oriented. I will look at the reality from an involved, historically committed stance, trying to discern the situation for the purpose of action. At this point the pastoral circle will be great help to my study.

This circle represents the close relationships between four mediations of experience: Insertion, Social analysis, Theological reflection, and pastoral planning. It also emphasises the on-going relationship between reflection and action.

The first moment in the pastoral circle is *insertion*. It will help us locate the geography of our pastoral responses in the lived experience of the youth. What they are responding to are experiences that constitute primary data. We gain access to these by inserting our approach close to the experience of the youth. In community we look at reality with all its aspects which influence our daily life. When we look at problems in context, we begin to see how they are connected and form structures, which compound them. To see the situation as it really is, to evaluate it in the light of the Scripture reading and the Social Teaching of the Church, in order to reach some judgement and to act positively towards the common good.

In the second moment of pastoral circle *social analysis* I will examine the causes, probe consequences, delineate linkages and identify causes. This will help us make sense of experience by putting them together and finding out the connections between them.

The third moment is the *theological reflection*. It will be an effort to understand more broadly and deeply the analysed experience of the youth in the light of the living faith, Scripture, the Social Teaching of the Church, and the resources of tradition. This will help us raise new questions, suggest new insights and open responses. As Christian, our main concern is to know if reality as we experience it conforms or disagrees with our faith and therefore, our “judgement” is based on the word of God as revealed to us in the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. From this analysis, results my agenda: to foster the values that agree with our faith and to fight whatever disagrees with it.

The fourth moment in the pastoral circle is *pastoral planning*. In the light of experiences analysed and reflected upon, what response is called for by individuals and by communities? How should the response be designed in order to be most effective? This

essay will follow a method of reflection, which has been adopted in many Church documents for example in the Papal Encyclicals, since the Second Vatican Council. This process of reflection can be summed up in three main steps: SEE, JUDGE and ACT.

iii) SOURCES OF DATA

As far as the data is concerned, I am going to use the information from the people of Consolata Parish in Westlands, Nairobi. I did this through interviews that I conducted, by using written questionnaires, and reading books in the Library. I also made use of other relevant articles to undertaken title I came across; newspapers, magazines, contacted the UN office on drug control and other qualified persons in drug issue. The questionnaires I used will be at the end of this piece of work. These are the ways I used to collect my data from the field.

iv) TECHNIQUES OF COLLECTING DATA

The techniques of collecting data that I used are two

a) Interview

The study of this subject is based on the information gathered from knowledgeable people involved in pastoral work: priests, catechists, religious sisters, counsellors and other Christians. I carried out the interview with a number of informants. My own practical experience of pastoral among the youth in Consolata Parish Westlands contributed much to this research. The interviews consisted of both open questions, formal and informal that elicited spontaneous and more detailed information from the informants.

b) Written questionnaires

Written questionnaires were distributed among a selected member of Consolata Westlands. These include the youth, their parents, Small Christian Communities, teachers,

and the pastoral agents. I distributed 200 questionnaire and got 187 back. The sample of my questionnaire is found at the end of this essay under the appendix section.

Table 1

<i>Those interviewed</i>	<i>Number of Informants interviewed</i>
Priests	5
St. Lawrence Small Christian Community	20
St. Monica Small Christian Community	21
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Community	23
Emmanuel Small Christian Community	19
Youth Kileleshwa Centre	38
Youth Consolata Shrine	43
Youth in Universities	89
Parents	30
Counsellors	3
Teachers and other informants	21
Total number of informants	310

v) THE STRUCTURE OF THE ESSAY

The study is divided into three Chapters. Chapter one deals with the following aspects: the background of the problem, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the hypothesis of our study, and the methodology of our study.

Chapter two considers the facts about the youth and drugs. This Chapter will deal with the major factors and causes of drug abuse basing myself on the data collected from the youth. We will later go on to see the effects of drug use and its abuse among the youth. Next, we will look at the various theories these youth hold or believe about drug taking. A personal reflection sums up this Chapter.

In Chapter three, we analyze the Church and drug abuse among the youth. At this point it will be necessary to consider some questions. What is the Church saying about the youth? What role do the youth play in the Church? We will also look at what the teaching of

the Church say on drug use and drug abuse. What does the Church say about drugs? Lastly, we will see the role the Church is playing in Westlands, Nairobi to help the youth come out of this dragnet of drug abuse.

Our last Chapter deals with the Church's effective intervention amidst the menace of drug abuse among the youth. We will suggest ways the Church has to use in dealing with the situation of youth and drugs, which has become complex and out of hand.

1.6 CONCLUSION

To conclude, this chapter mainly was a presentation on the methods used to collect data from the youth on the menace of drug abuse in Consolata Parish in Westlands, Nairobi. We also discussed the modalities involved in carrying out our research. It was precisely aimed at introducing the readers and giving them the approach taken to write this essay. With this at the back of our minds, this will greatly assist us to have a clear foresight of what we are going to venture unto in the coming Chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

DRUG USE AND DRUG ABUSE AMONG THE YOUTH

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter two we are going to examine the meaning of drug use and drug abuse. Here we are going to ask ourselves a couple of questions; why is it that the youth are easily hooked to drug taking and drug abuse? Next, what are the effects of drug abuse among the youth? This section will close down with my personal reflection on drug use and drug abuse among our youth.

2.1 MEANING OF DRUG USE AND DRUG ABUSE

A drug is any substance which when taken into a living organism may modify the structure of the organism or its function.² Used properly drugs can treat a medical problem. They can correct imbalances in our body chemistry, protect us against disease and relieve tension, fatigue, and pains. When abused, drugs can cause health problems, legal problems, social difficulties, financial hardships, and loss of one's life.

Drug abuse refers to the use of drugs for purposes other than therapeutic ones.³ It is taking a drug for reasons other than medical in an amount, strength, frequency or manner that damages physical or mental functioning and emotional well being of the user. The term drug abuse is also used to indicate an excessive consumption of drug regardless of whether the individual is addicted to it or not.⁴

Drugs vary and are very helpful and necessary if properly used. In other words, drugs

² Boniface M. Karechio, Drug Abuse in Kenya, (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1996), p.11.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Douglas Wanjohi Waruta (Ed.), "Drug Abuse and addiction" by D. Mutati in Caring and Sharing Pastoral Counselling in the African Perspective, ATIEA, (Nairobi: Act Print Limited, 1995), p.50.

help us to relieve pain, fight and prevent diseases if taken as per doctor's prescription. If one takes drugs for other reasons that are not therapeutic, the drugs bring harmful effects. This brings us to the core of our concern, which is drug abuse. It also refers to the recreational drug use, in contrast to medical intended use. Then, in person's language, we can say that drug abuse occurs when people use or take drugs ignorantly or for seeking pleasure.

Those most commonly abused drugs in our parish environs as I noted include alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, miraa (Khat) and heroin to some extent. Other drugs that are also abused are cocaine, glue and some prescription drugs including piriton, barbiturates and benzodiazepines for example Valium.

Let us now find out the reasons why many youth abuse drugs. Rather, the question we should ask ourselves at this point is; why is it that our youth are the most vulnerable victims affected in our parish environs by these drugs?

2.2 CAUSES AND FACTORS OF DRUG ABUSE

Every now and then we are told about the devastating consequences of the increasing drug abuse, especially among the youth. The question to ask ourselves is; what are the motivations behind the youth taking these prohibited drugs? Drug abuse is now one of the biggest problems among our youth today and particularly in our parish in Westlands, Nairobi. In carrying out my pastoral project, I discovered some common causes and factors that lead our youth to drug abuse. These are some of the factors: *peer pressure, curiosity, ignorance, parental influence, lack of proper guidance, easy availability of these drugs, the escape phenomenon and lastly the spiritual hunger.*

2.2.1 PEER PRESSURE

Studies have shown that most youth desire to belong to a group or gang and pay attention to what the members say or do. The need to belong becomes even greater when the

youth are undergoing anxiety, life-provoking experiences caused by sociological and psychological problems. These characterize precisely the adolescence period. Many youth have admitted using drugs to relax, to have fun and to be part of a group.⁵ In doing so the youth are yearning for sense of belonging and identifying with a group.

Peer pressure remains an enormous factor in creating a drug-crisis climate because it plays on the desperate need of these youth to be approved in their social milieu. If it happens that associates engage in this habit of taking drugs for pleasure, the degree of all colleagues doing so for conformity will be high. To feel secure, or a sense of belonging, the innocent, those who do not use drugs will ape the habit of addicts and in the long run all will fall victims uniformly. Some told me that, drug taking is often a group activity and it is through friends that drugs are introduced to the members.⁶ Still other youth may entice, coax or pressurize one another in their group to have a try.

The phenomenon of social pressure has affected many youth whereby they are introduced to drugs by listening to popular songs glorifying the effects of drugs or by emulating musicians or athletes who are known users of drugs. Drug users normally seek approval for their behaviour from their peers by trying to co-operate with other users. By doing so, they feel that they will be accepted more in the group. Other youth get into the drug abuse to identify with pop stars, film actors and other famous idols.

2.2.2 CURIOSITY

Curiosity is another reason that drives our youth to taking drugs. If we look at curiosity, many youth here want to find out what it feels like to be high and their desire becomes experience of a new state of consciousness. They desire to experience a new state of conscience as they have heard from other drug users. Some in this group have steady income for they are employed.

⁵ Group interviewed by the author, Kileleshwa Youth Group, 20th July 1999.

⁶ Joseph Nyaga, Age: 25 years, Interviewed by the author, 18th July 1999.

Other youth are lured or attracted by the users of certain drugs and imagine what they feel like. To know more, they have to begin taking these drugs. This is a common cause of drug taking. It was evident during my investigation that young people were tempted to experiment with drugs in order to prove whether drugs do change their mood and feelings or not. It is sad to note that in the drug world, curiosity has led many youth astray and to their deaths. The urge to know or explore the unknown is what curiosity is all about. In the modern world, some best-selling book thrillers reinforce curiosity among the youth, rap music and films that glorify drugs and the act of staying high. There is also the negative influence by the modern mass media and advertisements, which occasionally convey messages of drug abuse as a positive influence in success.

2.2.3 IGNORANCE

Another cause of drug abuse among the youth is ignorance. This refers to lack of proper information about the side effects that prohibited drugs have on our youth physically, medically and socially. Sometimes due to lack of the knowledge, our youth engage in the use of certain drugs and do it wrongly. If only they could make inquiries on the drugs they come across, from the experts before they use them, they could lessen cases of drug abuse. John Ngesa told me that the youth's ignorance about various aspects of drug problem makes them take drugs.⁷

2.2.4 PARENTAL INFLUENCE

Parental influence could also be called family breakdown and alienation. This is another factor that contributes to drug abuse among the youth. Parental attitudes towards the youth involve threat and blaming in many cases. Some parents fail to take up the responsibility of bringing their families together. Our society has become so permissive that

⁷ John Ngesa, Age: 24 years, Interview by the author, 18th July 1999.

our youth are left to do what they feel like. This kind of alienation from our cultures makes some people to take drugs as they like because it is no one's business.

Frustrations and misunderstandings in our families is another factor to consider:

Young people from unhappy homes where parents show little interest and concern to them will many times find refuge in drug taking. Some parents go as far as inflicting harsh physical punishments on the youth in the name of discipline. This sort of behaviour makes our youth engage in unlawful activities of taking prohibited drugs as coping machines.

Some youth admitted that they got into drug abuse because they felt that their parents had refused to co-operate in doing or giving them what they wanted. In taking the prohibited drugs, the youth were aiming at creating awareness of their presence in the home and for some to gain strength and courage. Lack of positive role model from our parents who smoke, drink and abuse drugs has laid a snare for our youth to seek comfort in drugs.

2.2.5 LACK OF PROPER GUIDANCE

This refers to the loss of self-identity of oneself. It is to feel that you do not belong because you have become a failure in education or in your life's expectations. Others still take drugs to escape from physical or mental pain. If our youth lack proper guidance, then they will have low self-esteem of themselves. Some consider themselves failures thus having a distorted image of themselves. To be a failure in education is not to fail in life. A youth may be a failure in School but a successful person in life. Proper guidance is of paramount importance to our youth. Our youth can get this proper direction from our guardians so as to avoid falling in the snare of drug abuse.

2.2.6 AVAILABILITY

Nowadays, it is common for our youth to obtain drugs easily from doctors, nurses, shops, and dispensaries within our parish environs. Practically, drugs are greatly near their reach. In areas where drugs are planted or prepared in large quantities, it is common to find many youth consuming these drugs, yet appears very normal. Take for instance, in a slum where local beer is brewed, everyone including the young will drink it as part of their meal. It was evident from my findings that the youth have an easy access to drugs and at low prices for example at street corners, market places, bus stops, pubs, hotels and parks. This availability has made many of them to take drugs.

We also observed that drugs could be on sale at our nearest kiosk, in our child's Schools, in matatus, side lanes, by friends, name it. Illegal drugs are now cheaper and more available than ever before. There was a time when illegal drugs like bhang and heroine were hard to find but not anymore. Others said that these drugs are now available not only in towns but also in rural areas. Jane Ciiru⁸ goes frequently to visit her grandparents in the rural areas. It is there that she gets drugs. What she does is to bring some in the city to take together with her colleagues. It is no surprise that these drugs are at an affordable price to our youth.

2.2.7 THE ESCAPE PHENOMENON

Many teenagers that I interviewed consider drugs a temporary solution to the many problems facing them both at home and in school. They find solace and joy in drug taking. Others because of the many assignments given to them in their learning institutions have taken refuge in drugs. They consider this moment as a time to rest by taking drugs. Others still are afraid of facing reality the way it is hence want to flee from reality. In the long run

⁸ Jane Ciiru, Age: 23 years, Interview by the author, 19th July 1999.

these youth end up in drugs, which makes them lose their destination and miss to achieve their goal. Still others because of the many problems they have would like to keep far from remembering about their assignments. Others because of the worries they have, the tension built in them, would like to escape and forget by taking drugs. Many of them fear facing reality head on, and take drugs as a temporary measure to escape from reality.

2.2.8 SPIRITUAL HUNGER

Human beings are sophisticated creatures in their needs, which have to be fulfilled. We have physiological needs, social needs, and spiritual needs to mention just a few. The spiritual needs require that we have the awareness of God's existence and also depend on him. If this is unsatisfied as it should be, some people may tend to fill the gap with drugs. Let us take a case of Stephen who is one among our youth who is starving spiritually. To quench his thirst he has resorted to drug taking, a habit that has become difficult for him to abandon. During my interview with him, he disclosed to me that he had lost control over his life as drugs had overwhelmed him. His illness as I discovered later was spiritual. For him, God had no place in his life and was not aware of God's existence. To live was to depend on drugs that he bought and abused. Drug taking made him satisfied, fulfilled and courageous. When other temporary things take control of our lives, the consequences are intolerable. Spiritual hunger is a factor that has led many youth, like Stephen to their death. Traditionally, there was no room for atheism – everyone knew God – even children could participate in worship. But that is no more the case today. Our youths are starving spiritually and looking for instant satisfaction which many of them get in drugs, in discotheques and teen bashes. To quench their thirst a good number of them have resorted to drug abuse. Hence, a good number of the youths, suffer from spiritual hunger.

2.3 EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE

The widespread abuse of drugs has become a human tragedy. Drugs entice, captivate and ultimately destroy people from all walks of life. It seems that the most affected people in our community are the youth. Drugs have invaded our homes, our place of work and our education institutions, thus affecting individuals of all ages and classes. Regardless of drug classification,⁹ the following are their harmful effects as observed and expressed by the youth I interviewed: health problems, malnutrition, poor performance in learning institutions, psychological disorders and increase crime rate.

2.3.1 HEALTH PROBLEMS

This was the first effect expressed by majority of the youth. These drugs have endangered their lives. Taking drugs, many body systems malfunction or function in excess. For instance, some of the youth that have been smoking have cancer, others bronchitis, others liver and others heart problems. Worst of all some have mental problems (Psychosis) which could be depression mania or schizophrenic type. Once the drug is not taken, asserted James one of the youth, withdrawal symptoms becomes evident. These are serious and may be life-threatening to these youth. These drugs when taken are transported to the brain through the bloodstream and exert different effects on the brain. There is also considerable reduction of the brain's ability to take, sort and synthesise information thus developing a false sense of functioning. Misuse of drugs as expressed by many youth have led to addiction, whereby the person is attached to the drug so much that it will control him/her. In the long run they become slaves and cannot do without them.

⁹ Drugs can be grouped into three broad types namely; **Positive drugs** are used to cure, treat, or prevent disease and are accepted by our society. **Negative drugs** are drugs taken for pleasure or to make somebody "high" and the use of some of them is accepted. **Hard drugs** are drugs that make the user to go high immediately.

2.3.2 MALNUTRITION

Usually, if a person is used to taking drugs, essential body nutritional needs are not met. This may be due to loss of appetite or devoting all available money to purchase of drugs. This was another common effect of drugs among the youth I observed. Their essential nutritional needs were not sufficient for their body. This led to loss of appetite and waste of money used to buy drugs.

2.3.3 POOR PERFORMANCE IN LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

I discovered that most of the drug abusers are youths who are still learning. Therefore if the learner's standards of learning are affected by drug misuse we will end up with very poor person's for the nation. Drug abuse can lead to deterioration of the ability to make sound judgement that is loss of self-control due to affected memory among our youth. In relation to this, there comes a great weakness of character and breaking of personal principles.¹⁰ In most cases many drug addicts have no care and courtesy. They end up causing road accidents, domestic quarrels and even becoming irresponsible. This leads to breakage in marriages, loss of success and golden chances in academic field and areas of work.¹¹

2.3.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

I discovered also that misuse of drugs causes psychological disorders. This I noted from the victims who become socially undesirable, that is cannot fit in the society properly being unwilling to work or to take responsibility because the drugs the victim took leads to "another world" hallucinations. These youth in the long run are not able to co-ordinate with other members of the society. The youth end up stressed and isolated. Actually drugs spoil

¹⁰ Karechio, *Op.Cit.*, p. 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.13

body tissues and bring with it a line of diseases of body and mind. Since drugs weaken the moral judgement conscience, they contribute greatly to sexual immorality, which is spreading AIDS like bush fire among the same youth. To crown it all, drugs taken by youth cause infertility and even death among them. Drugs also weaken and spoil their immune system. Using the drugs when the body is still growing, destroys all the process of its development to maturity.¹²

2.3.5 INCREASE CRIME RATE

From the information we gathered I learnt that drug abuse goes hand in hand with crime. With addiction, the users will do anything to obtain these drugs mainly to satisfy themselves. These youth will finally engage in various undesirable activities such as stealing, prostitution and selling of the illegal drugs. To avert their misplaced anger and frustration they further engage in violent acts like rape, abortion, killing as some admitted. In general, they become a threat and danger to the society. What these youth forget is that drugs if misused turns them into beasts.

2.2.1 THEORY

A recent study has established that alcohol, followed by tobacco, cannabis and inhalants, is widely abused by University students. It is puzzling to note that a rising number of our students, those in Westlands environs, are taking heroin, cocaine and mandrax, as well as abusing alcohol. Other study reveals that 20% of Secondary and University students are on drugs. With an estimated student population of 3.3 million-in Secondary Schools, Public Universities and tertiary Colleges-the percentage of drug users is too high a figure to ignore.

¹² Karechio, *Op.Cit.*, p.15.

I discovered also that 40% of Secondary School boys had tried an illicit drug at least once in their life. Half of them ended up being regular users with a very high chance of addiction. In Universities and other tertiary institutions, over 30% of students are on illicit drugs, mostly bhang, heroin and amphetamines.¹³ One of our most significant findings is that according to their frequencies, the four most abused drugs are alcohol (57), Khat (30), Cannabis (12), and heroin (10). Another outstanding element is that out of the total percentage of respondents (100%), 43.8% were drug abusers.

On the basis of these facts and other findings, we conclude that any campaign against drug abusers in Nairobi City must focus primarily on alcohol, khat, cannabis and heroin (Opium). The youth who are the most vulnerable sector of the Kenyan population must be seriously sensitized. The following table illustrates the most abused substance at one of our private University:¹⁴

<i>Name of the Substance</i>	<i>Female</i>		<i>Male</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	307		251		558	
Substance	Yes	%	Yes	%	Yes	%
Tranquillisers	30	9.8	30	12.0	60	10.8
Heroin	3	1.0	7	2.8	10	1.8
Cocaine	6	2.0	7	2.8	13	2.3
LSD	3	1.0	3	1.2	6	1.1
Local brews	17	5.5	59	23.5	76	13.6
Mandrax	4	1.3	5	2.0	9	1.6
Cough Mixtures	110	35.8	86	19.6	196	35.1
Amphetamines	7	2.3	12	4.8	19	3.4
Khat	2	0.7	2	0.8	4	0.7

Table 2 Source: East African Medical Journal, June 1999.

¹³ Amphetamines: Like Cocaine, the amphetamines, usually known, as "speeds" are stimulants that stir up activity. Slang names are "speed", "bennies", and "ups".

¹⁴ Dagi Kimani, "Drug, Alcohol Abuse High in Universities,"(United States International University) in The East African, (Nairobi: Published at Nation Centre), July 19-25, 1999.

The study established that alcohol is the most commonly used drug by the University students, followed by tobacco, cannabis and inhalants. Male students were significantly more likely to have used these drugs than their female colleagues. About 60% of the students interviewed had tried alcohol at least once in their lives. About 70% of these are still occasional, regular or daily drinkers, while 55% of the students interviewed admitted to having smoked cigarettes. It is clear that drug abuse has now reached epidemic levels. Boys are the most hit by the drug problem.

The investigations I carried out reveal that more than 7.5% of the youth do not have accurate information on the dangers of any drugs, even though they may be informed on where to purchase them. Then, how deep is the problem? Would parents believe reports that say 54% of Secondary School boys and 3% of Secondary School girls are regular cigarette smokers? More still for College students, the figure is 65%. Over 50% of Schoolboys and 30% of Schoolgirls are regular alcohol consumers. In Colleges, 70% of all students consume alcohol. More than three-quarters of my informants admitted that they knew at least one person who smokes bhang regularly.

Another survey conducted recently to show the magnitude of the problem among the youth in our Catholic institutions reveals the following data: from the survey the researcher found that the youth he contacted 56.2% were non-drug users and 43.8% were drug users. Among the abusers 56.8% were males and 43.2 females. The age group between 15 and 20 ranked first in abusing drugs (47.3%). The 20 to 25 age group 41.9% following this is the age between 25 to 30 came last with 10.8%. If you look at the drugs, which have been used; 47.93% abused alcohol, 23.9% used Khat, 9.92% used Cannabis, 8.27% Opium, 0.83% Cocaine, 1.65% Barbiturates and 0.83% used Glue. Finally, to have an idea of the amount of money being spent by our youth, the survey showed 50% spent 100-500 shillings, 38.9% spent 50-100 shillings, 7.4% spent 500-2500 shillings, and 3.7%

spent over 2500 shillings. This amount of money was spent within a period of three months.

Table 3 DRUGS MOSTLY ABUSED¹⁵

Name of drug abused	Percent of the youth abusing this drug
Alcohol	47.93%
Khat	23.9%
Cannabis	9.92%
Opium	8.27%
Barbiturates	1.65%
Cocaine	0.83%
Glue	0.83%

Table 4 DRUG ABUSE AMONG THE YOUTH IN SOME CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS¹⁶

AGE GROUP	DRUGS ABUSED IN PERCENT (%)
15-20 years	56.8%
20-25 years	41.9%
25-30 years	10.8%

Table 5 MONEY SPENT BY YOUTH¹⁷

AMOUNT (KSH)	PERCENT
Between Ksh 100-500	50%
Between Ksh 50-100	38.9%
Between Ksh 500-2,500	7.4%
Over Ksh 2,500	3.7%

From the above data we can conclude that drug abuse is a common phenomena among our youth. The drug that is most abused is alcohol because of its easy availability and the teenagers are the most benevolent group. From my findings, I discovered that

¹⁵ Daily Nation, "Drug Abuse high in Catholic Institutions," (Nairobi: Nation Newspaper Limited), Thursday, December 24, 1998.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

certain drugs are mostly abused than others. The most commonly abused drugs are five: Stimulants, Depressants, Hallucinogens, Narcotics and Cannabis.¹⁸ Sometimes, they use drugs to cope with problems they face, relieve stress or overcome boredom, while others use drugs to satisfy their curiosity.

2.2.2 CONCRETE SITUATION

During the interview, I came to learn and see most of the causes and factors of drug abuse discussed above common with some of the youth. It was quite evident that those who were involved in this habit were either curious or the drugs were easily available to them. Good examples of these youth are Gabriella and Dick. These youth according to the information I gathered are drug abusers. What drove them was peer pressure from their colleagues. Again, due to curiosity they were anxious to take these drugs which consequently led to addiction. Right now they are drug abusers and addicts.

I also noted some of the consequences of drug abuse such as poor health, poor performance in learning institutions and increase of crime rate common among these youth. Both of them were performing excellently well but since they started taking drugs their performance has drastically fallen. They are students, but education seems not to be important. What matters for them, are the drugs. Nevertheless, the rate of crime seems to have gone high among the youth that abuse drugs. In order to survive on drugs, some of these youth engage themselves in crimes with the intention of getting money to buy drugs. Jordan is one among many of these youth who will do anything to get money to buy drugs. He has been caught several times stealing and has been imprisoned several times. His health is poor and deteriorating yet he seems to continue abusing drugs.

¹⁸ *Stimulants*: "uppers" they speed working of the brain and the Central Nervous System causing feelings, perhaps very temporal of alertness and energy.

Depressants: "Downers" they slow down the Central Nervous System.

Hallucinogens: Cause changes in perception and consciousness.

Narcotics: Lower perception of pain and are derived from the opium poppy or produced synthetically.

Cannabis: Alters mood, thinking and behaviour.

These are a few cases among many, about youth that are drug addicts. What we are talking about are not fantasies but concrete situations I encountered personally, which call for our immediate attention.

2.2.3 CONCLUSION

This Chapter was mainly about the issue of drug use and its abuse among the youth. It begins by defining the term's drug use and drug abuse. We later went to discover some of the causes and factors of drug abuse that are rampant with the youth in Consolata Church in Westlands. We also saw various reasons that drive youth to drug abuse. We went further to explore the effects of drug abuse on the youth. Next Chapter will discuss the role the Church plays in a situation where drug abusers are mainly the youth. Having grasped the causes and effects of drug abuse, there is no doubt that the Church has a special part to play in this menace common with the youth. Chapter three is to deal with the role of the Church and drugs.

CHAPTER THREE

CHURCH AND DRUG ABUSE AMONG THE YOUTH

3.0 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In this Chapter we are going to look at the role of the Church on drug abuse among the youth. What has the Church to offer us about drug abuse among the youth? We shall specifically look at the Consolata Church in Westlands and its role on this issue. Does it have any stand as far as this problem is concerned? What is the Church doing to curb the drug abuse? Here we will deal with the practical intervention of the Church in Westlands. We will look at the preventive measures and creative measures taken by the Church.

3.1 CHURCH AND DRUG ABUSE

On the issue of drug abuse the Church does not stipulate very well in its documents its position. But to understand the position of the Church, we have to know what it says about the human person. The instructions given on human person in the Church documents are properly applicable to the youth that abuse drugs. Drug abuse of all kinds causes harm to human beings and should therefore be totally rejected by Christians. They should do all they can to help others understand and avoid the dangers and evils of drug abuse. The Church is also helping to bring back to good health the drug abusers who they know are already affected by drug abuse. About this issue the Church calls for total rejection by Christians of drug abuse.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the virtue of temperance disposes us to avoid every kind of excess: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine.¹⁹ The

¹⁹ Paulines/Libreria Editrice Vaticana, The Catechism of the Catholic Church, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994), p.532.

virtue of temperance should help us avoid the abuse of drugs as Christians. What this means is that the Church is opposed to every kind of excess and especially abuses of drugs among the youth. The guiding principle is temperance that helps us to avoid abusing drugs.

In its efforts to root out this problem, the Church understands and accepts drug abuse as a pastoral problem among the youth. Therefore, the Church can be used as base for voluntary organization devoted to the eradication of the drug problem. The Church is also trying to initiate dialogue with the youth to understand their psychological and physiological problems in order to help them find out ways of solving these problems. These are the biggest step for the Church where it has created a good atmosphere for the youth to easily exchange their view and understand the problem. This is a good example of Jesus' method that the Church uses.

As far as centres for treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts is concerned, the Church is at the forefront in establishing these centres where the youth who are abusing drugs can seek treatment and rehabilitation. Most of these centres, which are sponsored by the Church, are not profit oriented but service-oriented. The Church is taking concrete steps to cater for the youth facing drug abuse problem.

The Church has also taken awareness programmes to students, teachers and parents. This is of paramount importance as these people are made aware of the dangers of drug abuse. In a situation where drug abuse is rampant, awareness is a step towards great improvement. Therefore, creating awareness among the youth is a milestone in ensuring that our youth have a strong foundation and basic education about risks of drug abuse.

The Church's stand on drugs is officially stated in no uncertain terms, thus:

the use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offence. 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.*²⁰

Again *"Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of it by not using drugs, which can ruin our life."*²¹ The Church is doing everything possible to help drug abusers and drug addicts overcome their drug problems especially the youth. The Church is doing this in various ways. By creating employment opportunities, the Church is able to ensure that the youth can afford a sense of meaning in life, which protects and guards them from the dangers of drug abuse. As we saw in Chapter two of this essay many youth abuse drugs due to frustrations, some caused by lack of job opportunities. Besides this, the Church is offering and providing pastoral counselling services at an affordable fee or even free to those who are in dire need. It is trying to provide educational opportunities for those who are disadvantaged. They can be provided with vocational training in various fields. On a spiritual level, the Church is helping drug abusers to move towards balance, maturity and a sense of identity, a sense of 'being me' in Christ. Each new encounter in pastoral care provides the pastor with the chance of helping the youth to develop and grow as a whole person.

In the gospel of Mark Jesus says, *"If your hand makes you lose your faith, cut it off."* This could be applied to the youth to imply that if taking alcohol, abusing drugs will harm others and yourself then it should be refused at all moment. This is the fundamental duty of all Christians whether young or old, men or women, boys or girls to see that no one abuses drugs. This is what the Church is doing to encourage drug users to stop this habit. The stand of the Church on drug abuse has a biblical foundation in the book of Sirach. To the youth, they should "do no evil, and evil will not overtake them." If our youth avoid wickedness then it will turn aside from them.

²⁰ Paulines/Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Op.Cit., p.532.

²¹ Ibid.

3.1.1 CONSOLATA CHURCH IN WESTLANDS

The Consolata Parish in Westlands, Nairobi is not left behind. It is doing a recommendable job for the youth that are drug abusers and drug addicts. It has joined hands with other organizations to fight this menace which is seriously affecting the youth. The following are some of the practical interventions of the Church in Westlands to help save this situation.

3.1.1.1 PREVENTIVE

The role of preventive education plays an enormous part to the youth that abuse drugs. The Church in Westlands is committed to education, which is geared towards the cultivation of the intellectual, the creative and aesthetic capabilities of a person. From time to time, the Church has organized informative workshops where education is imparted to the youth to equip them to cope with a variety of problems they encounter.

When proper formation is given, then it will inevitably prevent the youth from abusing drugs, since they will be aware of the danger that is involved in it. The Church is preparing its youth at the Parish level and in Schools to be both “thinking tanks” and moral agents of change and moral education. If our Church is committed to promoting the formation and education of the whole person then, the combat against drug abuse will be successful. The Church’s intention is to fight drug abuse among the youth and save hundreds of lives through anti drug campaign. This is a noble idea that calls for total support.

The Church is on the lookout for the youth that have turned out to be drug abusers. The Church is preparing to provide role models, in its spiritual and moral standards. The Church is preparing, with respect to drug use to set an example along the lines “do as I do.” Giving appropriate role models will help prevent drug abuse among the youth. Apart from providing good role models, the Church has assumed the teaching role of giving

moral, spiritual guidance and information on drug abuse to save and prevent the youth from abusing these drugs.

Another preventive measure undertaken by the Consolata Parish Church is her availability to the youth, which is critical. The Church will likely listen and be able to discuss the youth's problems and concerns at an early stage. This is fruitful in my opinion to help prevent the youth from abusing drugs.

3.1.1.2 CURATIVE

Apart from undertaking preventive measures, the Church is also committed to using curative measures that will assist in the reduction of drug abuse among the youth. Among the curative measures undertaken by the Church, the following are the major ones:

Medical assistance with a specialized wing to cater for the drug abusers has been put up. The Church is opening up centres for treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. Time, money and resources is spent on helping young people achieve a life that has potential and fulfilment without resort to drugs. We must care for the most vulnerable in our society in all circumstances. Either simply funding campaign against drug use or legalizing drug will not solve the problem.

We need a variety of measures to tackle the range of issues, which surround the drug-taking culture in order to limit the damage caused and to promote a healthy lifestyle for the youth. The Church is set firmly in the Christian context that Jesus wants fullness of life for all of us. We then need to fight all those things, which detract from human dignity, deny that fullness or impoverish human beings in any way. Drug abuse means a living death rather than abundant life. The Church is making sure that the addicts are given proper medical attention, proper rehabilitation, good education and vocational training to keep them far from straying or engaging in bad activities.

The Church is also providing professional services to help the youth reduce abusing drugs. This is an opportunity for the Church to extend its helping hand by providing pastoral counselling services to the youth abusing drugs. Counselling services are also necessary as well as social services for the youth. In Westlands Church, we have counsellors who are helping these youth.

The Church in Westlands is also committed to organize seminars and workshops which are meant to sensitize the youth on the devastating effects of drug abuse. It is in such forums that the Church can help the youth in starting small libraries especially in needy areas to make literature available to them. The Church is also providing recreational halls for music, healthy films, videos and dances that are important not only for leisure but also to help the youth in developing physical skills. This makes them useful and can help their minds off drugs.

3.1.1.3 SUCCESS AND FAILURES

Looking at the curative and preventive measures undertaken by the Church we cannot deny the fact that the Church has achieved remarkable successes and at the same time some failures. Concerning the Church's success, the Church has made a big step by being in the forefront in fighting drug abuse among the youth as we noted above. The social teaching of the Church on this issue is also clear. The Church upholds in high esteem, the exhortation of St. Paul to the Church in Galatia that:

Brothers, if a person should be discovered in some failure, you spiritual ones must restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, watching yourself, lest you also be tempted. Bear the burdens of one another, and so fulfil the law of Christ (Gal. 6: 1-2).

The human person must be informed and formed from all human perspectives to enable him or her grows to a mature responsible person. To abandon the youth to languish in drug abuse is dangerous and a threat to the spread of the good news of the Church. The Church

should maximally use well the machinery at its disposal. This is to make sure that human education is imparted to all especially to the future leaders of the Church, the youth. It has in some instances been noticed that the Church has not opened its eyes to grasp the needs of the youth, which has plunged many in to problems, or even to death. The Church spirituality, which seems out of fashion, is another contributing factor to its failure. Where the youth have rebelled against the Church's spirituality, then it is an indication to the ecclesial authority to respond to the youth's needs immediately.

From *Gaudium et Spes* number 30 we read:

Let everyone consider it his sacred obligation to esteem and observe social necessities as belonging to the primary duties of modern man. For the more unified the world becomes, the more plainly do the offices of men extend beyond particular groups and spread by degrees to the whole world. But this development cannot occur unless individual men and their associations cultivate in themselves the moral and social virtues, and promote them in society; thus, with the needed help of divine grace men who are truly new and artisans of a new humanity can be forth-coming.²²

This is another point that the Church has advanced for the youth and other faithful to cultivate a harmonious environment where moral and social virtues reign in society.

The words of Pope Paul VI

It belongs to the laity, to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live.²³

Then if the laity do not heed to this practical course of action, the youth will remain threatened by drugs and its adverse effects on their health. What we all need is to see a prosperous youth taking the mantle from us in good health and prepared to assume responsibilities and their consequences courageously.

The Church emphasises the fact that, in the event of the legalisation of the sale and use of products encouraging chemical dependence, the future of the youth is at stake. The lives

²² *Op.Cit.*, p.835.

²³ Paul VI, *On the Development of Peoples* (*Populorum Progressio*), (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1992), p.81.

of our youth will be diminished, that is, marred, while others, perhaps without falling into real dependence, will waste their youth without fully developing their potential.

3.1.2 CONCLUSION

This Chapter was about Church and drug abuse among the youth. Here we tried to show the role of the Church on this issue of drug abuse. Drug abuse is a social malaise that calls for Church participation to help combat this problem. The Church has been credited for meetings where these youth are educated and made aware of the dangers of drugs. This Chapter tells us that, the Church is in the forefront in helping the youth grow into God fearing Christians. The Consolata Church in Westlands has not been left behind. Following the footsteps of the mother Church, it is helping the youth overcome problem drug abuse.

CHAPTER FOUR

DRUG ABUSE AND CHURCH'S EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The youth of Africa should find a companion in Christ. The question is: Does the Church respond to the needs of the youth? How does the Church respond to youth culture, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS? Is the Church in Africa relevant to the youth? Let us start by the relevance of the Church to the youth. How does the Church in Africa present Christ to the youth in a situation where drug is highly abused by them? The Church is as relevant to the youth to the same extent that she makes Christ relevant. In this Chapter we are going to consider what more the Church needs to do as far as the menace of drug and drug abuse is concerned. Later we will discuss some of the viable agencies that the Church has in mind as regards its programs that can help the youth stop abusing drugs.

4.1 WHAT THE CHURCH NEEDS TO DO

The Church in Westlands can still do more than it is doing now. The Church should be committed to assisting the drug addict through pastoral counselling programmes. To do this effectively the Church should be led by the words of St. Paul:

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

It should tell the youth and remind them that their bodies are Christ's house and so there is need to make them clean. Qualified personnel should offer pastoral counselling services as a way of healing to all especially drug abusers. The Parish Priest and the parish pastoral team should be equipped and prepared to offer these special services to these young men.

The Church should realize that it is the foundation and promoter of human life. It needs to help these addicts understand their human dignity. The spiritual guidance and counselling offered by the Church need to be continued and supported so as to help these youth.

The Church needs to invite the youth who abuse drugs to realize their faith. Being in contact with their Creator, the youth will find solution of their worries. In the gospel of Matthew 6:34 we read, "*do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself*". Trusting in God makes us avoid unnecessary worries and temptations. The Church needs to show that the machinery at its disposal will help the addict to come close to his/her Creator.

The Church needs to demonstrate to the youth that religion is of vital importance in their lives because it brings them to a closer relationship with God. This will help the youth to change and have a good relationship with God. Mass media gives good information on the dangers of drugs. Religion in the Church will offer moral guidance and proper teaching.

The Church needs to emphasize that in every youth, there is a spiritual aspect, which need to be considered in their growth and integral development. This aspect is promoted by religion. Those who have faith in a religion have high chances of evading and overcoming the problem of drug and drug abuse. Religion helps one to find another being to lean on rather than looking for happiness and consolation in drugs.

In brief the Church in Westlands needs to update its pastoral programs as regards drug use and drug abuse among the youth. It has to articulate the following:

a) The purpose of these programs set-up by the Church is very important: The programs set up must aim at providing both preventive and curative interventions. The emphasis must be creating awareness and providing treatment by qualified personnel.

b) The objectives of the program are also useful: Equipped with concise knowledge concerning drug use and drug abuse will go a long way in discouraging the practice among the youth. Treatment of the victims of drug abuse will assure the youth an alternative and a second change to lead a meaningful and productive life.

c) The Church has important viable agencies: These viable agencies are Christian Community and its effective leadership at all levels, Youth-Groups at various levels of the community, families, counsellors, medical personnel and teachers that can help in controlling this problem.

d) Methods and means or instruments to achieve these objectives include seminars and workshops, public speeches, video-shows, newsletters, radio/TV programs, and reading books.

4.2 VIABLE AGENCIES

Having discussed at length what the Church needs to do, allow me to suggest and give some practical viable agencies that can work hand in hand with the Catholic Church in Westlands to effectively help diminish this problem of drug abuse among the youth. The question we are going to ask ourselves is; what particular groups, people, agents does the Church have in mind as regards its programs? The objectives of the Church programs are: to empower Christian Communities, to establish youth-groups, to empower families, to consult counsellors, to provide medical personnel, to empower teachers, to use pastoral agents and priest and religious community as elaborated below.

4.2.1 YOUTH-GROUPS

The youth are the first agency to work with the Church and society at large to eradicate this menace of drug abuse. The youth should realize that the use of drugs is not the pleasure of everything neither does it solve ones problems forever. The youth themselves

should be the heralds of good news to their fellow youth. I believe that the youth is better placed to understand other youth. Why, then are we not involving them to evangelize their fellow youth? The youth stand a better chance of educating the fellow youth through organized rally plays staged or drama aimed at creating awareness of the problems related to drug abuse. Such knowledge of this situation backed with lived experience of some youth will go along way in discouraging others from use and abuse of the drugs. The youth-group should come out to denounce drugs.

The youth can also be viable by having projects that will keep them active, occupied and never idle. The youth should maximize their talents by getting involved in the sensitive affairs of the community such as awareness programs about drug control and the effects of drug abuse. There should be a more aggressive “Youth Against Drugs” campaign and they should agree that drugs also affect the other youth.

4.2.2 SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The organisation of a parish Church should be in such a way that the Small Christian Communities remain the basic promoters of both Christian life and of human life. From the Small Christian Communities, the parents are in a better position to interact easily with their children and let them become aware of the dangers of drugs. The Small Christian Community emerges as a viable agency that can effectively combat drug abuse among the youth. A Small Christian Community at the lower level of the Parish can convene and organize seminars and workshops where the youth can be educated on the negative effects of drug abuse to their life.

4.2.3 FAMILIES

The family is the most important social institution. It is an excellent environment for providing human warmth, dialogue and understanding. The families should

communicate with the children by showing interest in all aspects of their everyday life. Parents or guardians should talk frankly and listen to them whenever they need someone to confide in. Families should also pledge not to provide youth with alcohol. The families should communicate beliefs and values about drugs and drug abuse which gives the youth a set of guidelines and limits to help them make healthy decisions. Within the family context, parents should be much more active in gathering information on drug abuse and its health impact, commitment to home education that is sharing information with the children and keeping young people active, by developing fun and meaningful activities and even organizing drug free parties and receptions. In the family parents should take more responsibility on their children since drug abuse takes advantage mostly of the youth. They can initiate friendly and open discussion between them and their children on the prevalence of drugs, their effects and the problems they cause. They should also lead an exemplary life, which can be imitated by their children.

4.2.4 COUNSELLORS

The counsellor is able to detect the symptoms of a looming drug crisis, which will help them either to intervene constructively or to provide outside help at a time when it can do some good to the youth. The counsellors are able to understand some of the behaviours and reactions that accompany drug abuse.

The counsellors will be on the outlook for the most general kinds of symptoms; the most reliable of which is change. The individual person has a role to play in combating drug abuse. It is very hard to force a drug-addicted youth or abuser to stop abusing the substance. The only thing required is that the individual drug abuser should know and admit the problem, be honest with themselves and talk the problem over with a counsellor. All the time drug abusers feel a craving for drugs and therefore abusers should keep telling

their problems to a counsellor whom they like and trust. It is the counsellors who should be sensitive to situations in which susceptible youth may abuse drugs.

Counsellors are placed in a better position to learn as much history as possible of the client. The counsellors are able to intervene easily. Intervention means, “taking action” and is the practical side of what a pastoral counsellor can do to help someone having the disease of chemical dependence. This can be a risky procedure therefore, it needs to be carefully planned and carried out, preferably by a trained professional. A pastoral counsellor can help foster recovery in individuals having this disease, as well as build awareness of this disease and recovery in the community. The theological implication is to show compassion and encourage positive change to the youth just as Jesus did. Counselling services are necessary for the drug user. The youth abusing drugs require proper medical rehabilitation and educational and vocational training. Rehabilitation centres help a good number of these youth to stop the habit.

4.2.5 PASTORAL AGENTS

This is another group that the Church has in mind to assist the victims of drug and drug abuse. The pastoral agents includes the catechists, Sunday school teachers, the animators, the priests, youth patrons and many more who are either involved directly or indirectly with the service to the Christians and in particular to the youth. These are people that the Church can use to fight drugs and all victims of drug abuse.

4.2.6 MEDICAL PERSONNEL

A medical personnel is another group or people that the Church can involve in helping the victims of drug and drug abuse. Since these are qualified people, they are better placed to handle these victims of drug and drug abuse. They can do this by offering medical attention to them. As we saw the effects of drugs and drug abuse are detrimental

to the health of the youth and the only hope left for them is to seek medical attention. Health problems caused by excessive use of these drugs can be treated effectively by medical assistant. That is why the Church does not hesitate to involve medical personnel to help these victims of drug abuse.

4.2.7 TEACHERS

As regards its programs, the Church has also involved the teachers to help these victims of drug and drug abuse. The teachers can alert the youth on the dangers of drugs and drug abuse. They can also help educate and create awareness among the victims of drugs and drug abuse to help them stop this habit. Having discovered the role of the teachers in the society, it is no wonder that the Church is certain that the teachers are properly disposed to the youth to help them eradicate this problem. The Church should conduct training programmes to teachers and parents.

4.2.8 NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers have an advantage over Radio as well as TV broadcasting in which words and images are passing. A newspaper can be read at anytime and it can also be preserved for many years. The Church in Westlands has a monthly paper published for Christians and in particular for the youth. In its program the Church should use well the newspaper to help these victims of drugs and drug abuse come out from this habit. Special columns like that in the seed magazine for the youth are important in this regard. The newspapers and the magazines will eradicate and create awareness that will help the youth come face to face with the seriousness of drugs and drug abuse. As a matter of fact, newspapers are very influential to the youth.

4.2.9 PRIEST AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The priest and religious communities are other important groups that the Church has in mind as regards its programs. They should be involved to help victims of drugs and drug abuse; particularly that the youth should stop this habit. A good example of the religious communities is the Salesians of Don Bosco typically involved in serving the youth of Christ. Thanks to their recommendable job that has supported many youth grow to morally and spiritually upright good Christians. The priests should also be trained in counselling services and in youth ministry, so as to assist and support all victims who have fallen prey of drugs and drug abuse. These two groups are important and will work effectively to help the Church and the youth that are in dire consequences of dying due to the hazardous effects of drugs.

4.3 CHURCH'S EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

The Church in Westlands intends to create awareness concerning factors and causes responsible for drug use and drug abuse. It is committed to highlighting the effect of drug abuse among the youth. By doing this, the Church intends that Christian and the youth in particular will get precise information about the problem of drug abuse.

The Church is also providing assistance to victims of drug abuse. It is doing this to victims of drug abuse, to make sure that these victims will be encouraged to seek assistance from qualified personnel. The proverb "prevention is better than cure" is applicable here. This assistance the victims are seeking will help them overcome this problem. The final result will be that for those not yet abusing drugs will be discouraged to do so.

Another intention of the Church is to prevent the spread of the use of drug and drug abuse among the Christians and the youth in particular. By doing this the Church will

prepare the Christian community to assist in all possible ways to combat the spread of drug abuse.

What are the means the Church is using to achieve its objectives? The best means the Church is using is the pastoral programmes aimed at combating the use and abuse of drug among the youth. This can be done through written newsletters, radio/TV programs, seminars and workshops, film-shows and video-shows, drama and sports, music festivals, public speeches, and leaf-lets.

4.3.1 WRITTEN NEWSLETTER

Consolata parish owns one newsletter, which it uses to reach the youth (Consolata Newsletter). This is inadequate compared to other non-religious newsletters and newspapers mushrooming in Nairobi. However, other religious newsletters and magazines such as the *seed*, the *Mwanachi*, the *People* among others, compliment this. The Church should have space for youth forum where articles are published about the youth and their problems. These written newsletters should be made available to the youth.

4.3.2 RADIO PROGRAMS OR TV

The Church should use the radio station or TV to help educate the youth and create awareness among them through these programs on the radio and the TV.

The Church should also know that radio/TV programs play an influential role on the youth. It should make the youth read various articles on the effects of drugs to human life in order to discourage them from taking and abusing drugs. It is from such programmes on the radio/TV that our youth see sense in what they have always assumed or ignored. The Church should know that the radio/TV could help these youth change and therefore, use it to educate the youth on the seriousness of this problem. The Church should be in the forefront to help the youth to be aware of radio/TV influence on their behaviour. The

Church should be committed to ensuring that radio/TV programs do not cheat the youth. The Church is aware that radio/TV programs are so educative, important and useful to shape a drug dependent yet it can mislead many youth into abusing drugs. When working with a drug addict, religion in the Church would be important to help the youth see that they have a place where they would be welcomed and see a different way of life, not depression but where there is hope.

4.3.3 SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

They should be held frequently to help combat this menace of drug abuse common with the youth. These seminars and workshops will keep the youth busy with productive activities so as to encourage talent development. Again seminars will educate the youth on the dangers of drugs and the workshops help to address the youth on this issue of drug abuse. In the seminars, we should introduce the youth to healthy leisure activities that will divert their attention and efforts to constructive activities. Students Campaign Against Drugs (SCAD) is a youth-group active in Nairobi, visiting Schools, parishes and encouraging students to keep off drugs.

The Church needs to organize seminars for the youth about the dangers of being involved with drugs and make sure that no one is dragged to drug taking. The Church is prepared to help the drug abusers to look at their life as a gift from God, a temple of the Holy Spirit to be cared for in all ways.

4.3.4 FILM SHOWS AND VIDEO SHOWS

Through these shows, we will aim at giving assistance to the youth abusing drugs. We should frequently show films, videos to the youth on the consequences of drug abuse.

4.3.5 DRAMA AND SPORTS

There are other means that can be used to assist the victims of drug abuse. The significance of drama is to create awareness aimed at providing knowledge about drugs. With sports the youth will be kept busy, occupied and will attract fellow youth to take part in sports. Remember an idle mind is the workshop of the devil. The objective of this exercise and action is to make the youth dynamic in their generation, so that they will have a better human life and good health in the community. Physical exercises are important in order to help the youth in development of physical skills. On the social scene, our parish has also started sporting activities and drama clubs in order to engage and tap the energies of the youth and other idlers.

4.3.6 MUSIC FESTIVALS, PUBLIC SPEECHES, AND LEAF-LETS

Providing recreational facilities, halls for music and other social amenities creates a constructive distinction for the youth. Besides, the youth are mostly led into anti-social behaviour mainly because there is no alternative. The youth-groups should start organizations with the specific aim of combating drugs.

Other means include music festivals which should be held regularly to encourage healthy interaction, relationships and exchange of views that will influence the youth positively. Another forum where the youth can be nourished is through the public speeches. Public speeches will educate the youth on the causes and effects of drug abuse. The last but not least is the sermon through which the minister of the Church enlightens the youth about the effects of drugs. The sermons should be aimed at helping victims of drug and drug abuse. Once a talk on drug and drug abuse has been delivered, the youth should be supplemented with the leaf-lets that will give them more time to interiorize and personalize the material discussed and for future inquiry.

4.4 SUGGESTIONS

The Church should not condemn or criticize drug abusers and drug addicts. Instead, she should try to help them to overcome their drug problem. This can be done by:

a) The ministers of the Church should speak out from the pulpit about the problems of drugs and effects of drug abuse. We strongly believe that this will assist the youth a lot.

We must create awareness about drug and drug abuse.

b) We should try to overcome our shyness in integrating our young people who are victims of drug abuse by acting through the mass media, especially the Catholic press.

c) Another suggestion is what we read from *Gaudium et Spes* no. 14:

Though made of body and soul, man is one. Through his bodily composition he gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him, and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator. For this reason man is not allowed to despise his bodily life; rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and honourable since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day. Nevertheless, wounded by sin, man experiences rebellious stirrings in his body. But the very dignity of man postulates that man glorify God in his body and forbid it to serve the evil inclinations of his heart.²⁴

d) The Church cannot eliminate the youth's curiosity about drugs and alcohol; it cannot shield them from the social pressures to use them. But the Church can encourage the youth self worth, give them the hard facts, establish firm limits, set a positive example, and always keep the lines of 'communication without condemnation' open.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This Chapter stresses the importance of the Church's effective intervention and the viable agencies on the issue of the youth and drugs. In the Church's effective intervention the question we attempted to answer was; what means are there at the disposal of the Church to achieve its objectives? In the viable agencies the main problem centred upon

²⁴ Austin Flannery, *Vatican II Council The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1975), p.821.

this question: what particular groups, people, or agents does the Church have in mind as regards its programs?

We can say that the dissemination of accurate information and viable agencies is all that is required. What we have just discussed in this Chapter can be summed up as social support, outreach and crisis ministry of the youth abusing drugs offered by the Church.

5. GENERAL CONCLUSION

My overall view about this essay is that the objectives set out were in one way or another met. It is a research that has shed light on the Church and other people about the dangers of drug abuse. Throughout this essay we tried to stress on the need of sensitizing the youth so that they can reduce consumption of these dangerous drugs. We were also impressed with the good job and role already done by the Church on this issue. As any other human institution with the sole aim of helping the community and improving its welfare, we saw the capability the Church has on the problem of drugs and youth. The Church is empowered to make sure that it protects all the Christians from any external force that hinders the growth of its faithful. The abuse of drugs is a threat to the ecclesial community. The Church cannot bury its head in the sand that all is well with the youth. It is evident and clear that in various occasions the Church has come up strongly to condemn drug traffickers and abusers. The Church minds a lot about the welfare of its people.

The points we have discussed in this essay were meant to help us have a guideline and a direction on how to go about this problem of the youth and drugs. There are still few books that deal with the youth and drugs. While others benefit from this lucrative business, this essay is mainly to provide a working paper concerning drug abuse that can be used by the Church in their youth ministry in urban apostolate. We can say that what we set out to

achieve was to suggest ways aimed at improving and directing pastoral interventions for better results.

It was not easy to collect the data from my informants. Most of the times I met difficulties but I chose to persevere all the times. Other times, the questionnaires given out were lost and others never returned. All the same, this helped me get in contact with my informants who helped me to see, gather and write this essay.

About the essay itself, we saw in the second Chapter the causes and effects of drugs on the youth. This was to help us see the problems these youth face and the immediate side effects of these drugs. Drug abuse is a serious problem and a rampant one among youth. We cannot just watch as our youth die because of excessive use of drugs. How do we help them? The responsibility is on each and every person.

The question of assistance was from the Church point of view. The Church like any other institution has devoted all its efforts to make sure that the youth do not fall victims of drug abuse. With all its machinery at hand, the Church has done a tremendous job for these youth. After studying the seriousness of this problem, the Church has understood the urgency to fight drug abusers. It is giving full support to these abusers who left alone, will be digging their own graves. In this section the Church has judged and seen it wise to help its future ministers, the youth.

Another step the Church has made is to come swiftly and act immediately. The Church is no longer a spectator but an actor on this issue. The pastoral recommendations given by the Church are the action aids that have helped a lot these youth. Let us not forget the centres set up to rehabilitate those youth, the pastoral care given to them, the Christian education and many others that are all actions assumed by the Church to help eradicate abuse of drugs among the youth. All the viable agencies we discussed in this essay are channels that are acting to see that the youth are safe from drugs.

In summary, the deeper theological background of the Church is a great handmaid to solving the problems of the youth. With all its tactics, the Church in any pastoral situation is smart using the SEE, JUDGE and ACT method. We can say that the Church has made great steps towards finding a solution to this problem of the youth and drugs, but the debate is continuous since it is an acute problem among the youth.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRES ON THE YOUTH AND DRUGS

1. Who is a youth according to you?
2. What types of drugs do you know and which ones are prevalent within the environs of our Parish?
3. Do you have someone in mind that has been using drugs? Which ones did he/she use?
4. As a youth, what do you think are some of the reasons behind one taking drugs?
5. What are some of the effects you experienced or you know after taking these drugs?
6. What practical suggestions could you give to a youth who is abusing drugs?
7. What are some of the places where these drugs can be obtained by a youth?
8. Have you done anything to stop/curb this situation?
9. What will be your main concern to a youth ^{who} that is abusing drugs?
10. Do you see anything that the Church is doing to help the youth in this matter?
11. As a youth do you have any other suggestions or personal comments as far as the youth and drugs is concerned in our Parish?
12. Have you ever used drugs as a youth or at any time in your lifetime? Which ones did you use?
13. In your opinion, what is the effect of drugs on a) the youth b) the Church and c) the community?