

TANGAZA COLLEGE

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

THE PROBLEMS FACING THE YOUTH OF SAINT MICHAEL'S PARISH, OTIENDE, NAIROBI

**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PASTORAL STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES.**

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

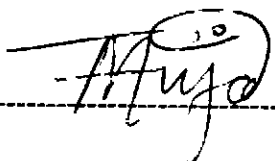
I hereby declare that this is my original work and has never been submitted to any college or university for academic credit. I have fully acknowledged all my sources of information.

Signed 

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Date 5th / 12 / 2002

This essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College Supervisor.

Signed 

Rev. Dr. Kawasonga Marcellus

(Supervisor)

Date 6-2-2002

DEDICATION

This work in the first place is dedicated to my parents Mr. Kasuurra Severino and Plaxeder Kabanyoro for their good examples of being my first educators and teachers. Furthermore to the youth of Saint Michael's Parish who have cooperated to reveal to me the problems which are affecting them.

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CHAPTER I

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

In 1999, I was sent by my Congregation of Holy Cross for a pastoral year in Jinja, Uganda. While working in the Parish, I noticed that the youth needed proper attention. They had been left on their own like the sheep without a shepherd. When I returned to Nairobi, I observed the similar situation in St. Michael's Parish. From that experience I developed an interest that I should get to know more about the youth as a future Church minister. What I am interested in, was their way of life as the leaders of tomorrow in our Church, and to get to know what problems they face so that I can be able to offer them my services by providing some suggestions and solutions where possible.

When we hear the statement " youth are the leaders of tomorrow" what question rises in our minds? I may have a question now that what kind of people or leaders are they today? It is important to dig deep into the problems of the youth. The strength of the building of the youth depends on their foundation and structure and therefore the youth need to be educated and trained early so as to build the firm foundation in our Church.

The problems or challenges the youth face today can either be destructive or formative. It depends on how they are handled. Youth problems are volatile practical issues which arise in life. At stake is the future of the family, in which lies the future of our society, country, Church and the world at large. Youth have many gifts, talents and much energy. If these are not properly acknowledged and utilized then the crisis and destruction may arise. On the other hand if positively handled, the youth can be very useful to our society.

As a theology student and a future minister in the Church, my task is to explore the problems of the youth in St. Michael's parish and I do not claim to have 'the blue print solutions' but what I will give_x will be proposals, suggestions and recommendations. I hope as a future minister in the Church, after understanding the problems facing the youth, I will be able to work with them properly and to assist them come out from such situations. My essay is based on the responses of the youth themselves through interviews and written questionnaires.

Before discussing the problems facing the youth of St. Michael's Parish in Langata Otiende, it is worthwhile first to define the term "youth." Who are they? Longman's dictionary of contemporary ^{English} defines the youth as the period of being young; the period between being a child and being fully grown up. It is a time in a person's life between childhood and adulthood. Kiura divides the youth in three classes; "pre-adolescence which lies between 9-13 years, adolescence (13-19 years) and early adulthood which falls between 19-25 years"¹ "It has been observed that the youth under certain conditions lasts well into 30s or middle age."² The period of the youth is a transitional one and quite volatile. It is characterized by many physical, psychological and emotional changes. Adolescence time is a time of searching for identity where many youth fall into adolescence crisis and hence the youth problems.

¹ Jane Kiura, Formation of the youth as agents of Evangelization for the Church as a family of God. (AFER, vol. 41, 1999) #s 45 and 46.

²Ecclesia in Africa, #102, p.76

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

In 1999, I got a chance of working with the youth at Uhuru park. I was assisted by two other seminarians ^{by} the Salesians of Don Bosco. By then I did not know much about the youth but as time went on, I got to know the interests of the youth like games, picnics, Bible sharing and the like. Having known some interests of the youth, I want to know now the problems of the youth and specifically the youth of St. Michael's parish here in Nairobi.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The study investigates the problems facing the youth. It is a special case study dealing with the youth of Saint Michael's Parish Otiende Nairobi. The youth are affected by many problems which include; premarital sex, drug abuse, unemployment and mass media.

A great number of the youth admitted that they have been involved in or caught up in one of the problems mentioned above. For that purpose the research identified these problems, explored their main causes, and suggested some solutions to these imminent issues.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The major objectives in the research study were:

- i) To identify the serious problems which are facing the youth of St. Michael's Parish.

- ii) To explore the main causes of these problems.
- iii) To assess the role of the Church and her involvement in trying to offer the solutions.
- iv) To try and sensitize them that these problems are real and that something needs to be done.
- v) To suggest some solutions which could help the person who will work with the youth to administer to them properly.
- vi) To help me by enriching the knowledge about the youth so that as a future minister, I will be able to handle the apostolate of the youth well.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS:

- ◆ If one becomes aware of the problems of the youth, he or she will be able to sensitize the youth and reduce the dangers that these problems might cause.
- ◆ If the youth themselves are aware of these problems, then it might be easy to work out the solutions.
- ◆ That the Church as the teacher on moral issues needs to address these problems fully.
- ◆ That the young people need to be helped out of these problems. The youth minister and the Church at large have a big role to play in addressing these issues.

1.5 METHODOLOGY:

AREA OF STUDY

In my research paper, I dealt with the problems that the youth of Saint Michael's Parish are facing. These included; drug abuse, premarital sex, the impact of mass media and unemployment. My area of interest was to analyze the root causes and the effects of these problems. As a minister in training, I looked at the possible solution, putting into consideration the position of the Church and her teachings.

1.5.1 SOURCES OF DATA:

I am mainly drew the information from the youth themselves of St. Michael's Parish by interviews and written questionnaire. The sample of the questions are found in the appendix at the back of this essay. I also depended on the written literature about the youth which I found from the library. There were many other related sources where I obtained the information like the newspapers, journals, magazines, and whatever I landed on talking about my topic.

1.5.2 TECHNIQUES OF COLLECTING DATA:

The techniques I have used in this paper are mainly two: interviews and questionnaires.

- ◆ **Interviews:** I have carried interviews with the youth themselves and I found some to be friendly and willing to discuss openly some of what they consider as the main

problems that are affecting their lives. Some of the questions I asked in the casual talk and others in the formal way. I have no doubt that what I have gathered is true information.

◆ **Questionnaire:**

FINDINGS

I prepared the questionnaire basing on the information I wanted to get from the youth. Sixty ^{questionnaires} questions were distributed and forty-five replied, below are the two tables showing the problems which were mentioned often during both interviews and the responses from the questionnaire.

Table 1 Questions that dealt with; premarital sex, drug abuse, unemployment and mass media. The main question here was how are the above issues affecting the youth? And what could be the root causes?

Frequency	Percentage	The problem mentioned
10	22%	Premarital sex
15	33%	Drug abuse
9	20%	Unemployment
11	25%	Mass media
Total	45	100%

According to table one, the predominant problem is drug abuse with 33%, followed by mass media. The table clearly shows that the four problems exist and need attention.

Table 2 Interviews

Number of the youth interviewed	Percentage	Problem mentioned
10	22%	Drug abuse
15	33%	Premarital Sex
5	12%	Unemployment
15	33%	Mass media
Total	45	100%

According to the interviews' table, premarital sex and mass media came up strongly with 33% followed by drug abuse with 22%. Unemployment took the fourth position with 12%. In the same way, the table affirms that the four problems exist and are affecting our youth of St. Michael's Parish. There were many problems that came up but those shown in the table were the major ones that the youth expressed in the interviews.

1.5.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS ESSAY:

This essay is divided into three chapters. Chapter one deals mainly with: general introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, hypothesis of this study and the methodology. .

Chapter two deals with the nature of the problems. It looked at the problems encountered by the youth in St. Michael's Parish and these are; premarital sex, drug abuse, unemployment and mass media. Also in this chapter, I pointed out the possible causes and the effects of the four mentioned problems.

Chapter three deals with the possible solutions and suggestions taking into consideration the role which parents, the Church, the neighbour, the government and the youth minister.

CONCLUSION:

This first chapter was to open the way of proceeding as far as the long essay is concerned. It mainly dealt with the introduction and the methodology. It also introduced to the reader and gave him or her what this is essay all about.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEMS:

Introduction:

This chapter expounds on the major problems that the youth of St. Michael's Parish are facing. These are mainly as follows: premarital sex, drug abuse, unemployment and mass media. I tackled them one by one, examining the causes as well as the effects of each. In order to examine these problems fully, some questions need to be posed, for example, why do the youth get involved in premarital sex and drug abuse? What effect does the mass media have on our youth? What are the causes of unemployment and how do they affect the youth today? After a thorough research and reflection, the researcher could be able to answer these questions.

2.0 PREMARITAL SEX:

Premarital sex is defined as any sexual intercourse before marriage whether with one's future marriage partner or someone else.³ The youth in their responses, admitted that premarital sex is a serious issue among them. The great number interviewed accepted that they had been involved in premarital sex. The percentage shows that 80% of the youth of St. Michael's Parish have been caught up in this situation. So the rate of premarital sex among the youth is high. It is a problem that needs to be addressed seriously if the youth are to be of good moral standard.

³ Philip S. Keane, Sexual Morality, (Toronto, Paulist press, 1977) p.100

2.1.0 CAUSES OF PREMARITAL SEX: The peer group always has the influence on the individual. The youth also find themselves under peer pressure to do certain things so that they can be accepted in the group. Among those things is premarital sex. The youth are attracted to the areas of pleasure and sex is among those. So in the peer group, sometimes the conversation on sex may be dominant. As a result, an individual is induced to experiment practically. In the peer group sometimes the youth advise each other on issues concerning sex but also on the other hand they tempt each other by saying unless you play sex with your friend, you cannot know if you are really normal. So for the youth, trying it into action means normality. In order for an individual to fit in the group, he or she ends up giving in to the demands of the group hence the problems of premarital sex.

In the current scientific world, where experiments are carried out so as to verify some facts, one cannot deny that the youth also take this trend. The youth see the area of sexuality as the area to be experimented upon. As a result, the youth end up being hooked into premarital sex because of experimentation.

The youth can be easily confused, some confuse love and sex. To many of the youth to say 'I love you' means I want to play sex with you. Some of our youth believe that love between the opposite sex cannot exist without having sexual intercourse. And yet "Sexual intercourse is not necessarily an expression of love or intimacy."⁴ The youth have the attitude that the girls can be conquered or won by having sex with them and by doing so the love between the two can be strengthened and yet this is not true kind of thinking.

⁴ Julius Mai Ndirangu, Youth in Danger, (Nairobi, Uzima press, 2000) p 75

The girls in turn give in and also believe that the relationship may break up if they say "NO." So the end decision is to go for premarital sex.

Great mobility, anonymity and rapidly changing technology and social structure all combine to allow youth more freedom than they have enjoyed in the past. Influenced by the media the youth cannot resist the temptation which is presented by the media in advertisement, blue movies and the way media exalts sex. For example in most of the advertisements on TV, a picture of the beautiful woman is shown and then you ask yourself what is the connection between the item advertised and the beautiful woman!

In the past, sex was regarded as sacred and it was a taboo to have sex anyhow unless you are married officially. The fact that traditional taboos against premarital sex long have been broken, leave room for the youth to play about with sexual intercourse.

The knowledge our youth have about sex is very deceptive. I can say that there exists an alarming ignorance among young people with regard to sexual matters, which is due largely to the fact that parents never discuss those matters with their children. The youth are left to discover on their own what sex is all about and by doing so they end up in premarital sex.

Materialism is another factor which leads our youth into premarital sex. Girls are the major victims. They want to get a lot of money to buy what they consider to be the latest of their fashion. They exchange sex for the material gains and in this way they end up in premarital sex.

Curiosity is another reason which leads our youth into premarital sex. In this research, the findings revealed that 75% of the teenagers go for sex for the sake of

curiosity just to discover what sex is all about. How is it done and how does it taste like!

Curiosity is therefore another factor that drives our youth into premarital sex.

Self-esteem is very important in one's life. Too low self-esteem could also lead our youth into premarital sex. When someone has a negative self-image and feels he or she has very low worth, the more likely he or she is to be involved in sexual activity. By involving in sex a person with low self-esteem may feel that one now is worthwhile or loved. Some think it a way to be recognized by others.

2.1.1 EFFECTS OF PREMARITAL SEX:

Here are some of the reasons as to why having premarital sexual involvement is harmful and can ruin the life of our youth if not checked up soon. Premarital sex lowers human self-worth by making them feel guilty or ashamed. It is a real challenge to the youth. If it were good as the youth perceive it, why feel guilty and shameful? The phenomenon creates a greater susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including the dreadful Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) which up to now has no cure and has affected our families, societies, countries and the world as a whole.

Premarital sex can bring about unwanted pregnancies which may lead to abortion with all its effects: psychological, physical and spiritual. Unwanted pregnancies can cause a girl to drop out of the school which could ruin the future of the youth the rest of her life. It reinforces self-centredness, strengthens the sensual focus and pulls us a way from our loving focus on our God and neighbour.

Premarital sex increases the need for greater stimulation in sexual contact which in turn increases the potential for conflict in marriage. A person who gets involved in

premarital sex risks his life because the chances are very high to get addicted. It is said that couples who have had premarital sex have a greater chance of marital dissatisfaction and divorce and for such danger, the youth need to be informed so as to avoid such kind of marriages.

The above effects of premarital sex are real and there is a serious need to address them to the youth so that they may not take sex for granted but get to know the dangers of premarital sex. I hope to give suggestions and solutions on what could be done in chapter three of this essay.

2.2.0 UNEMPLOYMENT

When talking and interviewing the youth of St. Michael's Parish, the problem of unemployment came out strongly. Before I discuss this problem, its causes and effects on the youth, I would like to define unemployment. It is not easy to define unemployment but I would define it as a state of joblessness: "it also refers to the number of people without paid job"⁵ Our youth at St. Michael's Parish are not spared this problem as it is a country-wide problem. The economic survey of 1994 indicates that 48% of Kenyan population were unemployed and 27% were underemployed⁶ The youth also cannot escape this problem either.

2.2.1 CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

There are many factors which cause unemployment and these could be both human and natural.

⁵ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

⁶ East Africa Standard, May 1st, 1996. p7

The attitude the youth have about work or job normally is not positive. Some see themselves as if they are not ready to work because their parents have some kind of property and they take this to be theirs. Some youth feel that they are not ready to take up responsibility and some believe in getting well paying jobs right after school which is not possible.

Human weakness: This happens through government policies and methods of management. The government ought to spread economic activities country-wide but unfortunately you find the economic activities or development activities are limited to towns or cities. We can take an example of industries. Most of them are concentrated in urban areas leaving other parts of the country undeveloped.

Education: Many students join colleges, higher institutions of learning and universities. After graduating, they compete for non-existing jobs or, if at all, a few existing jobs. This is so because they have been trained for white-collar jobs. The system of education does not prepare students to be job-makers but rather job-seekers and the puzzle remains, where are the jobs?

Misplacement of resources: Instead of investing in productive sectors like agriculture and manufacturing industries, you find the great investment goes into the non-productive sector like the army or security in general. The productive sectors can create opportunities for expansion of jobs whereas non-productive sector only consumes and no jobs to be created.

Corruption: When we listen to the radios or news on the TV or read newspapers we often hear of corruption and embezzlement of public funds. The money which is

supposed to be invested in development projects so that it can provide employment opportunities ends up in the wrong channels.

Computerization: Now that we are in the age of computers which is good in itself because the work can be easily done and at low costs but on the other hand it has come to be another fact of unemployment. With the introduction of computers, many people have been laid off or are being reduced. A computerized job may need only five people instead of employing fifteen who would do the work manually and earn a living.

Rural-urban migration: “The effects of migration to urban centres are difficult to discern”⁷ Most of urban centres have not sustained productive economic structures over the long period and yet still people continue to flock to urban centres in search of better jobs, education, health services and better standards of living. Colonial rule and independence led to the establishment of relatively permanent locations for administrative infrastructure and public sector employment. These have not been complemented by greatly expanded manufacturing and commercial activities in most urban centres. Indeed the modern sector has been heavily dominated by public employment. Formal employment is scarce and has resulted in a perpetual increase in number of people who are employed or underemployed flocking to urban areas. The truth is that such urban centres cannot provide employment because the number of people seeking for jobs is extremely high compared to the few jobs that might be available.

⁷ Obudho R.A, Environment and Development in Kenya, (Nairobi, Kenya national of science 1999) p33

what

Shortage of land: This factor exists and is aggravated by overcrowding and land grabbing by those people in power. This forces the powerless to move to towns in search of jobs on which to survive. The young people have no land and it is like a dream to acquire it. If land were available, it would keep the young people busy, for example, working in farm or cultivating some crops for income. But now that it is not there, the youth end up in the towns and cities looking for jobs which are not there either.

Foreign policies: Some of the factors which create unemployment are beyond government control. International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) impose some difficult policies on the government and as a result the loan or grant ends up in the non productive sector or in less economic activity hence limiting the creation of employment. Connected with foreign policies, there is a problem of debt servicing which cannot allow the government to invest more in the productive sector, hence the limitation of employment opportunities.

2.2.2 EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment has adverse effects on youth which cannot be doubted at all. “The costs of unemployment are steep. Our society loses income when there are idle resources and the loss of income is borne disproportionately by those who are unemployed”⁸ Unemployed often experience a loss of self-esteem. One feels worthless and has nothing to contribute for the development and the well being of the society. It can result in despair, depression, physical and mental problems.

⁸ Charles P. Lutz, God, Good and the Common Good, (Minneapolis, Augsburg publishing house 1987) p 64

At the human level, unemployment can hinder the development of one's talents, skills, creativity which may lead to low productivity and wastage of human resources. The movement of the people from one place to another in search of jobs (rural-urban migration) can deprive the rural areas of useful and energetic human resources. This also may affect the elderly people. They may find themselves left alone in rural areas and helpless because the young have left in search of jobs in urban areas.

Unemployment can bring dissatisfaction and competition in lives of people. Dissatisfaction is portrayed through violence, strikes and in crimes like theft or robberies and pick-pocketing. People feel that they have to look for livelihood by all means in order to survive.

Unemployment can lead to the creation of informal jobs and projects that can earn the bare minimum for a person to survive. The examples of such informal jobs can be seen on the streets of Nairobi where people are selling sweets, biscuits, cigarettes and other small items. When you just look at the person and the small things she or he is selling, you can easily tell that the person is lacking employment. And to make matters worse, those people are being harassed by the city council authority. Unemployment problem automatically leads to poverty with all its associated problems. For example lack of basic needs like housing, food, medical care and security. Malnutrition can be easily seen because someone cannot afford the balanced diet meal and as a result the diseases take advantage so it becomes just a chain of problems.

Unemployment problem leads to the exploitation of labour because there are many competing for few jobs. The employers take advantage of this situation. They end up lowering the wages and the poor people have nothing to do but only to work for the

whole day, in terrible conditions and only to realize little wages from their sweat. Unemployment problem is real among the youth and it needs to be addressed and tackled. I stated the causes and the effects on our youth in chapter two. In chapter three, I intend to give some suggestions and also to look at the position of the Church.

2.3.0 MASS MEDIA

Mass media, means “the main means of communication with large number of people especially by television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the like.”⁹ Media are very important in our present age. Media have influenced and controlled us in many ways. We get all sorts of information and nothing can happen in the world without being broadcasted within a matter of hours or if not exaggerated after a few minutes. Our world has become a global village because of the influence of media. The terrorist action which destroyed the World Trade Centre in America was just broadcasted after a few minutes and just after some hours the news had reached all over the world with pictures shown live. We should not forget that mass media could influence youth or our society either positively or negatively. It is true that the media have taken this trend and our youth of Saint Michael’s Parish stressed very much the impact of mass media especially on the negative side of it. Mass media have greatly changed our society and our world at large as far as communication, entertainment, education and information are concerned. The youth are open to learn for example the new values as presented by media and some youth can develop their talents and skills especially when they watch the games on the TV like football, basketball, volleyball and others. Mass media in themselves are not bad if well controlled and utilized on the positive side but the concern is not the positive part

⁹From the Advanced Learner’s Dictionary

of the media but to look at the negative effects media have on the our youth, especially of St. Michael's Parish here in Nairobi.

The youth are a vulnerable group and can easily be influenced by the media. They need to be helped to realize the dangerous side of mass media. The young people can easily be convinced by what they hear and see and the media are good at that.

When a company wants to sell its product, the easiest way is to advertise. As for advertising, "there is nothing intrinsically good or intrinsically evil about it. It is a tool, an instrument, it can be used well and it can be used badly."¹⁰ An advertisement is simply a public notice meant to convey information and invites some response. It has two purposes; to invite and to persuade. The media are advanced and can easily catch the attention of the viewers and audience by using different ways and one of them is through advertisement by music, violent scenes, sex and other immoral scenes which are unbelievable. Such advertisement create images and impressions in the mind of the viewers and especially our youth. Sometimes you ask yourself that what is the connection between the commodity being advertised and the beautiful woman who is naked and sexy! Such an advertisement falls on our youth, and as time goes on, the effects of it start to be manifested among the youth. The youth are corrupted with such ideas and scenes and they end up acting them out without giving any reflection or thought of what they are doing and where such actions are leading them.

¹⁰ Pontifical council for social communication, Ethics in advertising, (Nairobi, Kolbe press, 1997) p. 11

The media can mislead, misguide, exploit and manipulate the people. The delicate group which can easily fall a victim is the youth. Media if not checked can ruin the lives of the young people for they try to copy what is being advertised or what they see in dirty movies. TV, video, or movies can be very addictive and if not addressed, the youth may find themselves in front of the TV or watching a movie all the time hence creating an imbalance in other activities like studies and other home responsibilities.

It is really surprising when you walk in the cinema or video hall, the great number of people you meet is the youth and some of them are very young and could be at the age of seven. Another most surprising thing besides the youth being the majority is the type of movies they watch! Some of these movies are full of violence, wars, shooting, killing, raping and some are blue-movies (pornographic ones). You cannot imagine a young person, watching a movie that portrays sex, from its beginning up to the end: The question is that what impact do such movies have on our youth who seem to be excited in watching such movies? We know that the young people are good at copying and imitating so they end up acting these scenes out.

When you listen to the radio, sometimes there is funny advertisements like when they are advertising a type of condom “protector tastes good” or in case of cigarettes “embassy smooth all the way.” When the youth hear of such advertisement, they are hit by all sorts of imaginations and they are enticed to find out how good does protector taste? Or how smooth embassy is? So our youth end up taking up bad habits like smoking or indulging in premarital sex with all its bad effects.

Pornographic magazines in the past used to be bought by middle-aged men also in a hidden manner but now the media are using them as the way of advertising in order to sell a certain commodity. The youth are exposed to such pornographic pictures and they are very degrading on the side of women. Again the question left behind is that what impression or impact do such magazines give to our youth and what is the image and the dignity of women that are being shown?

People's cultures and cultural values are very important in the society. A people without culture cannot live because culture is a way of living that is accepted in a certain society or among tribes of people. It is evident that media promote the Western culture. If you watch the TV especially a channel like Kenyan Television Network (KTN) you will agree with me that rarely if not at all does it show the cultural programs, what are normally shown are the western programs. It seems not to be exaggerated to say that 90% of the program broadcasted is from the West. The concern would be that of our African values. This raises the question, where are our African cultures and cultural values? Obviously the youth will not hesitate to take the western values as superior in relation to our own values hence the promotion of the western value by the media. The influence of the Western values can easily be seen among the youth in the way they behave, dress, speak, walk as if they were not Africans.

I was talking with one of the parents, the mother of two boys. She said that her sons like watching the television and very violent movies and she was wondering of what these sons will become or turn into! To me it gave an impression that many parents at this time are aware of the problem of mass media and the impact it might have on their

children and yet they don't address it. Like this parent of two boys, why can't she take a step and help the children instead of wondering.

2.3.1 SOME OF THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF MASS MEDIA

I have been talking in general of the influence of mass media on our youth but now I would like to single out some of the effects specifically the media have on our youth.

- Promotion of immorality, for example, premarital sex.
- Corrupting the mind and the conscience of the youth.
- Promotion of violence as copied from the violent movies.
- Murder, stealing and rape may be taken as normal by the youth.
- Loss of our cultural values and the promotion of the Western values.
- Creation of confusion between the needs and luxury because of advertisements.

It is evident that the problem of mass media is real and needs to be addressed to our youth who are going to be the leaders and the future of our society and the world as a whole tomorrow. I will be giving the position of the Church and advance some proposals and suggestions in chapter three.

2.4.0 DRUG ABUSE AMONG THE YOUTH

When interviewing the youth, a question asked was, what are the problems that the youth face in this Parish? And in their responses to the questionnaire, they expressed strongly the problem of drug abuse among them and how it had affected their lives and families. They openly pointed out the causes of this problem. Before I discuss the problem of drug abuse, its causes and effects, I would like to be clear on the term “drug abuse” “which refers to the use of drugs for purposes other than therapeutic ones.”¹¹ In therapeutic use, the drugs have intended effects aimed at relieving certain symptoms while the subject abusing the drugs takes them to experience some effects associated with them and this may lead to dependence on drugs. Boniface Kerichio classifies drugs into three types “ positive drugs, negative drugs and hard drugs.”¹²

Positive drugs are those which are accepted in the society and there are sold in open places like shops chemists, streets, hospitals, dispensaries and other authorized places where drugs are sold. Although these drugs are accepted in the society, care should be taken of administering them otherwise they can easily be abused.

Negative drugs are those which are taken for pleasure or for making somebody feel “great” or “high” or energetic. These drugs are also accepted in the socially but they have side-effects on the user for they affect the central nervous system. Examples of negative drugs include tobacco products containing nicotine and tar products, alcohol like wine, whisky, beer and other types of alcohol. Khat-miraa and mirungi, shoe-gum or glue, petrol oriented products are also in the category of negative drugs.

¹¹ Boniface Kerichio. Drug Abuse in Kenya, (Nairobi, Uzima press 1996) p.11

¹² Ibid

Hard drugs, these include bhang, opium, heroin, mandrax and cocaine. The hard drugs are chemically made to stimulate the use immediately thus making him or her "high." A person can easily be hooked in the habit and becomes a dependent on such drugs and without them he cannot do anything.

A drug in itself is not bad especially the positive drugs if properly utilized according to the doctor's prescription. The positive drugs can treat the patient of his or her medical problem. They can protect the user from diseases, relieve pain and restore the sick person to health. Our concern in this research is not really the use of the positive drug but the drug abuse and the effects it has on the abuser and specifically among the youth of St. Michael's parish.

As I carried out the research on drug abuse, I found out that the common drugs abused by the youth include; tobacco, alcohol, glue, cocaine and bhang. Although other types of drugs may be available to the youth, the above were mentioned by the youth themselves and it seems they are more available. We cannot rule out the availability of other drugs like opium, heroin, mandrax and mirungi. As long as these drugs are available, they can be abused too.

The problem of drug abuse is real and cannot be doubted or denied. Before proceeding with this discussion, let us find out as to why our youth get involved or take drugs? Why do they abuse drugs and why are they the victims and the most vulnerable group?

2.4.1 CAUSES OF DRUG ABUSE

Any deliberate ingestion of drugs for non-medical reasons is wrong and harmful to the individual who takes it and not only him or her alone but to the family, community,

society, the country and the world at large. Some of the reasons as to why our youth get involved in drug abuse are as follows:

2.4.2 CURIOSITY

The youth, as they grow, like to venture in many risky activities for curiosity sake. They want to know a lot of things and are very curious to have all kinds of taste and this kind of curiosity leads them to get involved in immoral behavior as drug abuse. As they are keen to taste when the taste turns out to be good, pleasant, soothing and energizing, the young people can then be hooked in the habit. Young people are good at copying especially when they see the elders taking certain substances like cigarettes, alcohol and the like. They too feel that they should do the same and this curiosity ends up spoiling or introducing them into drug abuse. Some of our youth are enticed by the drug users and when they see them taking such drugs, the youth start to imagine the pleasure such drugs can bring to the taker how “high” the taker feels. In the course of imaginations the youth are tempted to taste.

2.4.3 PEER PRESSURE

One of the needs of human beings is belonging. A person wants to identify with a certain group and feels comfortable once she or he knows that she or he belongs to a certain family, clan, group or class of people. The young, as they grow, search this need of belonging in the peer group. In order to belong to a certain group, there are always requirements which are to be met so the peer ^{group} puts pressure on an individual. Peer pressure can have a positive influence or a negative influence on an individual. The peers

normally have the same interests or something which brings them together. Drug abusers seek approval from their peers and often try to convince others to join them so that they all have something in common. The young who find themselves in such groups are convinced by their friends to try the drugs. Those already in the system come up with some reasons like drugs are tasting nice, they make you feel good or high or if you are shy you will never experience shyness once you take drugs. An individual feels that pressure from the group and in order to identify with them and to have that sense of belonging, the young person surrenders to the requirements of the peers. For the young people, giving in to the demands of the group helps them to have that oneness and acceptance. Some of the youth I talked with said that they were introduced by their closest friends in the group of drug takers and they did not want to hurt them by saying "NO" so they tried the drugs and they entered into the habit.

2.4.4 BOREDOM

It is often said that idleness is a sin and it can lead someone into a sinful situation. When the young are bored because of suffering from having nothing to do, his body can become weak and any slight disease can affect him. The young person will need drugs to get some strength. Taking one type of drug may lead to another. For example a cigarette smoker will resort to bhang, changaa, cocaine and finally to heroin. So boredom can easily lead to drug abuse because the youth feels that he is breaking that boredom by taking some drugs which will give his body energy.

2.4.5 FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Many youth who come from broken families can easily be affected by drug taking syndrome. There is lack of proper guidance and the danger of the so called freedom because they are left on their own to do what they want. Drug taking substitutes for loneliness and preoccupies the young person to cover up the lack of parents. If the youth feels lonely, he can easily be welcomed in the group of his age mates and if they are involved in drug taking, the young person will also take their habits. Single mothers tend to overprotect their children and as a result the child becomes a nuisance or sometimes very disobedient. This kind of situation in the family can lead the young person to do whatever he feels or likes thus leading to drug abuse.

Some parents live together but with no peace at all in the family, no agreement. They are always quarrelling even over what seems to be minor. So with a kind of family, the young people feel that there is no peace and consolation and so they go out to look for peace. In the course of doing so, they may end in the group of drug takers and also get involved.

2.4.6 IGNORANCE

Ignorance is another cause of drug abuse among our youth. The young people start taking drugs as an experiment without knowing that the substance is very dangerous. If the drug provides the effects they are seeking then they continue. Our youth lack information and knowledge of the side effects and for them once it tastes or feels good, why not continue! Most of the young people do not pay attention to effects or ignore the

small effects and then they fall prey to the system and by the time they realize the danger, it is often too late to stop or reverse the damage caused by the drug.

2.4.7 SPIRITUAL HUNGER

A human being to be fully human, he or she needs God in his or her life. When people forget God or throw away God then the spiritual hunger arises. If the word of God does not find place in such person then he may end up substituting this spiritual hunger with drugs. Our youth from families which do not take the word of God seriously, develop spiritual hunger and displace it in taking drugs. Without God, many people go into depression, stress, despair and become hopeless and if not helped they can waste their lives by taking dangerous drugs. The life where God the guide and protector is neglected cannot be lived well. Satan takes over by leading the person in crooked ways like drug abuse.

2.4.8 ENVIRONMENT

The environment in which we live has got a lot of influence on our lives. If a young person is born in a family of alcoholics, he or she is likely to take up drinking. If the environment is that one where drugs are available or there are plenty of drugs, the young people are likely to be involved in taking drugs. The young people are good at observing and doing. Drinking is as normal as anything in those pubs even in the morning hours. The youth cannot hesitate to drink since everybody is doing it and indeed many of our youth have taken up drinking because of such environment in which they find themselves.

2.4.9 SCHOOL INFLUENCE

Kariuki Waihenya wrote a moving article in Daily Nation with the title “Drug abuse rife in schools. Use of bhang, cocaine, alcohol and cigarettes on the increase”¹³ Many of our youth leave their parents’ for studies while they are good and innocent. At school they are exposed to many things not only the knowledge of books but even other habits like alcohol taking, cigarette smoking and other hard drugs like bhang, cocaine, heroin and opium. It true that many youth who join groups involved in drug taking end up doing the same. The paper states that “Some 20% of adolescents aged between 16 and 26, smoke cigarettes according to the new study and another 9% have tried to sniff bhang while 23% drink commercial beer and spirits says the sturdy by Population Communication Africa and Path-Finder International.”¹⁴ You can imagine such situation where our youth are. This is the age of most youth in school and college institutions that have been recently hit by a wave of strikes that have been linked to drug abuse.

2.5.0 EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE

2.5.1 BRAIN DAMAGE

Nearly all the drugs dealt with have a direct action on the brain, an action which is in all its forms mysterious and incomprehensible. The drug taker gets permanent head damage. The person’s brain becomes permanently damaged leading to convulsions, confusion and sometimes madness and such state of life can also lead to suicide.

¹³ Daily Nation, Monday, September, 17th, 2001 p19

¹⁴ Ibid

Drugs affect memory especially substances like alcohol. "Memory may be considered as consisting of three phases; registration, retention and retrieval"¹⁵ Registration is the initial phase during which information enters the nervous system; it comprises of perception, learning and motivation. Retention is the storage period which may or may not be passive. Retrieval is the period in which the information stored in the nervous system is again elicited. "It is said that registration and retrieval are more sensitive than retention. This is true because the person who is intoxicated can still retain information for later recall quite efficiently and in some cases more than the one who is awake."¹⁶ So with the above explanation, there is no doubt that drugs affect human memory and they behave like mad people and as people with no reasoning capacity because of the effects of the drug on our brain.

2.5.2 NOT BEING A PERSON OF PRINCIPLES

The drug addict is reduced by drugs to a "brainless" person with almost no goal, aim or reality in life. The person cannot stick to his principles, he can say this and does the opposite because of the influence of the drugs he has taken. A person also can promise to do things which are incredible when he is under drugs and in the actual sense he has no means to honour his promise. Such situations do happen to our youth who are hooked in drug taking.

¹⁵ Perry Black, Drugs and Brain (Baltimore, the John's Hopkins press, 1969) p.135

¹⁶ Ibid

The person who is involved in taking drugs will have little judgment, resulting in enslavement to the drug circle. The young girl may be pushed into prostitution because of loss of judgement and also as a way to get money to buy more drugs.

2.5.3 POOR HEALTH

Drug abuse is never good for people's health. The effects on health may be irreversible if not helped in time. The drug abuser is affected physically, spiritually, psychologically, emotionally and mentally. Let us take an example of nicotine, it is the most widely used psychoactive agent in our society. "It has been estimated that cigarettes contain between 10 to 30 mg of nicotine depending upon the brand"¹⁷ Like most psychoactive drugs, nicotine is quickly and ubiquitously distributed, rapidly penetrating the brain and all parts of the body fluids.

It exerts powerful effects on the brain, spinal cord, peripheral, nervous system, the heart and various other body structures. Nicotine appears to stimulate the central nervous system at all levels, including the cerebral cortex, producing increased level, of behavioral activity. The stimulation of the brain is followed by a period of depression. So this is a physiological effect that nicotine has on the cigarette smoker.

There is a strong correlation between the incidence of lung cancer and cigarette smoking. The greater the number of cigarettes smoked per day, the higher the mortality rate from cancer of the lung. Other serious lung problems associated with smoking

¹⁷ Robert M. Juliet, A prime of Drug Action, (San Francisco, W.H Freeman and Company, 1975) p.100

include wheezing, chest pain, lung congestion and increased sensitivity to infections of the respiratory tract.

2.5.4 HEART DISEASE

When someone is addicted, the heart and blood system become disorderly. This may lead to sweating, nausea, cold sensations, vomiting, high blood pressure, stress and other drug related diseases.

2.5.5 POOR PERFORMANCE AT SCHOOL

When students get involved in drug abuse, it brings them into the state of restlessness. They will not pay attention in class because of the effects the drugs have on the memory. As they sit in class they cannot concentrate and, as a result, end up performing poorly. This may lead to their expulsion from school because of not meeting the required grades or credits.

Many young people who have abused drugs while studying have ended up being expelled from school because what they do under the influence of drugs cannot be accepted in schools. After taking drugs, the students start fighting, bullying and they can become very rebellious to their teachers reaching even the extent of abusing them or throwing stones at them in case of any disagreement. Such actions of course cannot be accepted in any school so the end result of the students of this kind of behaviour is expulsion.

2.5.6 STEALING

Drugs are very expensive and once someone is hooked on drugs, it is very hard to do without them (that is what we refer to as dependence). Normally the students depend on their parents for the money they use at school. When students get involved in drug taking the little pocket money can be finished quickly. The addicted students have to get money by all means including stealing. There are many cases at school where you hear of the missing property of other students. The drug abuser does not steal at school alone but even at home. The parent's property disappears mysteriously. The whole process does not affect the drug taker alone but other innocent students whose property is stolen. The misery of drug does not stop here but it touches the families of the drug takers and those of the students who lose their property.

CONCLUSION

The four problems discussed above are real and something should be done in order to help our youth. Nobody can deny the problem of premarital sex, unemployment, mass media and drug abuse. At this point I have just discussed the causes and the effects of these problems on the youth. Chapter three deals with the teaching of the Church and other roles played by different people.

CHAPTER III

3.1.0 THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH

Introduction:

Chapter three deals with the teaching of the Catholic Church about the problems of drug abuse, premarital sex, unemployment and mass media. The researcher looked at the possible solutions and suggestions. This chapter also suggests the different roles which can be played by parents, government, neighbour and the youth minister in order to help the youth to be better people. The main question here is, can the situation be contained to save the youth from the problems of premarital sex, unemployment, mass media and drug abuse?

3.1.1 THE TEACHING OF CATHOLIC CHURCH ABOUT SEX

Catholics believe that Christ himself remains always with his Church. He is the one Teacher upon whose Word all depend (Mt 7:29;11:27). In a special way, Christ teaches through the teaching office he has willed to be in the Church and which he has given authority to speak in his name.

The Magisterium has authority, the Pope and the bishops teach in the name and authority of Christ. The Church Magisterium therefore is the instrument by which the Spirit of Christ preserves the Church in his saving truth and prevents her from wandering from this truth.

In proclaiming the norms of sexual behaviour rooted in God's law, the Magisterium teaches that "it is seriously wrong to choose to engage in any sexual activity that is not authentically marital"¹⁸ From the first days of the Church, Pastoral leaders have taught as Scripture had, that those who engage in fornication, gross indecency and sexual irresponsibility will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (Gal 5:19-21). Sexual intercourse according to the teaching of the Church is for married couples. The Church always taught that the union of a man and a woman in marriage is good and holy thing. It is good because the scripture makes it clear that God himself instituted marriage. It is holy because the Lord Jesus made marriage a sacrament of his relation with the Church and a source of grace.

The teaching of the Church expresses a loving concern to preserve the real meaning and goodness of marital love and to foster human dignity in intimate relationships. Pope ^{Paul} John II has articulated these considerations as follows: "The only 'place' in which this self-giving in its truths is made possible is marriage, the covenant of conjugal love, freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God himself, which only in this light manifests its true meaning"¹⁹

"The Church's official Magisterium has condemned premarital coitus as mortal sin. Both the 13th century Ecumenical Council at Lyons under Pope Innocent IV in 1245 and the 15th century Ecumenical Council at Vienne under Clement V condemned premarital intercourse."²⁰ We can ask the question then what is the purpose of our sexuality? Our sexuality allows us to share in the creative and redemptive work of God. "The Christian

¹⁸ Michael J. Taylor, Sex: Thoughts for contemporary Christians, (New York, Doubleday and Company, 1973) p.63

¹⁹ John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio no 11

²⁰ John F. Dedek, Contemporary Sexual Morality, (New York, Sheed and Ward, 1971) p.31

cannot separate the pleasures of sex from its purpose that is to say the begetting of children, the mutual love and integration of husband and wife. The increase of Christ's mystical body, the Church."²¹

For many, sexual intercourse is solely or chiefly a means of pleasure considered as an end in itself. And any attempt to bind it to production is thought to be the imposition of a doctrinaire pattern on a biological urge. Sex in human beings is a means by which God extends his creation through time and space. The Christian must not so emphasize the procreative purpose of sex as to forget that to procreate without love is also a perversion. For a Christian must see his or her sexuality as expression of love for others and for God who has given him or her a sexual nature. Intercourse outside marriage attacks the divine plan, jeopardizes the work of redemption and prostitutes the man or woman involved.

Heterosexual attraction plays a decisive role in dating, courtship and social activities among the unmarried. But mature sexuality as manifested through sexual intercourse is an expression, a culmination of total interpersonal relationship. Sexual activity which is not founded upon a close relationship is exploitation or mere tension reduction. Sexual activity requires genuine commitment. Sexuality by its very nature demands a certain exclusiveness, possessiveness and permanence. These qualities should be present in genuine relationship. The only place such qualities can be found is in marriage.

Having seen the official teaching of the Church about sexual intercourse, the youth should understand that engaging in premarital sex is sinful and it is against the commandment of God. It is only the married person who has a right to sexual intercourse.

²¹ R.F. Travett, The Church and Sex and Christian marriage, (New York, Hawthorn publishers, 1961) p.83

Sexual activities outside marriage such as premarital, extramarital and homosexual intercourse by their very nature are sinful.

The Church clearly teaches that marital intercourse is good and holy when the choice to engage in this act is properly marital. As Vatican II has stated; “married love is uniquely expressed and perfected by the exercise of the acts proper to marriage. Hence the acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honorable; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving. They signify and enrich the spouses in joy and gratitude”²²

3.1.2 THE VIEW OF THE CHURCH ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT

The Church as a body of believers in Christ is concerned for her people: morally, spiritually, politically, socially and economically. She is concerned for the well-being of all the members in all aspects of life. She is to see to it that all the basic needs of human beings are met.

As regards the problem of unemployment, the Church through her ministers: Popes, Bishops and Priests, has always addressed this kind of situation. The man to come out boldly to address such social issue was ^Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical **Rerum Novarum**. ^(year) It claims the rights of the Church to intervene in social issues mainly for the ^Aworth of workers and that their rights cannot be taken by employers. Pope Leo XIII continued to say that there should be a provision for a just wage and better working conditions.

22 Vatican II Documents (Gaudium et spes, no. 49)

To foster a just wage the employers and employees and state are encouraged to create labour unions which represent and protect the rights of employers and employees and ensure that there is equilibrium. Both employer and employee should be happy with earnings and profits.

But it must not be supposed that the Church concentrates her energies on caring for souls as to overlook things which pertain to mortal and earthly life. "As regards the non-owning workers specifically, she desires and strives that they may rise from their most wretched state and enjoy better conditions."²³ The Church tackled the problem of unemployment in this encyclical which was issued in 1891. Pius XI issued his encyclical known as *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931 and also was in line with Leo XIII. *Mater et Magistra*, *Pacem in Terris*, *Gaudium et spes*, *Octogesima adveniens*, *Populorum Progressio*, *Laborem Exercens* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, all these documents are in line with *Rerum Novarum*. They repeat and emphasize the right of a human being to work. These documents address the problem of unemployment. The Magisterium's teaching about unemployment is clear that the rights of workers be observed and a just wage be paid. It is a right of a person to use material goods. The basic needs should be met through the creation of employment.

^{XXII}
Pope John XIII in his encyclical letter *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)* writes that "if we turn our attention to the economic sphere, it clear that man has a right by the natural law not only to an opportunity to work but also to go about his work without coercion."²⁴ Again Pope John ^{XXI}XIII in another encyclical expressed his concern about unemployment and that it needs to be addressed serious. This is what he said

²³ Leo XII, *Rerum Novarum* (On Condition of Workers) p 26
²⁴ Pope John XIII, (*Pacem in Terris*,) p 7

quote can be
documented by
paragraph or section
number, not page
number. 38

“unemployment is an economical issue and it is of great concern as human life and development are concerned.”²⁵ In order for a human person to attain economic development, it is a must that he or she gets employed and earn good wages.

The obligation to provide unemployment benefits, that is to say, the duty to make suitable grants indispensable for the subsistence of unemployed workers and their families, is a duty springing from the fundamental principle of common use of goods or the right to life and subsistence. The word of God’s revelation is profoundly marked by the fundamental truth that human beings, created in the image of God, share by their work in the activity of the Creator and that within the limits of their own human capabilities, human beings continue to develop that activity and perfect as they advance further and further in the discovery of resources and the values contained in the whole creation.

Pope John Paul II shows his concern in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*. He said that the problem of unemployment contradicts the basic right of the human being in regard to work. He regards it as a social evil in society and when it reaches a certain level, can become a social disaster. It is particularly painful when especially it affects young people who after appropriate cultural, technical and professional preparation fail to find work and see their sincere wish to work and their readiness to take their own responsibility for economic and social development of the community sadly frustrated.

And yet through work a person must earn his or her daily bread, continue the advance of science and technology and, above all, to elevate unceasingly the cultural and moral level of the society within which he or she lives.

²⁵ Pope John XIII, *Mater et Magistra*, (May 15th, 1961) p 14

A human being right from the beginning was made to be visible in the universe, image and likeness of God himself, and is placed in it in order to subdue the earth. Therefore, a person is called to work. Work is one of the characteristics that distinguishes us from the rest of the creatures. *Employment?*

The Church considers that it is her task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and help to guide the changes which may cause unemployment.

The Church is convinced that work is a fundamental dimension of a person's existence on earth. She is confirmed in this conviction by considering the whole heritage of many sciences devoted to human beings: history, anthropology, sociology and the like. The source of the Church conviction above all is the revealed Word of God and therefore what is a conviction of the intellect is also a conviction of faith. The Church finds in the very first pages of the book of Genesis the source of her conviction that work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth. (Genesis 1:28,) God blessed the human beings he had created in his own image saying "be fruitful and multiply fill the earth and subdue it." This may not refer to the work directly but indirectly these words indicate work as an activity for human beings to carry out in the world. Indeed they show its deepest essence.

Work and human beings are inseparable, to deny a person work is to deny him his life. A right to work is a fundamental one and therefore unemployment is really an evil which deprives a human person his right to work and to share the fruits of his work. It is difficult to do away with unemployment but still an effort is needed to try.

3.1.3 THE CHURCH'S VIEW ON MEDIA

The Church our mother acknowledges the importance of media in terms of communication and often the Church has used the media to preach the Good news and to communicate other important moral teaching and messages. The Church knows that if media are properly used, they can be of considerable benefit to humankind. They contribute greatly to the enlargement and enrichment of people's minds and the propagation and consolidation of the Kingdom of God. But the Church knows that a person can use the media in ways that are contrary to the Creator's design and damaging to himself. Indeed she grieves with a mother's sorrow at the harm all too often inflicted on society by the misuse.

Many of our Church leaders especially the popes have expressed their concern about mass media. They agree that the influence has been great on our youth. The young people are seduced to do what the media portray and to glorify it yet not everything that is portrayed is good. Pope John II in his message for the 23rd World Communication Day said: " Media could harm the family by propagating and degrading values and models of behaviour by promoting and broadcasting pornography and violent movies."²⁶

Those who are at the receiving end of the media and especially the young should learn moderation and discipline in their use of them. They should aim to understand fully what they see, hear and read. They should discuss them with their teachers and experts in such matters and should learn to reach the correct judgment.

²⁶ Pope John Paul II, The 23rd World communication Day message.

yea?

Vatican Council II has this to say on the side of the parents “parents should remember that it is their duty to see that entertainments and publications which might endanger faith and morals do not enter their houses and that their children are not exposed to them elsewhere”²⁷

3.1.4 THE CHURCH’S TEACHING ABOUT DRUG ABUSE

Our mother Church is not only concerned about spiritual matters alone but the well-being of the person as a whole. Drug abuse destroys an individual, the family and society at large. Therefore the Church regards drug abuse as evil. Archbishop Sheehan of Santa Fe, New Mexico in his pastoral letter on drug abuse says: “ drug abuse is seriously sinful and selling illegal drugs is an evil that deeply harms the entire community and sinful.”²⁸

The Catechism of the Catholic Church number 2291 states: “ 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.”²⁹

Number 2288 states: “ Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good. Concern for the health of its citizens requires that society help in

²⁷ Vatican Council II (Inter Mirifica #2

²⁸ Origins, (November, 15, 2001, vol.31 #23) p.395

²⁹ The Catechism of Catholic Church p.523

*≠ don't quote by page number,
quote by paragraph.*

the attainment of living conditions that allow them to grow and reach maturity: food, clothing, housing, health care, basic education, employment and social assistance.”³⁰

The Church emphasizes the point that life should be respected and that it is very vital to take care of health.

Paola Totaro in his article entitled **Vatican bans all heroin trial** writes “ The Vatican has issued that no catholic organisation should participate in the trial of a legal heroin injecting room, ruling this would involve cooperation with grave evil”³¹ The document implies that Rome also strongly opposes any Catholic involvement in existing harm minimization programs such as needle exchanges. “The good intention and hoped for benefits are not sufficient to outweigh the fact of its constituting an extremely proximate material cooperation in the grave evil of drug abuse and its foreseeable bad side effects”³² the document says.

In her teaching, the Church condemns drug abuse as a sinful act. It endangers the lives of those involved in it and the community as a whole. Anything which inflicts grave damage on human health and life cannot be accepted by the Church so is drug abuse.

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ National, Saturday, September, 23rd 2000

³² Ibid

National what?
Paola is a woman name.

As you have no section 2, you need a section 3.1.5.0

3.1.5.0 THE POSSIBLE SUGGESTIONS AND SOLUTIONS TO THE YOUTH PROBLEMS:

Having seen the position of the Church and her teachings, let us move to see what could be done by the Church, government, parents, youth ministers and the youth themselves. Our concern here is to look at the possible suggestions or proposals which can help to solve the problems that the youth face.

The Church:

The Church can continue to speak against the evils caused by drug abuse, unemployment, mass media and premarital sex in her instructions about morality. This could be done in homilies and sacramental preparation. The Church could also provide professional counseling at the Parish level or outstations so as to respond to the problems endangering the lives of our youth.

The Church could involve the youth in constructive programmes for example, during the holidays, the youth can be involved in Bible sharing as we know the Word of God can help them to give them a sense of direction in their lives. The Church could create different sports grounds and sports activities so that they can be busy with games instead of being idle which could lead them into problems. The Church can educate the youth through seminars, drama and the like about the dangers of the mentioned problems. The Church can also help the youth to form youth clubs so as to participate fully in the

Church and in the society as a whole. The clubs like YCS can help to bring together the youth and discuss matters of importance.

The role of the Government:

The government has particular responsibilities in the fields of mass media, creation of employment opportunities, and the fight against drug abuse. The civil authority has the responsibility in the sphere of mass media because of the common good toward which the media are oriented. The well being of citizens should be the main concern and the government is bound to ensure equitably and vigilantly that public morality and social progress are not gravely endangered through the misuse of mass media. This could be attained by promulgating laws and tirelessly enforcing them.

The government can direct its resources well in such way that they create employment opportunities. This will enable it to solve the problem of unemployment. The government, to create more employment opportunities for its people, should invest in productive sectors as agricultural and manufacturing industries.

Drug abuse could easily be checked by civil authority by setting some tough measures on illegal drug dealers. The government can control drug trafficking and a ban should be imposed on dangerous drugs. Severe punishments could be given to whoever is caught with illegal drugs or substances. Drug education could be introduced in schools as part of the school curriculum by the ministry of education.

As regards premarital sex, the government should introduce sex education and emphasis should be put on the dangers associated with premarital sex. The government

could pass a law that the youth should not go in disco theatres or halls since this could easily lead them to premarital sex.

Parents:

The parents are the first teachers and educators of morality to their children. They should have time to talk, listen and advise their children accordingly. Parents must re-double their efforts to provide for the sound moral formation of children and youth. This includes inculcation of a healthy attitude towards sexuality based on respect for human dignity of every person as a child of God. Some parents are too shy to talk about matters concerning sexuality to their children. Some regard such talk as a taboo, and so they leave the young to discover on their own. This should not be the correct way of handling the youth. Parents need to come out of their shyness and talk to their children on matters of life.

Children and the young people must be taught how to be discriminating, informed consumers of media. Parents with videos and televisions should not leave their children to watch whatever they want but should take interest to monitor what the young are watching. They should try to explain why certain programs are good to watch and not.

Parents should come out boldly and explain to their children the dangers of drug abuse. They should also know what kind of friends their children are associating with, they could be bad group that may lead the children to drug abuse and other bad habits.

The role of a youth Minister:

The youth minister should be a bridge builder between the parents and the youth. He should be close to the youth and the one who can feel free with them, easy to approach. The youth minister can do a lot of organizing for the youth, for example; organize meetings with parents to inform them how the youth are doing and what they need. Besides the meetings with the parents, he could organize meetings with the youth during which some important issues could be discussed.

The youth minister should know the likes and tastes of the youth for example: music, sports and picnics. It is the duty of the youth minister to organize accordingly. The youth minister could also organize seminars with parents during which important topics as sexual abuse, drug abuse, dangers associated with mass media or how to create employment could be discussed. Some parents do not know how to communicate with their young so the minister can help them in this area.

The youth:

The young people should help themselves to stem the tide of pornography and violence in media by responding positively to the initiatives of their parents and educators. They should take responsibility for their own moral decision in the choice of entertainment and other matters of concern like drug abuse and premarital sex.

The youth should keep themselves busy and be helped to develop interest in hobbies such as helping with work at home, gardening, keeping the compound clean. They could be encouraged to be positive about manual work. Let them be active in the Church activities too. Let them participate fully in choirs and taking the readings in the liturgy.

CONCLUSION:

With the help of the teaching of the Church on moral issues and the involvement of different people including the government, the youth problems could be solved. What is really needed is the participation of everybody. To help the youth to come out of these problems needs a combined effort. It is the work of the parents, teachers, government, Church, people of good will and the youth themselves to coordinate and alleviate the situation. As we have seen, the problems of the youth are real but something positive could be realized through coordinated and combined effort.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PROBLEMS FACING THE YOUTH OF SAINT MICHAEL'S PARISH, OTIENDE, NAIROBI.

- 1) Who is the youth according to your understanding?
- 2) What are the problems you know that might be facing the youth in this Parish?
- 3) What could be the problems facing the youth in the family? Do you any family?
- 4) What could be the problems that the youth face in schools/ colleges?
- 5) What are the problems facing the youth as they meet for liturgy?
- 6) Do you know any individuals who have been involved in such problems?
- 7) What do you think could be the causes of these problems?
- 8) What could be the effects of these problems on youth, family and the society?
- 9) What suggestions could you the youth experiencing such problems?
- 10) What suggestions could you give to the parents?
- 11) What is the role of the Church playing in order to solve such problems? Is the Church involved in any way?
- 12) As a youth, have you been involved or caught up in any of these problems?
- 13) What is the role of the youth themselves playing to address these problems?
- 14) Do you think a youth Minister could assist in such situation?