Drug Addiction By HG Bishop Serapion

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Drug Addiction

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Part 1

Drug addiction is considered to be one of the most serious issues which society faces in the modern age, for addiction is the destruction of man and the loss of the most valuable thing that society possesses, namely, youth.Â It is an expression of the frustration and the pain from which the com ffb munity suffers.Â Addiction and crime are two sides of the same coin, and they are a threat to humanity at large. Addiction is a universal problem from which many communities, whether developed or developing, suffer.Â In the past few years, the problem of addiction has become more critical in the community, as the number of addicts has increased, especially among youth in schools, universities, and clubs.Â The taking of serious, or 'heavy', drugs such as heroin has increased.Â As a result there was an increase in the rate of the crimes which the addicts commit after the drug has caused the inability to think properly and their desire to acquire the drug has made them forget all religious and social morals and principles. Addiction is a national problem, the effects of which are not limited to the addict or group of addicts, but rather it effects the society as a whole and requires the society to unite all its efforts to confront it.Â Addiction destroys the addict's life; not only his life on earth, but also his eternal life, for it takes away his freedom and enslaves him to the drug, leading him to commit sins and crimes.Â Therefore, the Church has its role in confronting this problem, both as a spiritual and national responsibility. The facts relating to this problem will firstly be tackled, then a practical model for the role of the Church in confronting it will be given. A 'Drug' can be defined as any raw material or chemical substance containing stimulating or sedative ingredients which, if used for purposes other than the intended medical and/or industrial purposes, may lead to addiction which harms the individual and the community physically, psychologically and socially. The narcotic substance might be analgesic, such as opium and its derivative; hypnotic or stimulating such as amphetamines, tobacco and nicotine; or hallucinatory such as L.S.D.Â Hallucinatory substances might be natural materials extracted from plants, such as opium, which is extracted from the poppy (a small flower). Hallucinatory substances can also be manufactured, such as medical drugs. The danger lies not in the narcotic substance itself, but in its misuse for narcotics can be very useful in medicine, as in the case of morphine injections which are used for relieving pain.Â Therefore the use of narcotics in medicine has very strict rules and regulations that help in avoiding their possible harmful effects. The person who resorts to the use of drugs does so out of curiosity, imitation, and escape from painful reality; a result of being exposed to the influence of evil friends or any other reason.Â It has been observed that some addicts were tricked into addiction by being given drugs as a cure for headaches or through inhaling heroin intentionally injected into a rose.Â Drug dealers often resort to such fraudulent means in order to circulate drugs, especially those which can easily lead to addiction, such as heroin. The motives for addiction might be internal, related to the addict's personality.Â The addict might be deviant due to perversions in his personality, where the causes

are innate. This can be seen in the case of psychopathic or psychological causes which go back to childhood, arising from a lack of stability in the family and the child's feeling of insecurity.Â The motive for addiction might also be: cu ffb riosity, the availability of drugs or incorrect concepts concerning sex, happiness and the power of innovation. The addict is an ill person who needs treatment.Â Addiction makes the addict biologically dependent on the drug; it ruins the addict's character and destroys his relationship with the surrounding community.Â Therefore addicts need medical treatment in order to become rid of their biological dependence on the drug; this is called 'detoxification.'Â The addict also needs psychological and social care so that he may once more become a normal person, both psychologically and socially.Â The addict needs the help of the whole community in order to become cured.Â The most critical and effective factor in the treatment of addicts, however, is the desire of the addict himself to be cured and do away with addiction. We must distinguish between the addict and the criminal who commits crime as a result of addiction.Â The former needs treatment, whereas the latter should not be exempted from punishment because he is an addict.Â Addiction, or the desire to obtain the drug, even if irresistible, is no excuse for crime and does not exempt those who commit crimes from being punished. Addicts might be victims of society, with all its concepts, trends and gangs of drug traders. They also might be victims of the family with its lack of unity, stability and its inability to provide a good role model.Â In many cases, addiction is not the sin of the addict alone, but a social sin for which the family and society are responsible.

Part 2

A.Â Addiction not only destroys the addict physically and emotionally, but also deprives him of his eternal life. 1. The addict loses his true freedom since he becomes a slave to narcotics, nicotine, or alcohol. Our Lord Jesus Christ has granted us true freedom, as St. John wrote, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (Jn 8:36). Saint Paul exhorts us to remain steadfast in the freedom which Christ has bestowed upon us and not be entangled under the yoke of any kind of slavery.Â He said, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Gal 5:1). 2. The addict destroys his body physically by the many health problems resulting from addiction and from the various bodily sins he commits as a result, e.g. adultery. Our Creator has given us our bodies, and in Jesus Christ our bodies became temples of the Holy Spirit. We no longer belong to ourselves, since we have been bought by precious Blood. Therefore, as St. Paul said, we must glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which belong to Him, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor 6:19, 20). 3. Addiction is a compounded sin, since one sin leads to another.Â Addiction leads the addict to wicked and harmful friendships, stealing, fornication, and many other sins. The addict becomes a slave, who has lost all the spiritual values and moral principles. Addiction leads him from one sin to another. B.Â Â Â Religion plays an important role in prevention and treatment of addiction: Addiction finds its victims amongst those who are far from God and not living a spiritual life. Emphasis on the spiritual life of youth protects him or her from the danger of addiction. Besides, the addict needs strong faith in God so he can be able to rid himself of slavery to the drug. He also needs an alert conscience and a fervent spiritual life to prevent him from relapse. The religious dimension in the problem of addiction makes the role of the Church essential out of Her spiritual and pastoral responsibilities. Moreover, since addiction is a major threat to society at large, the Church's role becomes even more important because of Her responsibility towards the society in which She is found. Our Coptic Orthodox Church has a leading and distinguished role in fighting drug addiction. Since 1988, the Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services and the Bishopric of Youth established a joint program called "The Program for a

Better Life".Â This program deals not only with drug addiction, but also with nicotine addiction and alcoholism.Â A brief description of what the Program does will be presented as an example for what the Church in Egypt is doing, and as a model to be used elsewhere. Â "The Program for a Better Life":

This program works in four different areas: 1. Awareness:Â in which the program organizes weekly meetings for servants of teen-agers and college youth, as well as the servants of technicians and laborers.Â Many meetings were held in Cairo and the other dioceses. The program publishes and distributes pamphlets to increase awareness. It also displays slides and video films related to this topic. Â 2. Training:Â in which workshops are held to prepare servants ministering in this field so they can bring awareness to their churches and cities, as well as help the addicts with treatment. 3. Treatment: arranges for detoxification of the addicts in private or public hospitals. 4. Rehabilitation:Â special attention is given to rehabilitation. The addict spends from 7-10 days in detoxification.Â This must be followed by rehabilitation, since the medical treatment does not rid the addict of the emotional effects of the drug on him personally.Â Without rehabilitation, he will relapse and return to using drugs.Â The rehabilitation may last up to 1 1/2 years and may require him to remain in a specialized treatment center.Â This is a lengthy and costly treatment, which needs the expertise of qualified individuals.Â Yet, it is a vital step in the total recovery of addicts. After realizing these facts, "The Program for a Better Life" established a rehabilitation center, in which all four areas needed for treatment are present in one center.Â The program uses group therapy in treatment, in which former recovered addicts help those in rehabilitation.Â Also, the program holds annual parties commemorating the number of years the former addicts have remained completely drug-free.Â This encourages the addicts under 48e going treatment.Â Additionally, there are social activities held by the social club at the center.Â Most importantly, special attention is given to the spiritual life of the addicts during and after rehabilitation. We hope that our Church in America can start a similar program for addicts, in which we can benefit from the available resources in our society.