

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

## JOY IS NOT FROM JOINTS...

Recently, Senator Kamala Harris a Democratic Senator from California who is running for President in 2020, was interviewed on a TV news program. Among other things, Senator Harris admitted that she had smoked marijuana and favored the legalization of that drug. She then made this incredibly irresponsible statement concerning marijuana use: "Listen, I think it gives a lot of people joy and we need more joy."

I have never tried marijuana, but I do remember how in high school some of the kids would smoke it on the bus coming home from school. I have noticed that recently more people are smoking it at parks and beaches and the authorities really don't do too much to stop them. If you ask me, the odor of marijuana is disgusting. I am sure that it does give you some kind of "High" or "Joy" to quote Senator Harris. But why do we need to get our joy from a drug?

Also, there is an important fact to remember in this debate-marijuana is a dangerous drug-in fact a very dangerous one. As most of us are aware, here on Staten Island we have a terrible drug problem. I don't think decriminalizing marijuana use would help alleviate that problem but would increase it. Recently I saw a study out of Colorado about the health effects of marijuana. As you might remember, Colorado is a state where it's legal to use this drug

The study found that weekly use of marijuana by young adults was associated with impaired learning, memory, math and reading achievement even after almost a month since the last use. Adolescents who smoked the drug also were less likely to graduate from college and were found to experience mental disorders like psychosis and schizophrenia later on in life. Marijuana is an addictive drug and its continued use the study explained could lead to cancer and coupled with this a high risk of using other drugs like cocaine and heroin. If all these facts are a definition of what "joy" is then call me a sad sack!

No, legalization of marijuana is a bad choice for our state and our country. Over the years as a priest, I have unfortunately performed funerals for young people who have died from drug overdoses. Most of them were in their teens or twenties with their entire life ahead of them. However, that life was sacrificed on the altar of drug abuse. Who knew how they got addicted? Maybe it started with marijuana and then led to other more powerful drugs. We can't tell but neither can they, because their lips now are stilled in death. What a tragedy!

The fifth commandment is "You shall not kill." Drugs can kill and so the Church condemns the use of marijuana outside of medical use as a sin. The Catechism clearly states that drug use inflicts very grave damage on human health and life.

A group that has spoken here at Saint Charles several times before is "Drug Addicts Anonymous." These young men have related some incredible stories about how their lives were totally messed up by drugs. Through God's grace they survived and overcame addiction. I think that most of them would say that drug use, even if "recreational" would not bring joy at all. Rather it brings unhappiness and ill health both physically and morally!

As Catholics we need to stem the tide of liberal policies that are truly running the souls of our young people and our entire nation. True joy does not come from "joints!"

Sincerely in Christ,  
Father Jerome