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Dear Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters In Christ,

CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST!

I am forwarding the following statement from today's the Archdiocesan Council meeting in Yorkton, SK. Please prayerfully convey this message to the faithful members of your parishes.

The Archdiocesan Council states:

Statement on the Legalization of Cannabis in Canada

We have grave concerns about the legalization of the adult use of Cannabis in Canada, especially due to the lack of information concerning its potentially medicinal or recreational consumption. "Marijuana" was banned in Canada in 1923 and its use or possession has resulted in severe criminal penalties. The period of illegality over the previous one hundred years has coincided with the discovery of all modern scientific advancements. At the point when legal research on Cannabis was halted, the medical technology of the early 20th Century was barely underway, and Jonas Salk did not even invent the Polio vaccine until 1955. The result is that while plants such as corn have been genetically modified over the last several decades to resist drought and improve yields, the potential uses of the cannabis plant have yet to be researched in even a most basic way. Our knowledge and understanding of Cannabis essentially have stagnated since the year it was banned.

From a moral perspective, life used to be much simpler when the Church could point to a sound governmental law and say, "Render unto Cesar..." (Mat. 22:21) or "Obey them that have the rule over you" (Heb. 13:17). Cannabis was illegal, so we said its usage was a sin of civil disobedience. Now that the October 17th date of legalization is just around the corner, the Church has difficulty with affirming the state's wisdom on passing Bill C-45, "The Cannabis Act." We wish to state unequivocally that the abuse of Cannabis to the point of intoxication is a sin and goes against a long-standing tradition of sobriety in our faith.



Nonetheless, there may be actual medical uses of Cannabis derivative products. We wish to be clear in stating that individuals prescribed drugs approved by Health Canada such as Epidiolex (aka Cannabidiol or CBD) by a physician for the treatment of Epilepsy or other medical conditions are in no danger of condemnation by the Church. Over time, more medical uses may become available such as: sleep aids, anti-nausea, anti-anxiety, and pain medication substitutes for opioids, to name but a few. It is at this point of taking over-the-counter or “recreational” Cannabis products that every Orthodox Christian must search his or her conscience and decide whether he or she is following the recommendation of a medical professional or seeking to become metaphorically “drunk with wine” (Eph. 5:18) in order to escape humanity’s pain of disobedience to God (Gen. 3).

This Council’s conclusion and recommendation to pastors, parents, parishes, and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ, is that the abuse of any substance such as alcohol or Cannabis, either recreationally or with a medical prescription, is against the teachings of the Church and should not be permitted. However, adults and children, as permitted by law and under the care of a physician, are free to follow medical advice regarding Cannabis to alleviate medical conditions. Those who are employed by, or are investors in, this industry are asked to carefully investigate the company to ensure its activities are legal. Individual questions regarding the use of Cannabis should be directed toward one’s pastor or Archbishop Irénée with the understanding that the ultimate answer to this and all of life’s questions always come from our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.



+AB IRÉNÉE

Archevêque d’Ottawa et du Canada (ÉOA)

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