



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL
DRUG CONTROL PROGRAMME
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING****

*To Dr GIORGIO GIACOMELLI
Undersecretary-General, Executive Director
United Nations International Drug Control Programme
on the occasion of the International Day against
Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (26 June 1996)*

The International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, established by the United Nations and now its ninth year, provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on one of the most tragic situations which still afflicts society today, causing untold harm, especially to the younger generation; it is also an opportunity to strengthen the resolve to face this problem.

The Holy See is concerned at the ever growing spread of drug abuse and illicit trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances, which public opinion seems at times to accept with widespread indifference and often with the apparent belief that protection from this scourge can be had by marginalizing and abandoning its victims, but without addressing its devastating causes.

A correspondence has to be recognized between the deadly pathology caused by drug abuse and a pathology of the spirit which leads a person to flee from self and to seek illusory pleasures in an escape from reality, to the point that the meaning of personal existence is totally lost. Factors such as the breakdown of the family, tensions in human relations, growing unemployment and subhuman standards of living all contribute to this estrangement. In fact, at the root of these evils is the loss of ethical and spiritual values (cf. John Paul II, *Message to the Representatives of the International Conference on "Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking,"* 4 June 1987)

The Holy See attaches great importance to both preventive and therapeutic medical treatment which seeks to help the victims of drug abuse to rediscover their own dignity as human beings by reactivating the personal resources which have been buried. Equally important is the commitment of individuals, families, society and institutions to the struggle against the despicable illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs.

For this reason the Holy See expresses great appreciation for the aims and activity of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, and strongly encourages the strengthening of international cooperation through well-planned and effective programmes, at the legislative and operational levels.

With these sentiments, I cordially invoke the divine assistance upon all who are working, at times with great sacrifice and personal risk, in the battle against drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs, and for the recovery of the victims.

From the Vatican, 15 June 1996.

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