

MESSAGE of Archbishop Makarios on International Day Against Drugs



Today's International Day Against Drugs is an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which this modern scourge has plagued humanity and especially young people and, at the same time, to realise the urgent need for collective and coordinated action, at all levels, with a view not only to cure the existing problem but, primarily to fight the causes that lead, mainly our youth, to the dead-end paths of addictive substances.

As for the area of treatment, it is well-known that the Holy Archdiocese of Australia has announced the establishment of two drug detoxification centres, in Melbourne and Sydney, for which a major effort is under way to begin their God pleasing mission as quickly as possible. Already in the "Axion Estin" facilities in Melbourne, the "Morning Star – Spiritual, Therapeutic, Addiction Recovery Program" has begun, which provides therapeutic and spiritual support and assistance to those who have gone through detoxification and face the difficult possibility of returning to drugs.

On occasion of today's International Day Against Drug Abuse, His Eminence

Archbishop Makarios of Australia said: "I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who provided their valuable support for this project and especially to Mr Nicholas Andronicus, a great benefactor of the Detoxification Centre that we are setting up in Melbourne as well as Fr Angelo Aliferakis, who has taken responsibility for the corresponding Centre in Sydney. To all those who are taking drugs, I make this request: "Try to see the positive side of life and ask for help from the Church, or from any other relevant body, in order to be freed from this dependency." "THERE IS A RETURN FROM THE ROAD OF DRUGS. YOU CAN BE FREE OF THEM," the Archbishop pointed out emphatically.

Nevertheless, the priority and goal of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia is to concentrate on the prevention of drug use and for all of us to seek to bring closer the day when the above-mentioned organisations, and any corresponding detoxification centres, will have lost their role and their need to be established. All of us, without exception, can make a crucial contribution in this direction. Without overlooking the fact that the causes of this social problem are varied and complex, nonetheless, we must all focus on the institution of the family, which is widely regarded as one of the key factors in protecting young people from the lurking dangers. Archbishop Makarios appeals to parents, teachers, clergy and anyone involved in this domain to work sacrificially to preserve and strengthen the bonds of love and unity, cohesion and peace in families, schools, Youth Centres and in society at large, while at the same time ensuring that children and young people in general are provided with the principles and values of our faith. His Eminence specifically stated, "I assure you that a young person who has discovered the truth in the Lord, is not going to look for false 'paradises'. A young person who directs their steps to church and has Christ as their role model in life, is not going to turn to the deceptive worlds that drugs promise."

Finally, with the opportunity of this day, we must not forget that the duty for all of us, following the requirements of Christian teaching, is to stand by the side of people who are experiencing the devastating effects of drug use. At a time when the tribulation of the coronavirus pandemic requires us to keep our distance from each other, today's International Day challenges us to go beyond, to unreservedly extend our hand to our neighbour who is being tried and to break down the walls of prejudice and social exclusion. Having nothing at all to fear in this particular situation but, on the contrary, each one of us acting as a link in the chain of life that promises a way out of the nightmare of drugs, we must move forward together and united. In this precious chain, we are all needed; today, and every day, and all the days of the year.