



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

201 West Park Avenue, Tallahassee, Florida 32301-7715 * (850) 222-3803 * www.flaccb.org

No on Amendment 3: Recreational Use of Marijuana

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Voting No on Amendment 3 will ensure that the recreational use of marijuana remains illegal for all Floridians.

Prevent Increased Use of and Addiction to Marijuana

Legalizing marijuana makes it more accessible, removes the criminal penalties and stigma attributable to it, and creates the impression that it is safe to use.ⁱ Taken together, these factors ultimately lead to increased use of the drug—by as much as 20% in adults.ⁱⁱ

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people who use marijuana have almost a 10% likelihood of becoming addicted, with that risk increasing in people who use marijuana frequently or start using it during youth or adolescence.ⁱⁱⁱ Marijuana use among young adults is already at an all-time high, with 10% using it daily and almost 50% using it within the last year.^{iv}

Avoid Adverse Health Outcomes

Decades ago, the level of the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, THC, was typically 2-3%. Products today, however, can have THC levels as high as 90%, creating significantly stronger effects on brain function—specifically memory, learning, attention, decision-making, coordination, emotions, and reaction time.^v This negative impact on brain function, in turn, leads to increased motor vehicle accidents, cases resulting in trauma, and use of psychiatric emergency services, emergency rooms, and poison control services.^{vi}

Because the human brain is not fully mature until our mid-to-late 20s, young people are even more susceptible to the adverse effects of marijuana.^{vii} In fact, research has linked the use of marijuana by young adults to psychiatric disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia, especially in young men.^{viii}

Similarly, some women turn to marijuana to reduce severe nausea during pregnancy.^{ix} This, however, increases the risk of stillbirth, premature birth, low birth weight, and impaired development of a baby's brain, including memory, learning skills, and behavior.^x

Adhere to the Church's Teachings

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "The use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offense" (no. 2291).

Furthermore, at an international drug enforcement conference almost 10 years ago, Pope Francis was clear:

Drugs are an evil, and with evil there can be no yielding or compromise...No to every type of drug use. It is as simple as that...But to say this 'no,' one has to say 'yes' to life...love...others...education...[and] greater job opportunities. If we say 'yes' to all these things, there will be no room for illicit drugs, for alcohol abuse, for other forms of addiction.^{xi}

ⁱ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/29/health/recreational-cannabis-frequent-usage-wellness/index.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10176789/>; <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/add.16016>;

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/addiction.html>

^{iv} <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/mental-health/marijuana-use-mental-health-young-adults-weed-rcna84984>

^v <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2023-05-09/legal-pot-is-more-potent-than-ever-but-largely-unregulated#:~:text=Legal%20Pot%3A%20More%20Potent%20Than,have%20failed%20to%20keep%20up;https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/brain-health.html>

^{vi} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10176789/>

^{vii} <https://cannabis.ca.gov/consumers/talking-young-people-about-cannabis/#:~:text=Health%20effects%20of%20cannabis%20on%20young%20people,-Effects%20on%20the&text=The%20brain%20does%20not%20fully,smoking%20cannabis%20harms%20the%20lungs;https://www.nbcnews.com/health/mental-health/marijuana-use-mental-health-young-adults-weed-rcna84984>

^{viii} <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/psychological-medicine/article/association-between-cannabis-use-disorder-and-schizophrenia-stronger-in-young-males-than-in-females/E1F8F0E09C6541CB8529A326C3641A68>

^{ix} <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/10/28/773560069/some-pregnant-women-use-weed-for-morning-sickness-but-fda-cautions-against-it>

^x <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/pregnancy.html>

^{xi} <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/francis-chronicles/pope-s-quotes-no-drug-use>