

**THE ADDICT,
THE CHURCH, AND THE FAMILY**



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Addicts, the Church, and Family

First: the addict.

We usually describe addiction as a "dangerous ghost" that hovers over all societies whether they be modern or backwards, poor or rich.

Addiction is a major disease facing modern society. It viciously destroys both human and national resources depleting wealth and power. As a result, the world fights back with all of its power. The percentage of addicts has increased dramatically especially among teens and youth. Some American high schools have addiction rates of up to 75% not to mention the economic losses, which sometimes exceed an entire country's wealth.

Recent increases in crime can be connected to addiction. Several politicians and high ranking judges have been murdered at the hands of drug dealers. Many addicts turn to crime in order to obtain drug money; slaughter of family members or even strangers may occur.

Despite global efforts to fight addiction, daily improvements in drug availability and potency continue to tantalize potential addicts.

Foremost is the addict himself.

The church and community leaders should be concerned with helping each addict no matter how few or many...**EVEN IF THERE REMAINS ONLY ONE ADDICT IN SOCIETY.**

In other words, the solution to the problem lies not in the amount of addicts or damage caused by addiction but in the self-esteem of the addicted person without regard to situation or age.

THIS IS MY RESPONSIBILITY:

Every leader in society, church, school, or family must realize in his heart his personal obligation by in effect saying, "I am the one responsible!"

Meaning that it is reasonable for me, as a member of society to blame myself first rather than blaming the drug addict.

Why? Because the addict is not really a criminal deserving of cruel punishment or severe retribution, but is instead suffering from a disease caused by society. How?!

1. Addiction serves as an escape from emptiness.

One of the main reasons for addiction is to escape from loneliness or lack of love. Because the human being is made in God's image, he always strives to be like God. This means that he carries the "love" of God, which is real love.

Every human being wants to love and be loved...some men surround themselves by those who entertain or give them company, but can never give them the "self-giving" love of God. Such a person

It is the responsibility of a good leader, whether clergy or layman, to give himself to others. In this manner, addiction will never find a place in the community. If the addict begins to be full of real love, he will not feel the emptiness that once pulled him to addiction.

2. Addiction is the result of inadequacy.

Every time I meet an addict, I feel responsible, as a servant of God, parent, or teacher. This is due to the fact that our incorrect methods of raising the new generation makes our children lose their self-respect. A young child who finds a person with a big heart who speaks to him with love and respect for his thoughts and his world of childhood, creates a spirit of maturity and respect for his life as a human being.

Father Pishoy Kamel was visiting someone and the lady of the house complained in the presence of her child that he was naughty. The father hugged and embraced the child and with his sweet smile told him, "I was a naughty child too!" The child was happy because the father sided with him rather than blaming him. The minute the father left, the boy started playing as usual. When his mother reprimanded him, he told her, "Father Pishoy was naughty just like me!"

What I am trying to make clear is that as leaders, clergy, or parents we should not make our children feel that we come from a different world or nature or that we are somehow better than them since this makes them feel desperately inadequate.

It is reasonable for a leader to act as a friend rather than a proud professor. You should approach children through the world of their childhood and youth through the world of the youthful.

The child accused of naughtiness will obey the clergyman when the clergy is on his side; he will go to him and obey him and in doing so will be encouraged to speak with him.

When God deals with man, he enters into a discussion with him. It was said of the prophet Moses that God spoke to him as a friend (Exodus: 32). In the same manner, we should give the next generation the chance for open discussion.

The new generation goes wayward when we give orders and ask for blind obedience.

A man once visited me who had a son who was a senior in high school. He was angry because his son hit him during a heated argument. The father insisted on kicking the boy out of the house and asked me to mediate their arguments. Afterwards, I visited their home and met the son. Since he was still in a state of rage and aggression, he was unwilling to accept any advice. I told the son, "Your father told me about the fight, but I would like to also hear your side alone."

After hearing the boy's story, I explained to the father that they were both at fault for the argument. The father was angry and disgusted with my opinion. I told the father to "allow me to deal with the situation in my own manner."

seriously studying. Peace has returned to the house." I told him, "Your son told me that my words made him feel confident that someone was on his side. Your son felt guilty and was able to

understand your position. I in turn told your son that I did not want to embarrass him in front of his father, but instead for him to think about the situation in order to realize his error."

Again, I must repeat that a true leader approaches the child through his world, and youth through theirs; not with condescension, but with maturity, wisdom, and esteem for youth. Thus, the new generation accepts their responsibility without the feeling of inadequacy which leads to addiction.

3. Addiction due to violence.

Addiction is often a result of the violence felt from one's international, local, and familial surroundings.

During my time in Canada, I visited a mother who complained that her children used violence amongst themselves. When I asked her why, she replied that "My kids changed while we lived in France due to media and TV violence like police movies...this greatly influenced their lives."

The media often glamorizes violence causing one to feel an inner instability. Thus, people turn to violence, hatred, addiction or combinations of these.

Violence in the family is even more destructive than violence in the media. Violence directed at one's siblings or mother can destroy one's personality since the home's peace and stability are replaced with bitterness and violence.

4. Addiction results from incorrect beliefs.

We are responsible for the addict's addiction since we either were the origin of these wrong ideas or did not find the error in the addict's ideas sooner. For example:

A. The concept of freedom.

We usually confuse the idea of freedom with that of "looseness;" therefore, we think that freedom is to do whatever we want regardless of responsibility or respect for others' needs.

A. Spoiled person feels constrained by responsibility...so he mistakes freedom for "looseness." If he faces any problem, no matter how small, he feels constrained and unable to cope. If he has a lot of problems, he judges them by his own ideas and seeks refuge in his friends who tell him that addiction is happiness and relaxation.

B. We are mistaken in believing that obedience is powerlessness. If your parents, teachers, and church leaders give orders and expect blind obedience, you will tire of being obedient. This road quickly takes one to the "friends" of addiction.

During a meeting with American Coptic families, we discussed the tradition of high school graduation parties, or "proms." Usually girlfriends and boyfriends go together and spend most of the night together. The parents asked, "How do we answer the question of whether our children should

knew that my boy didn't like taking orders, but my heart was against him going.

So, I told him to discuss it with his Sunday school teacher. When the boy went to ask his Sunday school teacher he said, "I can't answer you, but my son can since he went through the same thing last year."

When the two young me discussed it, the teacher's son advised him not to participate in something that was bad for his character. Thus, the young man, with complete freedom, refused to participate in the prom without feeling that he had been blindly obedient. In this manner, the Sunday school teacher gained the young man's trust through free discussion rather than orders.

Our Savior in His obedience to His Father taught us a new concept of obedience; not powerlessness, but love. Obedience did not destroy His equality with the Father but gave Him the joy of equal glory.

A woman once asked my advice about her mischievous kindergarten child. She told me that he did not listen to her advice, so she did not pressure him. Later, while playing with him, her son told her, "I knew that your advice was right, but I didn't take it since **I DON'T WANT TO BE A WEAK PERSON!**" These are the words of a small child who, like his kindergarten classmates has begun to equate obedience with lack of character.

I told the mother, "Make a mistake in front of your child. If he corrects you, follow his suggestion. Afterwards, ask him, 'When I took your advice even though you are my son, does that mean that I am weak?' He will realize that obedience is not weakness or poor character. Orders need not be given by the elder and taken by youth, but instead result from mutual love and open peaceful discussion."

C. Addiction results from the idea that religion is old-fashioned, out-of-date, enslaving, and humiliating. Addicts consider religious regulations to be rigid and unforgiving!

Leaders must show through their words and deeds that religion is:

-a "meeting" with God and the way to happiness.

-an eternal blessing by which the believer can enjoy the love of Our Father, his membership in the Body of Christ, his acceptance of the Holy Spirit, and his soaring from glory to glory until settling in the arms of God.

-to reach the spirit and bypass the hard world.

D. One mars the picture of the church by thinking that it looks down on sinners, especially addicts. I wish that our actions showed St. John the Evangelists' message that the church is a hospital not a court. In this manner, addicts would seek rest from the slavery of addiction in the haven of the church.

Whatever his situation, the addict believes that he is a slave to addiction. Although he may wish to be cured, he always feels helpless since he is like a wounded person who needs to be taken care of not reprimanded. The addict needs to be cured with the Real Loving Spirit.

During the 1960s an old woman visited me and proclaimed, "My soul is lost." I asked her to explain and she answered, "You are the reason!" Although I was shocked, I asked her why, and she answered, "Every time I enter the church, I hear you speak about the horror and bitterness of sin. I am a slave to sin, so what do I do?" I realized my error, and started to speak positively of repentance. I told her, "Jesus Christ is full of love, tenderness, and acceptance for sinners."

When we focus on sin, filth and slavery of addiction, it destroys the soul of the addict. Thus, it is our duty to emulate Our Savior who concentrated more on showing us paradise, sharing the Eternal Glory, and the enjoyment of our new lives. In showing the positive, we send the spirit of hope to those destroyed by weakness.

F. From misconceptions which seep into our life and prepare us for corruption and addiction, "leading a double-life," a person finds that believers are people who live two different lives: one life inside the church or religious society, and the other at work or home. This wrong idea makes one lose respect for life as a whole; therefore, causing people to view the devout as hypocrites who carry a special mask for religious life but wear no mask in their dealings with others. In this manner, a person despises and rejects living in partnership with God; he shuns it and loses his heartfelt belief. This pushes him to addiction and other destructive vices.

G. From misconceptions which spread among the uneducated comes the link of the use of drugs to sexual power. As such, the newly married man may think that he needs drugs in order to have the sexual power of marriage.

[5. Addiction and self-loathing.](#)

Psychological problems have increased in first and third world nations alike. Drugs offer a false refuge from these problems. As a result, the treatment of addiction requires a lot of psychological care. Modern man must face the complex world with a big heart, mature thoughts, and confidence built on reliance in the bosom of God, Lover of mankind.

The ability to open one's eyes and accept Christ's open-armed greeting, as well as to carry Him in this world fighting one's battles and overcoming the world with the spirit of faith will allow us to say, "I have conquered the world!"

In West Covina, California, I met someone who greeted me warmly saying, "Don't you remember me? I am from St. Mark's Church in Sporting." After this he told me, "I will never forget my first meeting with Father Pishoy. My soul was completely destroyed. I told him, 'I want you to give me three hours to hear my sins and prepare me for confession.'" With his usual smile, he sat with me for a few minutes after which I felt the Peace and Love of God. I asked the father for permission to obtain

might."

An overpowering belief in Jesus Christ allows the believer to triumph over adversity without adversity overpowering them; they cross paths with tribulations without swallowing them in the tidal pool of addiction.

6. Peer Pressure.

Many scientists assert that a large percentage of addicts become addicted due to peer pressure. Truly, societal and church leaders are those responsible for this pressure.

When a person in a position of power in the church loses his spirit of friendship built on an open heart, peaceful discussion, and mutual respect, one's view of parents, teachers, clergy as well as leaders spiritual and layman is tainted forever.

Due to his tainted view, the addict fall prey to the pressures of friends whom he vies as his only haven, since he is without a will, the addict allows them to mold him as they please!

7. Addiction and External Pressure.

We can not ignore the role of outside pressure in driving some to addiction. The desire to make profit as with drug dealing, political advantage, as some countries do with other nations; the solution of economical problems as in Latin America where drug cultivation was encouraged in order to boost the Gross National Product after the collapse of coffee prices, all contribute to external pressure. Due to these pressures, we need education of the public regarding the dangers of drugs.

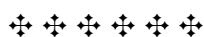
8. Addiction caused by curiosity.

Some people fall into addiction in order to experiment with drugs. As a result, we must acknowledge that those who fall due to curiosity were not educated at a young age. We must present the facts regardless of their nature so that they can receive it from a reliable and trustworthy source rather than seeking information from friends or through experimentation.

9. Addiction and self-confidence.

Low self-esteem and desperation can push one to addiction as way to flee from your inner-feelings. In contrast, cockiness and conceitedness can lead one to the same end. For those who smoker or take pills and feel that they have power over their addiction to use or refuse drugs as they wish, this over-confidence pushes them to use drugs until they are imprisoned by them.

This phenomenon must spur us to educate the new generation to lean on God, sure of their rich blessings, but not helpless or careless in solving their own problems. We should not fear but should be aware of God's care for us, while simultaneously being careful not to fall.



Often we view the addict as a criminal who should be severely punished while in reality he suffers from an illness. Not only should the addict be absolved of all responsibility but we should feel personally responsible for his/her addiction.

Every person, even a child, wants to be a leader, the addict too wants to lead, not for advancement but instead for destruction. An addict's treatment should replace his self-confidence and in doing so show him his true-self as a leader in the society that he lives in.

Addicts to Thought

When we discuss addiction, we think of drugs, alcohol, or smoking etc. but there exists another addiction which controls even some religious people, that of addictive thought. This kind of addiction can exist in many forms.

1. The addiction to an idea: this occurs if someone holds a view and pushes it on others without free discussion. He refuses all those who think differently and carries much hatred, anger, and animosity for those who think differently. This is an addictive idea for which a person becomes enslaved.

2. Addiction to a certain person: this occurs when someone gets infatuated with a special person. It may even reach a state of slavery, a person loses his identity, thoughts, and will to become a slave to another. For example, we often hear of people committing suicide after the death of a famous celebrity, artist or musician.

This kind of addiction also occurs with some religious people. A believer may admire a religious personality, but instead of taking what is good from their leader, they try to imitate every aspect of their idol's personality regardless of whether his beliefs and actions are good or bad. The believer turns his humanity into a mannequin which the other person controls. It is fine to emulate those you admire, but only God can build our souls. We should not treat other people like Gods.

Becoming a Slave to Ritual and Habit

This is a soul-destroying addiction. Loss of freedom to music or other enjoyments can enslave some causing them to forgo their inner peace and self-realization. In the din of the music, the addict finds pleasure, but he loses his soul.

Jesus Christ's crucifixion gave freedom to humanity. "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed (John, 8: 36)." As St. Paul said (Galatians 5:13) "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh."