



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This Election Day, Tuesday, November 3, is a pivotal day in the history of the state of Ohio as people have the opportunity to vote to legalize the statewide sale of marijuana. Recently, my brother bishops throughout Ohio and I have stated publicly our strong opposition to Issue 3; we urged the faithful to vote "NO" on Issue 3.

Recent polls suggest a close vote on Issue 3, thus, I feel compelled to write this message to you directly to emphatically state how detrimental I believe the approval of Issue 3 would be for our communities. I ask your help to share this message and solicit your prayers that those who plan to vote on November 3 fully understand the implications of this issue and reflect on how, as faithful citizens of our communities, the Gospel compels us to respond.

I believe the legalization of recreational marijuana would be harmful to both children and adults. Legalizing marijuana use would send a message to children and young people that drug use is socially and morally acceptable. As people of faith we must speak out against Issue 3 and the damaging effects its passage would have on the children and families in our state.

Already, marijuana use is widespread, especially among teens. A survey by the University of Michigan done in 2008 found that by the 12th grade, 43 percent of the students had tried marijuana, 19 percent had used it in the month preceding the survey, and 5 percent used it daily.

Marijuana has both short-term and long-term health effects. Like alcohol, it can affect concentration and slow down reaction times. That's an especially serious problem for teenage drivers at a time in their lives when they are learning to drive. Local physicians from the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals and MetroHealth say that marijuana use has harmful effects on the brain, especially for teens and young adults.

The Church teaches that the non-therapeutic use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Indeed, the intoxication that marijuana induces impairs our consciousness, makes us less receptive to carrying out God's plan for our lives and lends to conduct unbecoming of a Christian.

For these and many other reasons, I urge a "NO" vote on Issue 3.

As Election Day approaches, I would ask that time be spent in reflection on this issue as we are called to properly form our consciences in preparation for voting. May the Holy Spirit inspire us to do what is right and truly beneficial for all in our communities, especially our youth, who would be most vulnerable.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop Richard Lennon
Catholic Diocese of Cleveland