

Pope Francis condemns the 'evil' of legalizing drugs

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) Pope Francis on Friday (June 20) strongly condemned the legalization of recreational drugs, saying all drug use was “evil” and deserved no type of compromise.

Francis told participants from a drug enforcement conference in Rome that attempts to legalize recreational drugs were “not only highly questionable from a legislative standpoint,” but failed to produce “the desired effects.”

It is not the first time that the pope has spoken out against what he calls the “scourge of drug use”; he met crack cocaine addicts in Rio de Janeiro on his first official visit to Brazil last year.

But it was a particularly strong statement from the pontiff and is likely to add to the debate in the U.S. following the legalization of marijuana for recreational use in Colorado and Washington state in 2012.

Nearly two dozen U.S. states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for medical use; bids to decriminalize marijuana for recreational use are pending in Maryland, California, Oregon, Alaska, Maine, Massachusetts and the District of Columbia, with other states considered likely to follow.

“Let me state this in the clearest terms possible: the problem of drug use is not solved with drugs! Drug addiction is an evil, and with evil there can be no yielding or compromise,” Francis said.

“To think that harm can be reduced by permitting drug addicts to use narcotics in no way resolves the problem. Attempts, however limited, to legalize so-called ‘recreational drugs’ are not only highly questionable from a legislative standpoint, but they fail to produce the desired effects.”

The pope said drug use was fed by a “deplorable” international commerce that put the lives of adolescents and young people in danger. “Faced with this reality, I can only manifest my grief and concern,” he said.

He said “substitute drugs” were a “veiled means” of surrendering, and said there should be no room for illicit drugs, alcohol abuse, or other forms of addiction.