

WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO ADVISE OTHERS

—by St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite—

There are people who make excuses and utter the following cold and indifferent words: “Why should I be concerned with what other people do? ... Why should I advise and correct another person? I am not responsible for him!” Such people must realize that they are obliged by the natural law, the ethical law, the Gospel, and the invisible warfare (which their fellow brothers in Christ are experiencing) to be concerned for others.

Let us listen to the divine St. John Chrysostom who reproves such people with his golden and sweet words. He says that no one should speak in this manner because such statements are demonic and characteristic of the callousness of the devil; and Christians have no ties and nothing in common with the devil, whereas they have numerous things in common with their brothers in Christ.

“Do not utter this chilling phrase, ‘What concern is it to me? I have nothing to do with him’ ... for this is a satanic saying. It is diabolical cruelty. It is only with the devil that we have nothing in common, whereas with all human beings we have much in common.”

Furthermore, he advises us to be concerned for the salvation of our brothers because when we look after the salvation of others we simultaneously attend to what is beneficial for us.

“Do not utter that phrase replete with gross insensitivity, ‘What concern is it to me? I have my own affairs to worry about.’ For it is precisely then that you care about your own affairs, when you seek the advantage of your neighbor. This is why St. Paul said, ‘**Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well being**’ (Cor. 10:24).”

Elsewhere, he censures them who make excuses by pointing out that the statement many people make, “It’s none of my business,” was first voiced by Cain who murdered his own brother. He continues to say that such remarks give rise to all the evils, and he poses the following question: If the salvation of your fellow Christian is of no concern to you, to whom is it a concern? To them who do not believe in God? To the idolaters who rejoice when they see Christians sinning? Or to the devil who struggles to destroy and throw Christians into sin?

“Do not say to me, ‘What do I care? Fear him who first uttered these words. The statement ‘**Am I my brother’s keeper?**’ (Gen. 4:9) expresses the same meaning. This is from where all the evils sprout forth; for we consider the wounds of our body to be something foreign. What are you saying? You do not care about your brother? Who will care about him? The unbeliever, who gloats over him, upbraids him, and insults him? The devil, who impels him to sin and trips him up?”

You should realize, my dear brothers, that if all of us were interested in contributing to the salvation of our fellow brothers, then in a short time evil people would correct their ways, and relatively quickly our cities would become free of evil and sin. This is certainly the case, because if one single person alone possessing a heart filled with godly zeal and filled with love for his fellow man is capable of correcting an entire nation, how much more so can large numbers of Christians—when of course they decide to lay hold of zeal and are determined to implant brotherly love within their souls—correct people who are living in sin? Truly, the sole reason for the perilous plight of contemporary sinful people, the primary cause that has allowed immorality to increase in our days and permitted the devil to reign within present-day society is none other than we ourselves. For when we witness our fellow brothers and Christians sinning openly and carrying out various evils, we do not take the initiative to collectively go to them in an attempt to help them and correct them with brotherly advice and even reproof, if necessary. On the contrary, each one of us comes up with various excuses, we all remain silent, we quietly withdraw to ourselves, and thus we allow others to continue carrying out all the sin they choose and all the evil they desire.

Behold how the gold-tongued St. John Chrysostom precisely confirms these truths: “Therefore, let us not say these things. Rather, let us display proper solicitude for our brethren. I promise with all exactitude, and I guarantee you, that if all of you who are present here resolve to secure the salvation of all who inhabit this city, everything will speedily be restored to good order ... Let us then take an interest in the salvation of our brothers and sisters. One man filled with zeal is sufficient to correct an entire city! Hence, when not one, or two, or three, but such a great multitude is capable of contributing in the correction of them who live carelessly, and yet the majority are perishing and falling, it is from no other cause other than our own laziness—not our weakness. Isn’t it irrational for us to hasten to lend a hand and help raise up an animal that has fallen, yet to neglect and show no concern for our fellow human beings who are perishing?”