

Constructive Criticism (May 26, 1996)

Every individual in the Church community has the right not only to talk about anything, but also to criticize everything. I said "every individual in the Church", not in the religious denomination. You might be considered as orthodox simply because you were born so, but you may not be taking part in the prayers, or you may not be in contact with those who work and teach. You may also be lacking the minimum knowledge that enables him to enjoy the right to criticize. Only the believers who practice their faith, who are present, and who are familiar with the activity of the parish and the diocese, know what they are talking about, unlike others.

Criticism in gatherings, for entertainment purpose, that target the clergy, mainly what they did and said, might be daunting or leading to sadness and despair. This type of criticism is often unfounded and based on slander and defamation. If you were to criticize the behavior of the priest or the bishop, you ought to talk to him or blame him. In fact, we are willing to listen and to accept your arguments, should you have any.

Do not believe everything you hear. Make sure it is right and then talk to those concerned. And let your comments be for prosperity, so that we can advance, if you are talking because you are zealous for the church of God. Refer to the Lord and be calm before voicing your complaints, so that He scents your mouth with the redolence of the Spirit. Then, talk to those concerned both humbly and clearly. The church is not a place for letting off steam; and it cannot be built by the plaintive, the angry, or the one who seeks dispute. Paul called us to "Bear one another's burdens", and he added: "If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness". We shall pay attention and refrain from destroying and defaming each other, for defamation is evil.

The commandment is to cover the trespasses of our brothers. "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." But the commandment also mentions: "Put away from yourselves the evil person." This means that we shall report the misbehavior of the sinful or the dishonest to the spiritual authorities. If you remained silent about those who are destroying the church of Christ, you are a partner in destruction. We must not expose the priest or the authorities in front of people, so as not to cause them to stumble. Our duty is to report the misbehavior to the spiritual authority, in order to repair the situation and to discipline those who must be disciplined.

Inoffensive utterance aims at improvement. And every faulty person is subject to complaints, so as not to be partner in the dark path of faults. "What communion has light with darkness?"