

We are members of the same body

Patristic reading

Each one must try, according to his ability, to be at one with everyone else... Do everything to help each other

Let us help one another since we are members of the same body. Which of us, having a wound in the hand, foot or any other part of the body, would loath it and cut it off, even if it becomes septic? Would we not rather bath it, clean it, put a plaster on it, make the sign of the cross over it, bless it with holy water, pray and ask the saints to pray for us - as Abba Zosimas used to say - and to put it simply, not abandon, or dislike our own member or even the bad smell of it, but instead do everything to heal it. Likewise, we must suffer with others, assist them as much as we can and with the help of others who are stronger than us, think of everything and do everything to help them and each other. "We are individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:5), as the Apostle says. If we are all one body and every one members one of another, "If one member suffers all members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26), what do you think the coenobite brotherhoods are? Do you not understand that they are all one body and each one a member of the other? Those in charge are the head. Those who supervise and correct others are the eyes. Those who do good to others through their instructions are the mouth, those who practise obedience are the ears. The hands are those who work. The feet are the stewards and those who have several duties. Are you the head? Govern. Are you the eyes? Be careful and understand. Are you the mouth? Speak and give help. Are you the ear? Obey. The hand? Work. The foot? Serve. Let each one serve the body according to his ability, and try to help one another whether it is by preaching and putting the word of God into the heart of a brother, consoling him in time of trouble or by giving him a helping hand. In short, as I said, each one must try, according to his ability, to be at one with everyone else, for the more one is united to his neighbour, the more one is united to God.

Dorotheos of Gaza, *Practical Teaching on the Christian Life VI,77*