

There is public announcement on television perhaps we have heard: "Friends don't let friends drive drunk." It means that we have a responsibility for our friends, if we really are their friends.

This goes against the grain of people not wanting to get involved in the lives of others. Many just want to mind our own business. Maybe we just don't like conflict, just wanting to step away because we fear their anger.

Nevertheless, as we Christians have a responsibility to others, no matter how uncomfortable that may be. Jesus incarnate means us! It means this Body of Christ!

+Years ago, I was celebrating someone's wedding and I personally knew one of the bridesmaids, who was a younger sister of the bride. I knew her because she had been active in the youth group while in high school.

I hadn't seen her in a good while, as had gone on to college. I was shocked at how thin she had become and told her sister of my concerns. Her response? "I'm sure we were all thinking it, but no one wanted to admit it."

If we are ready to take that step and decide to do something, our motive or reason to intervene must be based upon love. Paul reminds us that love requires that we should watch out for one another's souls, and love specifies the manner in which our watchful care of one another should be conducted. Love seeks the good of the one who is loved.

+One Day Mother Teresa took a woman off the streets in Calcutta. She had sores infested with bugs. Mother Teresa cleaned and dressed her sores while the woman never stopped shrieking and even using swear words and insults.

Finally, the woman asked Mother Teresa, "Sister, why do you do this? Not everyone behaves like you. Who taught you?" Mother Teresa replied, "My God taught me." The woman said she wanted to know her God. Mother Teresa kissed her on the forehead and said, "You know my God. My God is called love."

Love is our basis.

The Gospel provides us with a model when dealing with conflict. We can call it the Lord's teaching about conflict resolution or conflict management.

This first stage is designed to let the two people concerned solve the issue between them - to put our complaint into words and meet them one on one.

Too often, we keep it inside, keep it bottled up and go into a slow burn. If someone does something wrong to us, we pretend to overlook it but we really don't. It goes deep inside, building up pressure until sooner or later there's a Mt. St Helen's type explosion.

So often, what we do in a conflict is speak to everyone about it except to the person involved. We gossip, slander, complain, engage in detraction rather than confront the person who needs to know.

If someone does wrong, we are to bring it out into the open, state it and face it – no matter how painful this may be. Some call it *tough love*.

+Christian businessman and author John D. Beckett shared the following personal story about the redemptive power of speaking the truth in love:

He was in a dental chair being prepped for the replacement of a filling. Just as his mouth was filled with dental hardware so he could only mumble, the dental technician said, out of the blue, "You're Mr. Beckett, aren't you?" He grunted assent.

"Well, I don't know if you remember or not, but you fired my husband." Beckett began to perspire. He was stuck. He couldn't move. He couldn't speak. He could only listen to the ensuing monologue. "It happened ten years ago," she said. "A few days after your company hired my husband, he was notified he had failed a drug test. You then called him into your office before he left.

You said, 'I realize I don't have any choice but to terminate you, but I want to tell you something. You're at a crossroads. You can keep going the way you are, and the results are very predictable. Or you can take this as a wake-up call. You can decide you're going to turn your life around.'"

He hoped the technician couldn't see the beads of perspiration on his forehead under all the paraphernalia as she continued: "I want you to know, my husband took your advice. Today, he's a good father, a good husband, and he has a fine job. Thank you for firing my husband!"

2-3. Suppose the first step does not resolve the situation and the person refuses to admit wrong, continuing in a behavior bad for him or her as well as for the one he/she has injured. This creates a real danger in cases where a friend uses drugs or drinks excessively, contemplates suicide or abortion, or, as I mentioned earlier, has an eating disorder.

The second and third steps might be defined as negotiations – bringing others along, which may be inclusive of the Church. Nowadays, we call that an “intervention” and the group may also include a qualified third party - counselor, teacher, priest or physician. Or it simply could be a group of concerned friends. Jesus provided the blueprint for “Dr. Phil”.

Finally, if all else fails, we are to treat them like tax collectors or Gentiles. Harsh! Well, the gospels call Jesus a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He also healed many a Gentiles. He reconciled many to the Father.

In such cases, we have done all we can do, but now we entrust them to the Lord. We leave them to God's justice, God's judgment and God's grace, but we never give up on them.

We all have a responsibility to others. And as Christians we have a responsibility to not stand by and watch others destroy themselves and others around them. The greatest harm we can do to people when they face spiritual/physical danger is to do nothing and just look the other way.

We are responsible for one another or we will be complicit in what they do.

Yes, "Friends don't let friends drive drunk."