



## **A weekly reflection by members of the Precious Blood Community**

August 16, 2023

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*If the member refuses to listen to them, Tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:17)*

It has been pointed out by some folks that people can use verses in the Bible to prove anything--affirm any view, back up any strongly held belief, or falsify an opponent's argument. If this is so—and experience says it is—the above statement, attributed to Jesus himself, can be presented as a reason for the Church (that includes us) to exclude or even expel the offender. After all, isn't this what happened back in the time of Jesus? Both Gentiles and/or tax collectors were considered worthless, ignored whenever possible, and treated the way we sometimes treat immigrants and strangers today.

But wait—isn't this behavior antithetical to what Jesus said just a few chapters back when he said during the Sermon on the Mount to *love your enemies* (Matthew 5:44)? And then there is the directive (commandment actually) to *love your neighbor as yourself* (Mark 12:31). According to what Jesus emphasized in the context of his ministry, our "neighbor" is anyone at all, including the one whom we despise, which meant in Jesus's time the Gentile (outsider), the tax collector, the Samaritan, and the leper. Today our neighbor would include the one in the opposite political party, the one we heard disparaging us behind our back, the one who scammed us—in other words, *the one who sinned against us*.

Keeping Jesus's commandment about loving one's neighbor in mind, we now know what to do with the one who has wronged us and who won't work things out with either us alone or together with others present. We are to love that person even as God does. This is what living our Precious Blood spirituality means. It is always about forgiveness, compassion, and restorative justice. By living in this manner, we may be deeply surprised that both ourselves and the other will be transformed, and, in the process, the offense itself will become insignificant.

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This weekly reflection is made available to all who are part of our Precious Blood family. Feel free to share it with others. Would you be willing to write a reflection? If so, please contact Vicky Otto at [votto@pbspiritualityinstitute.org](mailto:votto@pbspiritualityinstitute.org)