



A weekly reflection by members  
of the Precious Blood Community

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**Kaitlin O'Neill**

“The joyful heart sees and reads the world  
with a sense of freedom and graciousness.”

John O'Donohue



Today's first reading brings to light the concerns the early Christian community had about adherence to Mosaic law, specifically regarding circumcision. The questions they ask set the stage for the Council of Jerusalem. Those who were Pharisees before becoming believers had a deep respect for the law they had been given. They heard of Paul and Barnabus' travels, but their rigidity prevented them from fully welcoming Paul and Barnabus with the rest of the Church when they arrived in Jerusalem. The testimony of the Gentiles' conversion and the joy they brought to their brethren was, sadly, not enough for those Pharisees who had become believers. During this time in the early Christian community, there were many questions about belonging.

What made someone a believer? Who was a part of the ingroup? These questions still resound deep in our hearts as Christians today. Like the Pharisees, the fruit of these questions is often a spirit of rigidity. Their rigidity was an impediment to seeing God in the newness and messiness of creating Church. It was a stumbling block to taking part in the joy of the kingdom, and it came at the cost of excluding legitimate heirs to the kingdom. What would it take for us as Church to welcome those who, in light of strict adherence to the law, would be considered outsiders? I do not suggest adopting a posture

of a prideful epistemological uncertainty, but rather extending a posture of openness and receptivity towards people and circumstances we do not yet understand. It is the outsiders after all that Jesus embraced.

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