

LITURGY & LIFE
THE EMMAUS JOURNEY

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

A Catholic Update Companion to the Sunday Readings

FAITH IS PROVEN BY THE LIFE WE LIVE

Hear the call • Change the heart • Live the yes

1: FOR THE HOMILIST/PCL OR OCIA CO-ORD.: CHRIST SPEAKS - WE LISTEN

Sunday Readings

READING	SCRIPTURE
First Reading	Ezekiel 18:25–28
Responsorial Psalm	Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9
Second Reading	Philippians 2:1–11 (or 2:1–5)
Gospel	Matthew 21:28–32

The Heart of This Sunday's Gospel

THE SON WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

A father asks two sons to work in his vineyard. The first refuses, but later changes his mind and goes. The second gives the proper answer—"Yes, sir"—but never acts. Jesus reveals that faith is not proved by correct words alone. The first son offers hope: an earlier refusal does not have to become our final answer. The second offers a warning: religious language without faithful action remains incomplete.

The Liturgical Thread

Ezekiel teaches that a sinner who turns from wrongdoing can live, while past righteousness cannot substitute for present fidelity. Psalm 25 asks God to teach us His paths. Saint Paul presents Christ as the perfect model of humble obedience, emptying Himself and becoming obedient even to death. Jesus then asks which son actually did the father's will.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE READINGS

Conversion is possible → Humility opens the heart → Christ models obedience → Faith becomes action

Listening With the Heart

Listen

Read Matthew 21:28–32 slowly. Notice the difference between what each son says and what each son does.

Reflect

Where have you said no to God but now feel called to reconsider? Where have your words said yes while your actions have said no?

Pray

Speak honestly to God about resistance, delayed obedience, and unfulfilled promises. Ask for the grace to act upon the truth you profess.

Rest

Remain quietly before Christ, whose humility and obedience reveal the path of discipleship. Rest in the hope that your past refusal need not be your final answer.

Carry This Word

MATTHEW 21:29

“Afterwards he changed his mind and went.”

2: FOR THE CATECHIST: THE CHURCH TEACHES - WE LEARN

Catechetical Focus

CONVERSION AND THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

Conversion is a grace-filled reorientation of mind, heart, and life. It includes recognizing truth, turning from sin, trusting God's mercy, choosing a new direction, and putting that choice into action. Christian obedience is not passive compliance; it is the free entrusting of oneself to God, modeled perfectly by Jesus Christ.

Catholic Update Resources

PRIMARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

C1610A | Be Converted Anew—and Go Evangelize

This Update presents conversion as an ongoing dimension of Christian life rather than a single event. Like the first son, every disciple can reconsider a former refusal, turn toward God, and live differently. A genuinely changed life then becomes a credible witness to the Gospel.

SECONDARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

C0206A | Seven Disciplines of Successful Catholics

This Update helps translate interior conversion into stable Christian practice. Prayer, sacramental life, Scripture, service, stewardship, examination of conscience, and faithful participation in the Church help a spoken yes become a lived yes. These practices do not earn grace; they form a disciple who responds consistently to grace.

The Catechist's Companion

Key Teaching

Conversion becomes authentic when a changed heart produces a changed life.

Session Aim

Help participants recognize that conversion is ongoing and that authentic discipleship requires more than correct religious words. Faith must become visible through choices, habits, service, and obedience to God.

Formation Objectives

- Explain the difference between regret and conversion.

- Describe Jesus as the model of humble obedience.
- Recognize that a person's past does not prevent a faithful response today.
- Distinguish religious appearance from lived discipleship.
- Name one concrete action through which to do the Father's will.

Integrating This Week's Catholic Updates

C1610A establishes the interior movement: conversion changes the direction of the heart. C0206A establishes the outward expression: Christian disciplines give that new direction a stable form. Conversion without action can become sentimentality; discipline without conversion can become empty performance. Authentic discipleship requires both.

Expand the Conversation

- Why does Jesus praise the first son's action without approving his original refusal?
- Why can people who know the correct religious language still resist God?
- What practices help move a person from good intentions to faithful action?
- How does Christ's humility in Philippians shape Christian obedience?

Common Misunderstandings

- The Gospel does not teach that words are unimportant; it warns against words separated from action.
- The first son is not praised for rebellion but for refusing to remain in rebellion.
- Conversion is not only an initial event; Christ continually calls Christians to deeper conversion.
- Good actions do not save us apart from grace; they are the fruit of grace received and cooperated with.
- A sinful past does not permanently disqualify a person from responding to God.

Church References

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1427–1431; 1435; 1814–1816; 2087; 2822–2827. Scripture connections: Psalm 51:10–14; Matthew 7:21–27; Luke 15:11–32; Luke 19:1–10; John 14:15; James 1:22–25; James 2:14–18; 1 John 3:18.

OCIA Connection

OCIA participants may have previously rejected the Church, postponed faith, or spoken positively about God without making concrete changes. The first son shows that an earlier no does not prevent a present yes. The second warns that enrollment, attendance, or enthusiasm cannot substitute for conversion. OCIA is not simply a course to complete; it is a process of becoming responsive to Christ.

Catechist's Insight

PASTORAL CARE

Do not divide the group into “good sons” and “bad sons.” Every disciple has resisted and later responded, and every disciple has also made promises without fulfilling them. Invite participants to ask: “Where have I said no but now need to go?” and “Where have I said yes but failed to act?” Preserve the hope of the Gospel: grace can still change the answer.

3: FOR THE CANDIDATE/CATECHUMEN: THE DISCIPLE RESPONDS - WE LIVE

Living the Gospel This Week

- Where have I resisted something God has asked of me?
- Is there an earlier no that Christ is inviting me to reconsider?
- Have I made promises to God that I have not acted upon?
- Does my treatment of others reflect the faith I profess?
- What would obedience look like in one concrete situation this week?
- Do I believe that I—and others—can truly change?

Choosing to Be an Intentional Disciple

WHAT IS CHRIST ASKING OF ME TODAY?

What is one yes I must begin to live rather than merely speak?

The vineyard is entered one faithful step at a time: make the call, offer the apology, return to prayer, keep the promise, serve the person, seek needed help, or end the behavior that contradicts the Gospel.

Holy Habit

THE EVENING EXAMINATION OF RESPONSE

At day's end ask: Where did God invite me today? How did I answer? Did my actions agree with my answer? Where do I need to change my mind tomorrow? Conclude: "Lord Jesus, let my life become the yes that I offer You."

Faith Into Practice

- Complete a responsibility you have repeatedly promised to fulfill.
- Return to a spiritual practice you have abandoned.
- Apologize where your conduct has contradicted your faith.
- Participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Perform an act of service before speaking about service.
- Encourage someone who believes it is too late to change.
- Read Philippians 2:1–11 each morning and imitate one aspect of Christ's humility.

Personal Reflection

Where have my words said yes to God while my life has said no? What action would begin to bring those two answers together?

4: FOR THE SPONSOR: THE CHURCH SENDS - WE WITNESS

Sponsor's Path of Accompaniment

Share Your Faith

Share about a time when you knew the answer God wanted, but it took longer for your life to catch up with your words.

Walk Together

Ask: "Has there been a time when you changed your mind about God, faith, or the Church?" Listen without rushing to correct the struggle.

Pray Together

Read Philippians 2:1–11. Ask Jesus for an honest heart, courage to change, and strength to act upon a faithful yes.

Experience the Church

Participate together in an act of service requiring real commitment rather than observation. Discuss the difference between agreeing that service matters and doing the work.

Continue the Journey

Each person names one concrete, realistic, measurable faith commitment to complete before the next conversation. Speak honestly afterward about the response.

Faith at Home

Create a household practice called "Our Yes This Week." Each person chooses one concrete action through which to respond to God and writes it on a card near the prayer space. At week's end, gather to speak honestly about the response and renew the commitment without turning the exercise into a scorecard.

Parish Life

Choose one stated parish value—welcome, compassion, stewardship, service, family support, or care for the marginalized—and help make it visible through a concrete action. Ask whether the parish's practices reflect the mission it professes.

Go Forth This Week

Do not let yesterday's no become your final answer, and do not let today's yes remain only a word.

Prayer for the Week

Merciful Father, You continue to call me even when I resist Your voice. Thank You for not allowing my past refusals to become my final answer. Give me the humility to recognize where I have been wrong, the courage to change direction, and the perseverance to enter Your vineyard. Forgive me for speaking faithful words without living a faithful life. Give me the attitude of Christ, who emptied Himself, became a servant, and obeyed even to the Cross. May my prayers shape my choices, my beliefs guide

my actions, and my promises become service. When I have said no, help me change and go. When I have said yes, help me follow through. Let my whole life confess: Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen.

Emmaus Insight

Conversion begins when grace turns an honest no into a lived yes.