

Msgr. Marucci - **Conversion** Lesson Plan

First Joint Zoom Session for Catechumens Candidates and Sponsors

**Liturgical-based Catechetical Lesson – September 21, 2026 for the
Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle A**

Matthew 21 28–32 • Ezekiel 18 25–28 • Philippians 2 1–11

Central message

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

Dear Catechists:

To assist you in your presentation(s), I created this guide that I used during the first Catechetical Session. I outlined the session to include the following components for ease of presentation:

5 Minutes: Welcome and Opening Prayer:

5 Minutes: Ask **Candidates/Catechumens** to sign into the Chat and identify a prayer intention.

5 Minutes: Proclaim the Gospel for the **UPCOMING SUNDAY**.

20 Minutes: Presentation on Topic (Conversion & the Obedience of Faith).

5 Minutes: Briefly Summarize the Primary and Secondary Catholic Updates. Create a leading question for Participants to reflect on. I asked them to Identify one thing that stood out on either of the updates, and “WHY” did they think the Lord wanted that to stand out for them.” I could have asked something like....Why did you choose to participate in this Faith Journey at this time in your life, or What do you think Jesus asking of you today? Etc...

8 Minutes: Assign everyone into BreakOut Rooms: (To do this: Place cursor on the “More” or “Break out Rooms” button. (It may located where the function Icons are, or embedded in the More Icon). Click on Break-out Rooms. Assess the number of Participants and assign the number of rooms to be used. The Zoom session is set to automatically assign rooms, and to last for 8 minutes). If they don’t return past 8 or 9 minutes, simply close all rooms by hitting the close rooms button.

5 minutes: When everyone returns to the main room, **encourage two or three people to share what occurred in their room.**

5 minutes: Synthesize your 20 minute Presentation: (What were the main points of your Catechetical lesson.

2 Minutes: Give them a question to reflect on during the week. Encourage the PCL to have their Sponsor contact their Candidate/Catechumen. End with the Closing Prayer (found on your catechists handout).

Session Purpose and Outcomes (I created this to focus my presentation)

This first joint session introduces **conversion as the continuing work of God's grace, not as a test of who has already "arrived."** By the end of the gathering, participants should be able to:

- describe **conversion as a grace filled turning of mind, heart, and life toward God;**
- **distinguish regret, good intentions, and religious words from conversion that bears fruit;**
- recognize **Jesus Christ as the model and source of the obedience of faith;**
- **explain why conversion naturally leads to witness and evangelization;**
- **name one concrete action** through which they will live their yes to God this week.

Facilitator Preparation

- The **Handouts for the Catechists, Sponsors, and Homilist** should have been distributed by Catechetical leaders to the respective parties **last Friday.**
- The **Primary Catholic Update** should also have been distributed to all Candidates/Catechumens **last Friday** for them to read over the weekend.
- I have enabled and tested the **breakout rooms, screen sharing, chat, and the reactions or polling features.**
- I have prepared **Zoom to group individuals randomly rather than cluster them according to their respective parishes.**
- Power Point Handouts are optional (I chose NOT to use them for a 20 Minute presentation).
- Reinforce the Gospel (**Matthew 21:28-32**) **Liturgical Theme with the Catechetical Topic. Which one really did the Will of God...The one said Yes, and did not go....The one who said No, but went later...OR....In my opinion....One who says Yes....and that acts upon it.**
- I set a visible timer to make the **"Lecture Portion" end at 20 minutes.**
- I required all **participants to sign into the CHAT feature** and to **list a prayer intention** they wish to be remembered during the session and the upcoming week.

One Hour Session at a Glance

Time	Minutes	Activity	Purpose
0:00–0:05	5	Welcome and opening prayer	Create a hospitable, prayerful beginning.
0:05–0:10	5	Introductions and Zoom covenant	Learn names and establish safe participation.
0:10–0:15	5	Proclaim Matthew 21:28–32	Let the Word of God frame the theme.
0:15–0:35	20	Presentation on conversion	Give the group a shared Catholic foundation.
0:35–0:40	5	Summarize the Catholic Updates.	Connect ongoing conversion with evangelization.
0:40–0:48	8	participant conversations in Break-Out Rooms	Engage Candidates/Catechumens to share and dialogue
0:48–53	5	Invite 2 or 3 people to share	Group sharing helps others to understand
0:53–58	5	Synthesize your 20 minute lesson	Helps to reinforce the weekly lesson.
0:58–60	2	Provide a Reflection Question for the Week, and offer the Closing Prayer	Carry's the theme throughout the week

Msgr. Marucci's Detailed Facilitation Plan (Turn on Recording)

0:00–0:05 Welcome and Opening Prayer - Welcome everyone by name as they enter.

*"Tonight is our first gathering as catechumens, candidates, some PCL's and sponsors. We come with different histories, different questions, and different experiences of the Church. We share one hope: to hear Christ more clearly and to answer Him more faithfully. **No one here is finished; every one of us is being called to conversion.**"*

Opening Prayer: "Merciful Father, You never stop calling us. Open our minds to Your truth, our hearts to Your mercy, and our lives to Your will. Give us the humility to change, the courage to act, and the charity to accompany one another. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

0:05–0:10 Introductions and Zoom Covenant

Required each Candidate/Catechumen to SIGN into Chat and Identify a prayer intention:

Remind participants of the 4 Zoom Covenant Rules:

- **Speak** from your own **experience**.
- **Listen** to understand, **not to correct**.
- Keep **personal sharing confidential**.
- **Everyone may speak; anyone may pass.**

0:10–0:15 Gospel Proclamation and First Response

Proclaim the Gospel for the **UPCOMING Sunday (Matthew 21:28–32)** slowly. Allow **20 seconds of silence**. **Ask participants to type one word in the chat: "What word or phrase stays with you?"**
Read several responses aloud without commentary. Then offer a summary statement: I chose:

"Jesus is not praising the first son's refusal. He is praising the fact that the refusal was not final. The question is not simply what we once said, but what grace enables us to do now."

0:15–0:35 Twenty Minute Presentation

I have attached my **presentation manuscript** on the next page. The presentation was timed not to exceed 20 minutes to ensure time for small group sharing. **Slides are optional**; the bold, red, and yellow highlights are simply included as it is my personal presentation style, so a text is not read.

0:35–0:40 Primary Catholic Update Discussion – Summarize both Catholic Updates (The Catechists Handout can assist you to summarize the readings)

0:40–48 Primary Catholic Update Discussion- Break into small groups, **and** return to the whole group for two or three insights.

0:48–53 Participant Conversations in Break-out Rooms

Ask a leading discussion question: I selected: **"What is one thing that stood out in the readings for you, and Why do you supposed God wanted that to stand out for you?"**

0:53–58 Group Sharing: Encourage two or three rooms to share.

0:58–1:00 Commitment and Closing Prayer

Provide a reflection question for the week, encourage them to get together with their sponsor, and the PCL to journey with them at the parish level. Close with the prayer at the end of the Catechist's guide....or your own prayer.

Msgr. Marucci: 20-Minute Presentation on **Conversion**

1 The Question Jesus Places Before Us in the Gospel Narrative

The **father** in Jesus' parable asks both sons for the same thing: "Go out and work in the vineyard today." One son refuses but later changes his mind and goes. The other gives the respectful answer but does nothing. **Jesus asks which one did the father's will.** The answer is obvious: the one who went...or is it?

This is **a story about more than changing an opinion.** The **first son** changes **direction**. His later action does not make the original refusal good, **but it proves that the refusal was not final.** The **second son** reminds us that **the right vocabulary can conceal an unchanged life.** We can know prayers, attend sessions, admire the faith, or say that God matters—and still resist what God asks.

The **Gospel** therefore gives us both **hope** and a **warning**. The **hope** is that **no earlier no** has to be our last word. The warning is that **a spoken yes is incomplete until it becomes a lived yes.**

2 What the Church Means by Conversion

In ordinary speech, **conversion** can sound like changing religions or having one dramatic experience. **Catholic faith includes decisive moments, but conversion is larger.** **It is a grace filled reorientation of mind, heart, and life toward God.** The biblical word often translated as repentance, **metanoia**, points to a **deep change of outlook and direction.**

Conversion begins with God. God speaks, calls, reveals, forgives, and gives **grace**. We do not manufacture conversion by willpower. **Yet grace does not erase our freedom;** it **heals** and **strengthens freedom** so that we can respond. **Our response** includes **recognizing truth, turning away from sin, trusting God's mercy, choosing a new direction, and acting on that choice.**

This is why **regret is not yet conversion**. **Regret says**, “I wish that had not happened.” Conversion adds, “By God’s grace, I will turn and walk another way.” **Emotion** may accompany conversion, but emotion is not its measure. **The measure is a changed direction that gradually bears fruit.**

3 Conversion Is Both First and Ongoing

There can be **a foundational turning toward Christ**: the **awakening of faith**, the **decision** to seek Baptism, or a **return to** the sacramental life. **For catechumens**, the **journey toward Baptism** expresses a real **response to** God’s initiative. **For baptized candidates**, formation can **deepen or restore the grace already received**. Sponsors and catechists are not spectators; **the baptized remain in need of conversion throughout life.**

The Catechism teaches that **Christ’s call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians**. Baptism gives new life, but it does not remove every weakness or struggle. **The Christian life therefore includes daily conversion**: prayer, examination of conscience, reconciliation, works of mercy, forgiveness, self denial, and renewed fidelity.

Ongoing conversion does not mean that God’s love is unstable. It means that His faithful love keeps drawing every part of our life into communion with Him.

4 Grace and Human Freedom

Ezekiel tells Israel that a person who turns away from wrongdoing can live. Past failure does not imprison the future. At the same time, past righteousness is not a substitute for present fidelity. **Each day contains a real invitation and a real response.**

Catholic teaching holds grace and freedom together. God always takes the initiative, and we truly cooperate. We cannot save ourselves, but God does not convert us without us. **The first son is**

moved to reconsider, and then he goes. **Conversion includes the moment of truth and the next faithful step.**

This protects us from two errors. One is **pride**: “I changed myself.” The other is **passivity**: “If God wants me to change, He will do it without my response.” **A Catholic answer is: God gives the grace, and grace makes a free, faithful response possible.**

5 Jesus and the Obedience of Faith

Philippians shows us **Jesus Christ** as the perfect model of **obedience**. He does not cling to status; He **empties Himself**, takes the form of a **servant**, and becomes **obedient** even to **death on a cross**. **Christian obedience is therefore not mindless compliance or fear**. It is **the Son’s free, loving entrustment of Himself to the Father**.

The obedience of faith means placing ourselves in the hands of the God who has first loved us. Sometimes we understand before we act. At other times, trust leads us to take a faithful step while understanding continues to grow. Jesus shows that **obedience and love belong together**.

Conversion makes our life more like His: less centered on protecting the self, more willing to **serve**; less concerned with appearing faithful, more willing actually to do the Father’s will.

6 From Interior Change to Visible Fruit

Conversion begins within, but it cannot remain invisible forever. The Gospel does not set words against actions as though words do not matter. Our profession of faith, promises, and prayers matter deeply. Jesus warns against words separated from action.

A changed heart begins to affect choices and habits: how we use time, speak about **others**, handle **money**, **forgive**, **worship**, **serve**, and **keep promises**. These actions do not purchase God’s love. **They are the fruit of grace received and cooperated with.**

We should **not expect instant perfection**. Growth can be **gradual**, and **setbacks** are real. **The sign of conversion is not that struggle disappears; it is that we keep returning to Christ, accept the truth about ourselves, receive mercy, and begin again.**

7 The Sacramental Shape of Conversion

Conversion draws us toward life in Christ's Body, the Church. In Baptism we die and rise with Christ and receive new life. **In Confirmation** the Holy Spirit strengthens us for mature discipleship and witness. **In the Eucharist** Christ nourishes communion with Him and sends us into the world.

The sacraments are not prizes for people who have completed conversion. They are **encounters with Christ who initiates, strengthens, nourishes, heals, and sends us.**

8 Converted Anew and Sent to Evangelize

A genuinely changed life becomes a credible witness.

Evangelization is not merely **winning** an argument or having perfect answers. **It is sharing YOUR STORY of the good news of Jesus** through words and through **a life being changed** by Him.

Ongoing conversion and evangelization belong together. Without conversion, witness can become performance. **Without witness,** conversion can become private and self enclosed. **The disciple receives mercy, begins to live differently, and then helps others encounter the One who makes new life possible.**

9 The Invitation for This Week

Tonight, the question is not "Have I ever said no?" Every disciple has. Nor is it "Have I ever failed to fulfill a yes?" Every disciple has done that too. **The question is: What is Christ asking of me today to be an Intentional Disciple? How is his grace calling me to act differently now?**

Choose one concrete step: return to **prayer**, **apologize**, keep a **neglected promise**, **attend Sunday Eucharist**, seek **Reconciliation** if **you are baptized** and **properly disposed**, serve someone, or end a pattern that contradicts the Gospel.

Discussion on Be Converted Anew and Go Evangelize

The goal is not to test whether participants remember the article. It is to help them connect its central movement—ongoing conversion leading to credible witness—with their own discipleship. Select questions according to time and the group’s readiness.

Fifteen Minute Discussion Process

Time	Process	Facilitator direction
0–2 minutes	Silent recall	Ask everyone to revisit the sentence they marked, or to name one idea from the Update that challenged or encouraged them.
8 minutes	Breakout groups	Groups of three or four discuss two core questions . Ask one person to be ready to share one insight , not anyone’s private story.
9–14 minutes	Whole group harvest	Invite three brief reports . Listen for connections
14–19 minutes	Synthesis	“We are converted anew not only for ourselves. Christ changes us so that His mercy can become visible and shareable.”

Core Questions for Breakout Groups

1. **What idea or sentence in the Catholic Update most encouraged, surprised, or challenged you? Why?**

Facilitator Synthesis: What we learned today...

- **God’s grace initiates conversion, and human freedom truly responds.**
- **A sinful or resistant past does not permanently disqualify** anyone from answering God today.
- **Correct words matter, but faith must become visible in conduct.**
- The **baptized also need continuing conversion**; no group present is spiritually superior to another.
- **Evangelization flows from encounter with Christ** and is expressed in both **word** and **witness**.

Optional Follow Up Between Sessions

Invite each sponsor to check in once during the week using the **Sponsor Handout** as a spiritual guide.

Closing Prayer

Merciful Father, You continue to call us even when we resist Your voice. Thank You for not allowing our past refusals to become our final answer. Give us the humility to recognize where we have been wrong, the courage to change direction, and the perseverance to enter Your vineyard. Forgive us for speaking faithful words without living a faithful life. Give us the mind of Christ, who became a servant and was obedient even to the Cross. May our prayers shape our choices, our beliefs guide our actions, and our promises become service. When we have said no, help us change and go. When we have said yes, help us follow through. Let our whole lives confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen.

References for the Catechist

Sacred Scripture: Ezekiel 18:25–28; Psalm 25; Philippians 2:1–11; Matthew 21:28–32; Luke 15:11–32; Luke 19:1–10; James 1:22–25.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1427–1431 and 1435 on continuing conversion and its expressions; 1814–1816 on faith; 2087 on the moral life flowing from faith; 2822–2827 on doing the Father’s will.

Liturgy and Life chapter: Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A, approved OCIA sections.

Primary Catholic Update: C1610A, “Be Converted Anew—and Go Evangelize.”