

## Cycle A

### Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary # 136

#### Reading I: Ezekiel 18: 25-28

Ezekiel speaks to the people of Israel and encourages them to mature in personal accountability and to assume responsibility for their lives. Speaking for the Lord, Ezekiel calls on the Israelites to a **conversion** of heart, to take responsibility for their own decisions and realize that they have the power and opportunity to change anything bad in their life to good. This same fact will be seen in today's gospel from Saint Matthew. **Conversion** of heart is an on-going process for any of us who would loyally and faithfully follow Christ Jesus.

#### Reading 2: Philippians 2: 1-11

Saint Paul stresses the oneness among believers and pleads for this unity among Christians. In essence we are all called to **conversion** of heart and mind. When Saint Paul speaks against being caught in selfishness and vainglory, we recognize that this calls us to what traditionally has been known as "dying to self." In the process of dying to self we enter into a **conversion** experience which allows something different to grow in union with the other. Notice that **conversion** is a process, which indicates time and patience. It is like a living thing that needs to be nurtured, cared for and attended to daily.

#### Gospel: Matthew 21: 28-32

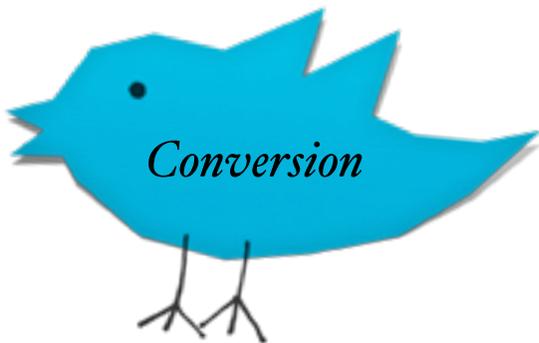
In today's gospel we see a clear illustration of a change of heart of the first son spoken of in the parable. The **conversion** experience is illustrated by the fact that the son, although at first saying no, decides to go and do as he is asked to do. Jesus will continually speak to the fact that there is a primacy of deeds over words. This story is told to send a message to the Pharisees and, for that matter, anyone who does not practice that which they speak. Congruency of words and deeds are essential to living the Christian life. The text of the gospel continues to contrast the second son's change of heart with the priest's failure to respond to the **conversion** of tax collectors and prostitutes.



build. plant. grow.  
*the word this week*



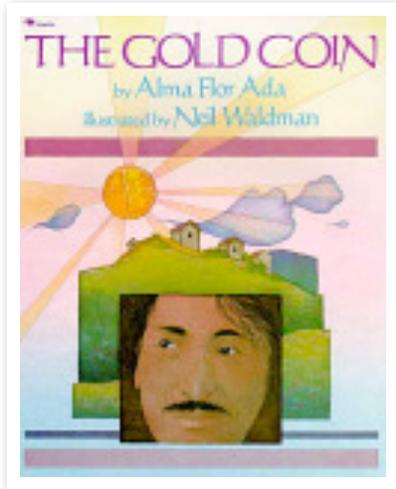
ordinary  
time



lectionary  
reading



children's  
story



### The Gold Coin

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character  
education  
activity

**Conversion means to enter  
into the process of change  
with a thoughtful mind and a  
loving heart.**

## The Gold Coin

This is truly a grand story of a conversion experience. The primary character in the story by the name of Juan has been a thief for many, many years. So many, in fact that Juan cannot remember a time when he was not a thief. When he tries to steal Dons Josefa's gold, something very strange begins to happen to him. His skin becomes tan instead of pale, his body straightens from his bent over posture and his mouth begins to smile instead of having its usual scowl. Juan begins to remember another time in his life, a time that was filled with joy and laughter. Set against a Central American background, this is a story of love, faith and the ability to enter into **conversion**, no matter one's previous history.

### Activity

Step One: Read to the students an account of the **conversion** of Saint Paul. Help them to understand that Saint Paul was not always someone who wanted to assist Jesus in the ministry of the Church but actually was one who persecuted the Church and was really trying to destroy the Church.

Step Two: Help them to understand that **conversion** is something that happens over time and invite them to think of how there was some change in their lives. This might best be accomplished by asking them if they made judgements in the past about someone because of how they looked or dressed. You may wish to model this using a story in your life which would be appropriate to the age of the students.

Step Three: To assist the students in understanding change or **conversion** it might be best illustrated by having the students view pictures of a caterpillar and the stages it goes through to become a butterfly. Stress the importance of knowing that the beauty of the butterfly is contained within but the process of **conversion** and transformation takes time and the appropriate environment for such change to occur.

The Greek word for  
Conversion of heart is  
known as  
**KAIROS.**



case study

Look.  
Feel.  
Know.  
Act.

## What could you do today?

Organize pictures of yourself from the time you were born to the present and place them in a horizontal line on a piece of paper so that you can look at them and see the physical change that has occurred as you have grown in age. You are also growing in wisdom and grace as well but that is not always obvious to us when we look at a progression of pictures. Underneath each of the pictures write an accomplishment or a word that would describe an achievement that occurred at that particular age. Identify a virtue or goodness that also occurred at that particular age.

## Look Feel Know Act

Now that you have done the above exercise and have clear proof that growth occurs in you physically you can know that the same is true for growth in the other areas of your life, such as your spirit. Reflect on all the changes at the various stages of your life and see the growth in those areas and celebrate those things. Ask yourself what other areas you would like to have growth occur. Where else might there be room for **conversion** in your life?

It can be a natural pitfall for people to look at others and determine where they might need a change in their life, but it is most important to look at ourselves and see where we need to change. Commit yourself to being one of those individuals who will honestly strive to be the very best “image of God” that you can be and to know that that quest will always involve **conversion**.

*The Gold Coin* aligns itself with the concept of knowing that **conversion** is a process and thus takes time, reflection and patience. The story illustrates the physical change that occurred in Juan, much like the spiritual change that occurred in the son who did not wish to do the will of his father and yet after some time and reflection made a change. Throughout the scripture passages chosen for today we can see the challenges that are placed before us. However, we must take heart in the fact that God is there for us all along the way to assist us in these changes, for indeed none of us can do any of this on our own.



**closing  
tool**

Pray to the Holy Spirit that dwells within you to help you when you are called to make a change in your life. The Holy Spirit is there to help us use words that are good and helpful, to have thoughts that are kind and loving and to have actions that will follow the path of our kind and loving thoughts. Amen.



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