Everyone who is ordained, after being dressed in the vestments of their office, receives the Book of the Gospels. The priest or deacon approaches the bishop and kneels before him. The bishop places the Book of the Gospels in the hands of the newly ordained and says:

"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, Teach what you believe, and practice what you teach."
I remember very clearly my own ordination. It was a very joyous day with all those I had spent five years in formation with, with my spouse, and with my family, including my parents. It was a deeply spiritual moment when I lay prostrate before the altar during the singing of the litany of the saints. I felt awash with grace. The most sobering moment of the day was when Bishop O'Brien spoke the words above. I love the scriptures and believe in its life-changing message. I also love to share the good news of Jesus Christ, but without a doubt, the most challenging aspect of my Christian life is to practice what I preach.

Call it an occupational hazard, but with the assignment of preaching the Gospel in a public way, sets a high bar for the preacher as a public person. I had always been a very private person, but with the advent of public ministry, this disappeared. I love to be of service, but with it came the feeling that I am now to be held to a greater scrutiny. It made for more than a little discomfort when challenged, as we all are, with temptation. In today's Gospel Jesus challenges his religious authorities when he observes that, "They preach but they do not practice." This scrutiny is not just for religious authorities but also for all the faithful. Every one of us, once we profess our faith, takes on the responsibility to live the faith we profess.

If we are to live out our baptismal call to be evangelists we must not only spread the Good news of Christ but to live what we believe. If we, like the Levites in our first reading from Malachi, falter by not living by the instruction of our faith, we may cause many to falter. We are to be ambassadors of Christ and as such we have a responsibility to live what we believe. It is true, as St. Paul writes, "all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God." Thank God that we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23-24) So it behooves us not to be judgmental of others, but to remain humble about our calling as Christians and gentle and patient with others.

So we are to return often to the Gospel for instruction and inspiration. And remember that all the faithful are called to be heralds of the Gospel. Believe what we read, teach what we believe, and practice what we teach. And when we see others struggling with the yoke of Christ that we respond by sharing in this burden and lightening the load by sharing in the struggle.