

Living Our Faith: Hearing, Acting, and Changing

3rd Sunday before Lent, 16 February 2025

Let me tell you a story about **Rafael**, a quiet but devoted church member in a coastal town. He wasn't the type to lead prayers or speak up in meetings, but he was always present—attending services, listening attentively, and keeping his faith close to his heart.

One night, as a fierce storm battered their town, Rafael heard a loud **crash** outside his home. The sea had risen, and waves were swallowing the streets. People were crying out for help. But no one was moving. The local officials were waiting for orders, the wealthy families had secured their homes, and even the church leaders were still debating what to do next.

Rafael stood by his window, watching, waiting. His heart pounded as he saw an elderly woman struggling against the floodwaters, calling for someone to save her. But no one came. He glanced at the church, its doors tightly shut. He remembered all the sermons about compassion, about faith in action. He clenched his fists and thought, *"If no one is coming... then I must go."*

Grabbing a rope and a flashlight, he ran into the storm. The water was cold and strong, pushing against him, but he pressed forward. One by one, he helped people climb onto safer ground. He knocked on doors, urging others to help—not just watch. Soon, a few young men joined him, then a few more. By the time the storm passed, the church was no longer just a place of worship—it had become a shelter for those in need.

The next morning, however, whispers spread through the town: *"Who told Rafael to do that?" "He should have waited for instructions." "That's not how we do things here."* Instead of being recognized, Rafael was questioned—because he did something different, because he acted instead of waited, because he **lived out his faith rather than just listened**. And yet, in his heart, he felt no regret.

Rafael's story may seem extreme, but in reality, it mirrors what happens in many of our own communities. How often do we see a need, hesitate, and wait for someone else to act? How often do we tell ourselves, *"That's not my role"* or *"That's for the church leaders to decide"*? And when someone does take action for what is right, do we support them, or do we criticize them because they are doing things differently?

Jesus' words today challenge us to examine how we live out our faith. Are we truly following Him, or are we simply maintaining what is comfortable? In **Luke 6:22**, He says, *"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man."* And in **Luke 6:26**, He warns, *"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets."*

These are strong and challenging words. Jesus is telling us that true discipleship is not about maintaining the status quo. It is not about keeping things the way they have always been, simply because we are used to them. **It is about transformation.** It is about transforming ourselves, our church, and our community to be more faithful to God's will.

This is why Jesus calls us not just to personal transformation, but to the renewal of our Church and community as well. Many times, we hold on to ways of doing things simply because they are familiar, not because they are truly what is best. We say, *"This is how we've always done it."* We resist new ideas or approaches, even when they can help more people grow in faith. We focus too much on tradition instead of the possibility of transformation.

Jesus calls us to renewal, urging us to let go of what no longer helps us grow and to embrace what draws us closer to Him. This doesn't mean abandoning the past but being willing to ask if our practices, traditions, and systems still serve the Gospel and bring people to Christ. If not, then we must have the courage to re-examine and renew them, just as Jesus did. Faith is not just about knowing the truth but standing for it and doing what is right, even when it is uncomfortable. It is easy to listen, agree, and walk away unchanged, thinking that someone else will act. But true faith demands our participation in shaping the Church and serving our community.

Faith that is only heard but not lived is like a tree that never bears fruit. Jesus calls us not to be silent believers but active disciples, challenging us to move beyond agreement into action. Are we truly listening, or are we resisting the transformation Christ calls us to? When others step forward to bring change, do we support them or hold on to old ways out of habit? Jesus reminds us that false prophets are praised for telling people what they want to hear, but true prophets—those who stand for justice and renewal—often face rejection. If we seek a stronger church and community, we must embrace what is right, encourage participation in decision-making, and be open to the change God is calling us to make.

The Gospel today reminds us that faith is not just **what we believe**—it is **how we live**. It is not about being comfortable—it is about being faithful. It is not about following old ways blindly—it is about following Christ with open hearts. It is not about just hearing the Word—it is about putting it into action.

So today, I leave you with these questions for reflection: **What areas in your life and in our church need renewal so that we can better reflect Christ's teachings? How can you actively live out your faith instead of just listening to it? Are you willing to step forward, speak up, and take part in shaping the direction of our Church?**

Sisters and brothers, if we desire change, it must begin with us. Christ calls us not to passive faith, but to a faith that is alive and active. May we have the courage to listen, to act, and to lead where Christ is calling us. **The renewal of our church and community is not for tomorrow—it begins with us, here and now. Amen.**