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Saint Bernard Church  
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## WHAT WE EXPECT OF OURSELVES AS CATHOLICS

Lent is a good time for us to reflect on our expectations for being Catholic. So today I'm going to ask each of us, including me, to think about what our goals are for living a Catholic life. Then we can think about how well, or not, we're doing at reaching those goals.

Today's Gospel is a really good one for thinking about our expectations when it comes to our Christian faith.

Jesus says, "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand."

So to examine our expectations when it comes to our faith, we need to know what it means when Jesus says, "The kingdom is here. The kingdom is here now."

The kingdom that Jesus is talking about is a person. It's Jesus. Jesus is the kingdom. Where Jesus is present, the Father and the Holy Spirit are also present. And where they are all present, there are adoring angels.

Since human beings have had a habit of taking their eyes off heaven, God sent heaven to human beings in the person of Jesus Christ.

With Jesus walking this earth, performing miracles and telling human beings how we are to live, what difference does His presence make?

Saint Peter answers this in Chapter 1 of his 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter:

: [Jesus] divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and power. Through these, he bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that **through them you may come to share in the divine nature**, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire."

When Jesus says the kingdom is at hand, Saint Peter is telling us that this means that now, through Jesus, we have everything we need to share in His divine nature, to share the life that He has with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus gave everything He had to the Church. It is through the Church, and especially the sacraments, that we have access to the teachings of Jesus, to His power to heal and to forgive, to the supernatural graces that He wants to give to all of humanity.

This raises a big question for each of us, the biggest question there is in life: “How much of the divine life of Jesus are we experiencing?” How well do we know Him? How much have we shared in His love and His graces?

Let’s look at a couple of specific examples.

Example number 1: Are we listening to God when he speaks to us?

Maybe we’re not sure God does speak to us. But let’s think about this.

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Word of God. God speaks to every one of us through all the various authors of the books of the Bible. To make sure we get the message, He sent His Son to speak words that people could actually hear with their ears. Jesus is God’s Word made flesh. And His words are captured in the Bible.

So we all have this amazing opportunity, unique to followers of Jesus, to immerse ourselves in the process of reading and listening to God communicating to us. To know God, we have to know Jesus, and to know Jesus we have to know the Bible.

Each of us, then, has to ask ourselves, are we taking full advantage of the reality that God is speaking to us? My fear is that we listen to a lot of things that are not nearly as important as what God is saying.

Reading the Bible every day is not like doing 50 pushups. It’s not this heavy burden. When we really get into the Bible, we find out that it greatly enriches our lives. It becomes a manual for how to live. And the Bible is alive, in the sense that there is a sacred power in its words and it can speak to us about something that is going on in our lives at the time we are reading it.

Example number 2: What are we experiencing when we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus?

At every Mass, “the kingdom of God is at hand.” Msgr. Gaalaas, in just a few minutes, will raise up the bread and bring Jesus down from heaven to the altar. Then He will give Jesus to us so that we can be united with Him in the most powerful way possible this side of heaven.

For the Eucharist to have power, we have to believe, we have to expect, that receiving Jesus is going to change our lives. It’s going to enrich our lives by giving us supernatural graces. It will give us the power to overcome our selfishness and to sacrifice ourselves for others.

Receiving this power has to be one of our goals in life. It has to be something, some One really, that we desperately want.

Jesus said on the Cross, “I thirst.” Jesus thirsts for us to love Him, to desire Him, to want the life He wants to share with us more than anything else in this world.

Jesus, though, does not force Himself on us. We can accept, reject or ignore the life He offers us. We accept His offer by surrendering to Him and entrusting ourselves to Him.

Jesus says in John 10:10, “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

This abundant life is richer than we ever could have imagined. God guides us, leading us to do things we never would have done on our own, and experiencing special graces as we do them. He communicates to us all the time. He provides everything we need, including a deep joy that overcomes any disappointment.

I will close with this suggestion. Jesus says in the Book of Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.”

During this Lent, reflect on this theme that Jesus is knocking at your door. He is calling out to you. Have you been listening for His voice? Do you hear Him now? Are you willing to open the door and let Him in?