



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last weekend, we had Tony Brandt and Chris Stewart of "Casting Nets Ministries" come and speak to a group in the parish. Their humor, authenticity and moving stories had us rapt for the hours we spent with them. They were preparing us for the Parish Mission they will be leading here October 17, 18 and 19 (7-8:30pm each evening).

Tony and Chris will be giving three talks this October: *The Gift*, *Change Yourself*, and *Change the World*. Hmm... change the world! That seems like a rather high expectation, doesn't it? Yet, when we look at the history of the Church, that's exactly what God does. Jesus took twelve men – most of whom did not have very much learning or influence – and used them to change the world. The world has been *radically* changed, because of the witness of these men.

So how did it happen? The disciples received *The Gift* of God: Jesus. They encountered Him. They encountered *HIM!* They came to *know* the God of the universe who took on flesh (not just know *about* Him), and in this relationship, they were transformed. They received The Gift, and *He* then changed them. Too often we try to change ourselves and have no success. If we really knew who we are to God – what it really means to be His beloved sons and daughters, what it means that He loves us enough to die for us – that knowledge would open us to all the graces we need to change, to pull us out of our brokenness. If we knew how much we are loved, that love would change us.

This transformative love, this intimate love, this tender love, this passionate love has inspired generations of saints to work to change the world. It was this encounter with love that led the Apostles to go to the ends of the earth proclaiming that God took on flesh (various traditions hold that the Apostles travelled from Spain and Great Britain in the west, to southeastern Africa in the south, and as far as India in the east... not bad for twelve guys who lived before public transportation!). It was this love that inspired St. Benedict to be alone with The Alone. It was this love that called St. Francis to give up everything. If God could inspire them to spend their lives in love of Him, and so transform the world, what can He do with us?

It's interesting to think that some two-thousand years later, God has not changed. He can still inspire humanity by His love. When we look at a St. Teresa of Calcutta or St. John Paul II – two great saints of our times – we know how they inspired us, and how they can continue to inspire. How does God want to use you, me? It takes a "yes" to God, and He can work.

Last week, I asked you to ponder the question Jesus asks,

Who do you say that I am? (Mark 8:29)

Jesus is inviting us to enter into the mystery of who He is. An encounter with Him, allowing ourselves to receive The Gift, will Change Yourself, and give us the courage to let God Change the World through us.

I ask you to mark the Parish Mission on your calendar. Set those days aside for a time of renewal for yourself, your family, our parish, our Church.

Sunday, October 17 7:00-8:30pm

Monday, October 18 7:00-8:30pm

Tuesday, October 19 7:00-8:30pm

Be there, and encounter the living God!