A Father Speaks Up

by Jack Bolton

Trying to Talk about Mitch's suicide in 1977, even 39 years later, still brings many thoughts to mind regarding all of my feelings... then and now. The feelings are so personal, so private, so utterly my own, that the thought of sharing them with another is still difficult today.

Surely nothing in my life has taken so much out of me and at the same time given me so much hope for others. My hope is that through the opportunity of talking about our loss, others may find that they too can proceed to make the journey through the pain and anguish that can be mastered.

I admit that in the aftermath of Mitch's death there were so many questions that it is hard to bring them to the conscious level. One of the many was the "Who's fault is it?", and an anger that could not be easily put aside. There is the dichotomy I faced in trying to bring to terms the different feelings that racked my body and mind. Who could possibly know what I was feeling? No man, no woman, no priest, no counselor... No one knew.

I thought that everyone in the world knew that Mitch shot himself and that this father of his was about to enter a room, call on the telephone, or write a letter. To my surprise, a lot of people did not know, but those that did know, went out of their way to give me the support of love and comfort. My faith would tell me that I should expect help from our church... but I had no concept of the strength, love, and support that waited for me. This came form the church and others around us. It seemed that as soon as I could permit myself to express, to expose, I received the reinforcement to proceed.

Time became the major factor, slowly rebuilding the strengths that I knew I had, to overcome the agony. I found that time moved impossibly slow. When would I feel better, when would it be over? The truth is, that it is never over, but then it is not supposed to be over. The truth is that it will never be, but my growth and gaining strength will make it bearable.

Years have passed since I went back to Mitch's room to find him dying by his own hands. That image is with me today, and yet I find that I can look at that image and be at peace with myself. I know I did not plan, nor want, nor envision, that my son could or would take his life. But it is a fact, and I can live with it today, knowing that I have made it this far.

It was a gift Mitch has given us...a new knowledge of strength. Mitch has renewed our faith in God and the world. This was a faith, this was a love, this was a caring, and this was a friendship that I had taken for granted. NO more! Time is precious. Life is precious. You are precious. Each day is a new revelation of this gift, a gift from Mitch.