



# REFLECTIONS

November 3, 2013

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**He said to him, "Tend My sheep."**

*John 21:16*

## Essence of Caring

A sense of helplessness filled their minds as Mitch and Mark drove to see their dying friend. A phone call urged the brothers to hurry. "He will not live much longer," Kirk's mom pleaded. But what would they say? What *could* they say? His mind racing in anxious thought, Mitch pulled to the side of the road. "Mark, let's just stop and pray."

They paused and prayed for their friend; but mostly they paused to pray for themselves. They may have prayed for their friend to find peace, but for sure they prayed to conquer their helpless feelings.

We have all felt helpless when confronted by irreversible conditions in the lives of those we care for. It is much easier to reach out when there are answers to bring. But when there's nothing to bring!—well, it is easier to simply stay away and rationalize that nothing can be done. But there is. And Mitch and Mark did it. They brought themselves.

Henri Nouwen explains it this way:

*...when we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not-knowing, not-curing, not-healing, and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is the friend who cares...<sup>1</sup>*

Together the brothers entered the room of their dying friend. Silence only added to their helpless feelings; but they knew they had brought all they had to give—themselves. Then, in the silence, Mark began to remember times in his own life that were not so good. And as he immersed himself into the helpless pain during those days, he began to describe the despair he had felt. He told of how he turned to God; and found the healing grace of Jesus Christ.

As Mark completed the story of the peace he found, a tear glistened on Kirk's cheek. He could not speak, but the healing grace of Jesus Christ came across Kirk's face. And his final breath was blessed with peace.

Friends don't bring answers. Friends bring themselves. It is the essence of caring. It is the essence of tending God's sheep.

*"You are the light of the world."*

*Richard* +

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<sup>1</sup> *Out of Solitude* by Henri J.M. Nouwen © 1974, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana

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