

God doesn't cause tragedies

The mystery stories of life are often better than the ghost stories of fiction. This is a mystery story that began as a tragic story.

Most of us are used to stories of automobile accidents. We hear about them and just as quickly forget about them.

The incident that I'm recounting in this column happened about 25 years ago. Some stories, however, are worth telling and retelling.

There was a tragic accident on Belair Road in which a young father was killed and a 3-year-old son seriously injured. The news account stopped there, but the real story only began there.

The wife and young mother, torn with grief over the loss of her husband, devoted her energies to the care of her son. The doctors and nurses attending her child agreed that it was best not to tell her son that his father was dead.

The day after her husband's funeral, the young mother was at her child's side in the hospital. Bravely trying to contain her own grief, she tried to encourage and comfort her son.

After having spent some time together, her son looked up at her and said: "Mommy, Daddy is in heaven."

She had not told him that his father was dead. No one else was supposed to have said anything. Her first reaction was an angry feeling inside, furious that someone had broken the secret.

Trying to control her emotions, she asked: "Who told you that?"

The little boy answered: "Jesus did."

The mother was taken back by his response. They had gone to church as a family. They had said grace at meals and prayers at bedtime, but she hardly considered that they were a religious family. They had had no reason to talk about death to their son.

Trying to overcome her confusion, she then asked: “When did Jesus tell you this?”

“That night in the car”, he replied. “When Daddy and I were in the car waiting, Jesus came into the car. He told me that Daddy had other work to do, and that he was going to take Daddy home with him to heaven. He said not to worry. He said that I would see him again.”

In my book, “When Life Doesn’t Make Sense” (Cathedral Foundation Press), and in innumerable columns, I have expressed my belief that pain and tragedy and death do not come from God. It is not God’s will that people experience sickness or accidents. Rather God is always on our side against the powers of darkness. God is always bringing healing and hope and new life.

But when the forces of evil have done their worst, when they have wrung life from our human form, God stays on our side. God will not let death have the last word. He will restore life to us and preserve us forever in his eternal home, there to be reunited one day with those we have left behind in an earthly home.

It’s hard to explain that to a 3-year-old. It’s a lot easier when a 3-year-old explains it to us!