

PARENTING

Accident reveals God's loving help

Almost from the day my two children were born, I have blessed them each evening with the prayer, "May God's angels watch over my angels." Not long ago, I believe God answered my prayer in a special way after my son, Bobby, was involved in a serious sledding accident.

That day, schools closed due to a snowstorm. A group of neighborhood children and parents gathered at the park up the street from our house. When I brought Bobby and my daughter, Teresa, I was told the hill was fine for sledding. But as Bobby headed down the hill on his first run, he hit an icy patch and spun headfirst into a tree off to the right of the hill.

It is difficult and painful to describe the horror I felt as I turned Bobby over in the snow and saw a face I hardly recognized; his right eye was swollen shut. As I held him close, he cried out, "Mommy, Mommy..."

During the next three days at the hospital, being Bobby's "mommy" took me to places in my heart and soul where security no longer existed, where terror touched me as never before.

Bobby received a skull fracture above his right eye that ran up along his forehead and very close the base of his brain. He also received two "orbital" fractures — one small one just beneath his left eye and a larger one that ran from his left eye toward his temple. The second fracture came within a hair of severing the optic nerve, which could have cost him his sight in his left eye.

For three days Bobby was observed closely at the hospital for any problem with the optic nerve. The attending neurosurgeon also wanted Bobby watched very closely because his CT (computed tomography) scans showed a "cloudy" spot in the brain area. If problems developed with either of these fractures the doctors would have to consider emergency surgery.

After the days of anxious waiting, we



BY EILEEN MARX

family matters

were finally blessed with the news that all Bobby's fractures were healing remarkably well and the injury did not cause any permanent damage.

The morning of the accident was especially frightening to me because my husband, Joe, was out of town on business. He was delayed getting to us by the snowstorm. When Joe finally made it to the hospital emergency room, I knew that the only other person who shared the love and responsibility for Bobby was also there. Together, and with God's grace, we would find a way through the difficult days ahead.

The hours before Joe arrived were some of the darkest hours I've ever experienced. I wondered where God was as I was drowning in a world of medical terminology and procedures that were overwhelming and frightening. My family's safe and secure world seemed to be crashing in all around me. I felt like Peter as he tried to walk on water to meet Jesus during a storm at sea. In the hospital I felt like I was being tossed about; I could only see the waves. It was only a day or two later when I realized that not only were the hands of God reaching out to me, they caught me and held me close when I could hold on no longer.

God was everywhere during the first few days of Bobby's accident. He provided me with my son's calm and reassuring soccer coach who accompanied me during the

first six hours in the hospital and with two close friends who cared for my daughter. And then God sent my sister-in-law, a nurse. The hand of God was at work in all the friends and family who called. We felt the presence of God when our pastor came to visit Bobby and bless him — a visit as important to us as any of Bobby's doctors. God's angels were in the 26 children from Bobby's class who sent homemade cards. The kindness of Jesus was in the pediatric ophthalmologist, who showed a real expertise and a gentleness we won't forget.

The times I felt God's presence more than any other were the times I looked at Bobby those first days in the hospital. Behind his bruised and swollen face was a brightness and bravery that I had never seen before. As Bobby endured a series of painful x-rays and tests, he never complained. He had gotten very sick before one CT scan but to the amazement of the technicians, he remained calm as we pretended he was an Apollo 13 astronaut getting ready for his mission. When his good friend Will thought the accident was his fault and began crying, Bobby smiled and said, "It wasn't your fault, Will. It was the tree's fault."

In the early hours of the morning when sleep would not come, I climbed into Bobby's hospital bed just so I could hear his breathing. "You are my hero," I whispered.

During our three days of waiting, we discovered that there are many little heroes in the halls of this hospital that show uncommon acts of bravery every day. Many of the children are in the hospital for a lot longer than three days and some will never return home. Walking through the children's ward is a stark reminder of the fragility of life and of the gift we are given each day we spend with our children.

•••

Marx lives in Lawrenceville, N.J., with her husband and two children.

Events

☉ **FEB. 18, 19 — Family fun:** break week; hands-on science activities and theater performances; Rochester Museum and Science Center, 657 East Ave., Rochester; 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; 716/271-1880.

☉ **FEB. 19, 20 — Family dance concert:** Park Avenue Dance Company; 7:30 p.m.; The School of the Arts main stage, 45 Prince St., Rochester; \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors or students, \$20 for families; for information, call 716/493-3625.

☉ **SAT, FEB. 20 — Nordic Hot Dog Days:** Eat chili and hot dogs and enjoy cross country skiing and snow shoeing; 11 a.m.-3 p.m.; Cumming Nature Center, Gulick Rd., Naples; Rochester Museum & Science Center members and preschoolers free; students \$1.50, seniors and college students \$3, adults \$4; call 716/374-6160.

☉ **SAT, FEB. 20 — Family nature walk:** Three Sisters Waterfalls; 10 a.m.; takes about two hours; meet at Castle entrance gate, Letchworth State Park; free; for information call 716/493-3625.

☉ **SUN, FEB. 21 — Fireside tales:** of nature and animals; bring your own snacks; 1:30-2:30 p.m.; Mendon Ponds Park, Clover Street, Honeoye Falls; free; for information call 716/334-3780.

☉ **WED, FEB. 24 — Concert:** Songs for children with Bart Dentino and Kevin Huber; 10 a.m.; Strong Museum, 1 Manhattan Square Park, Rochester; \$3 for member adults, \$2 for member children, \$6 for nonmember adults, \$4 for nonmember children; for information call 716/263-2710, ext. 202.

"Historically, the Catholic press (which includes diocesan and national newspapers, and national magazines) has been the mainstay of the Church's communications effort in the U.S. It remains at present the least expensive way of conveying comprehensive Catholic-oriented news and views on a regular basis to the largest number of Catholics."

— National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Open
The
Doors
To A
New

Millennium



1999 Catholic Press Month

Catholic Courier

A Celebration of Women's History Month A Celebration of Women

What voices of women are emerging from recent Scripture scholarship?
Join Barbara E. Reid, O.P., Professor of New Testament Studies at
Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, for:

LECTURE:
Women in Scripture
Friday, March 5
8:00 p.m.
Nazareth Arts Center
4245 East Ave.
reservations and cost:
\$15 per person
SSJ Spirituality Center
336-4370

WORKSHOP:
**Women in the Bible:
Icons of the Reign of God**
Sat., March 6
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
St. Bernard's Institute
Strong Hall Auditorium
reservations and cost:
\$30 per person
St. Bernard's Institute
271-3657

The stories of women's thirst and lifegiving water,
as found in Scripture, are told with imagination at:

**Miriam's Well:
Story, Scripture and Song**
Sun., March 14
6:30-8:00 p.m.
St. Rita's Ministry Center
1008 Maple Avenue, Webster

Sponsored by the Webster-Penfield Catholic Connection



For additional information contact
Gloria Ulterino at the Diocese of
Rochester at (800) 388-7177 or
(716) 328-3228, ext. 347 or email
ulterino@dor.org.