

COPING WITH LOSS

by Karen Mace

The "curtain man" came to our house at 5:15 p.m. to measure our windows, just as I was getting ready to go to my painting class. We chatted awhile. He was very friendly. Eventually, however, the question came as it always does, "How many children do you have?" "Three girls," I responded. "Miriam, our 16-year-old, and Ileana and Sarah who are already with Jesus." He was taken aback and, in fact, quite shaken. The lump in my throat swelled and threatened to choke me. It happens often. It's nearly two years since God



Karen Mace reminisces about her two daughters in heaven, Sarah and Ileana.

took Illy and Sarah, and it isn't any easier to verbalize that they're no longer with us. I'm glad they're with the Lord, but it doesn't take away the pain—there's always a dull ache, at times cutting through me like a knife, exposing the rawness of the wound.

"Well," the man said, "we trust in God and in His sovereignty, and we believe that nothing happens to us that He doesn't allow." He sighed and shook his head.

Later I looked at their photos on the wall and softly asked, "Why Illy? Why Sarah? Why did God want you so soon? I so long to hold you in my arms, Illy, to cuddle you and laugh with you. Only 3 years old. You hardly had time to make your mark on the world. Yet you did. You left behind memories of a laughing,

happy little girl who loved Jesus and looked forward to celebrating His birthday. You got to do it the best way last year—right there with Him! And you, Sary, I miss you so much as I walk in the mornings. I still see your face as you looked at me and laughed with a toss of that beautiful hair and always said, "Let's go, Mum." Oh Sary, we were just starting to know each other. I think we would have been best friends." I turn away as the faces of my girls blur into one, and I let the tears fall.

In the early morning when I cannot sleep, I think of Illy and Sarah. I ask the Lord Jesus to hug them for

me, and to tell them I love them. Not only does He hug my girls, but I sense His arms around me, too—comfort that once I refused in anger—anger at God who allowed such a deep hurt. I now accept His comfort with gratefulness.

God assures me that He will never leave me nor forsake me. Slowly I'm beginning to trust

Him again. He has never explained why He allowed what He did, nor does He have to. After all, He is God. When our faith is tested, we hang onto that fact.

Tomorrow, or the next day, I'll meet someone who has not met me before, and eventually they'll ask, "How many children do you have?" My answer will be the same: "We have three. Miriam, who is 16, and Ileana and Sarah who are already with God."

Karen Mace is an HCJB writer and radio programmer in Quito. Her husband, Ross, directs mobile medical clinics. In November 1993 Sarah, 12, and Ileana, 3, accidentally succumbed to fumes from a faulty heater.