



AN EASTER APPARITION

Several years ago a friend gave me a week at Seaside Village in Florida for Holy Week and Easter. I was driving back to New Orleans early afternoon on Easter. As I drove by Grayton Beach, with the white sand and sea oats and the emerald sea, I knew I had to stop and spend a few quiet hours in this exquisite place. A few families were on the beach. I carried my chair down close to the water, far enough away from the families so I could enjoy the solitude—until seven-year-old Lily walked over, sat beside me, and hugged my legs.

I smiled and said, “I am Shirley. Who are you?” She grinned, but said nothing. She just sat in the sand and hugged my legs and rested her head on my knees.

After an hour her mother walked over to me and told me that Lily is autistic, and she has never

spoken a word. But she has a mission in life: she cannot stand to see anyone alone. She wants to keep them company—a child who cannot use words or express what she needs is concerned about another’s aloneness.

I wept quietly as she rested her head on my knees. After an hour her parents came to pick her up to play with her in the waves. When I picked up my chair, Lily looked back from the water and blew me a kiss, and I returned it.

Lily! An Easter apparition—not on the Sea of Galilee, but at Grayton Beach—a memory that will stay in my heart forever. May each of us, like Lily, discover our mission in life. Perhaps it is simply being with others when they feel alone.



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“God on the Gulf Coast” is a seven-day retreat guide from Sister Shirley Miller about finding God in unexpected places.