

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

“Consider the lilies of the field.” Matthew 6:28b

I remember as if it were yesterday. I was walking through the woods with Jane, a knowledgeable nature lover, and there is nothing like spending the day strolling through alleys of Southern Pines. These grand old trees seem to enfold you with their clean, crisp smell. The wind plays on their needles, causing an overhead fan dance. The sun lights the show perfectly. There are shimmering shadows being danced on the world below. The moss and fern and rocks and streams seem to come alive with movement. Jane takes over the lead. Our pace quickens. She walks with assurance. You can tell this woodswoman knows and loves this environment. The respect with which she walks and the wealth of knowledge she quietly shares are incredible. She can identify each sound, each plant, each animal. She abruptly stops. All my senses heighten. I know a halt means a hidden treasure is tucked away in the underbrush. I wait for Jane to enlighten my untrained eyes.

She points to the left. My eyes narrow their focus, anticipating the need to search and to find another camouflaged jewel.

“Look - the lilies,” she said.

I gasp and want to drop to my knees. There, right in front of me, standing in all their paper white glory, are

growing hundreds upon hundreds of wild Resurrection lilies. That image was instantly seared into my memory. The vision remains pristinely clear. The one difference today is that the silence of the woods has been replaced by the inward tape of the Lord's Words, "Consider the lilies of the field." It is this image and this scripture that unexpectedly floated back into my mind yesterday.

I found myself stuck in the Atlanta airport for four hours. I didn't want to keep up with my bag, so I went to the airline baggage claim office and asked where I could safely leave my baggage. They showed me the spot, and there it was confidently left. When I returned, it was gone. A week's worth of favorite clothes - gone. Suits, dresses, shoes, nightgowns, bathrobe, underwear - gone.

I went back to the baggage claim office where I patiently waited in a long line. When my turn came, I calmly recounted the situation. The airline representative could not have been more nonchalant. He treated me like a bothersome non-person.

I was constantly aware of the little gold cross around my neck and Whose representative I was. I was determined not to lose my cool. I wanted to be adult about this and see that all the correct procedures and paperwork were followed and completed. I went from one rude representative to one flip supervisor, who left the room to consult with airline security.

Then, miracle of miracles, he reentered the office with an about-face attitude adjustment. It was like night and day. I was told that within 72 hours I would receive claim forms and that they were sincerely sorry.

While sitting on the outside airport benches waiting for my ride, there was ample opportunity for me to reflect on the past hour's events. I was proud that I had not fallen apart or lost my cool. I'd never been treated, however, like a non-person before. (It was high time that I was.) Pride disintegrated as a parade of imaginary people started wandering through my mind. I'd never gotten into the skin of a person who isn't treated with the dignity and respect due a God-created creature, one made in our Lord's image. What if it were your 24-hour reality? What if all you received every day of your life was put-downs? Heavy. Humbling. Healthy. As a Christian, I know this cannot be our identity. As Christ's own, we know we are of great value and that our worth is not dependent on the treatment we receive from others, but still, others' treatment of us can cloud our perspective. Repeated rejection can confuse one's reality.

As I continued to sit and wait, I realized I also needed to look a little closer at my reaction to the loss. Were the garments more important to me than they should be? Were they clinging closer than I had realized? I was bugged by a lost bag, but what if it were my house burning, like my friend Marla's, or my home robbed, like my friend Hilda's? What if it were my lost

*leg, like the man who just wheeled himself up next to me? Help!
Heavy! Humbling! Healthy!*

The airline agent had said he was almost sure the bag had been stolen. The procedure was that I would fill out a form listing the items lost and their value. They would issue a check to cover the loss. I thought it was important that I write down everything before I forgot. I started recording - giving the description of the item and its estimated value. Ow! I realized I remembered more about these "things" than the people I'd met at a conference only yesterday. I knew the labels, their colors, their size, their designs, the material used. Ow! I couldn't remember anyone's name from yesterday and could only vaguely picture a few of them. I remembered only scant bits and pieces of their life stories. I was sure their images and personal information would in a week's time be totally faded from my memory. Ow! Where were my priorities?

I then resolved that when the check came in the mail, I would closely evaluate the need for replacing the lost garments. Did I really need them, or could I get by with what I had? And those things that had to be replaced, might they be bought on sale? The leftover money could go to charity. As I sat and pondered these "lost things," they seemed to be letting up, lightening, and leaving me. I was even ironically becoming thankful over the loss and the lessons it had afforded me.

Then once again the woodland image of the field of Resurrection lilies floated back into my mind with its accompanying words - "Consider the lilies of the field."

My ride arrived and I got into the van. "Where's your luggage?" she asked.

"It's lost."

"Oh, no!"

I said, "It's all right. I like traveling lighter."

Precious Pilgrim, as I finish this letter the airline had phoned and they found my bag. They had accidentally picked it up and flown it to Montgomery. The next day the bag and I were once again reunited, but on review its contents had lost some of their glitz and grip on me.

Precious Pilgrim, what baggage are you carrying? Does it need to be lightened or left behind? Are things possessing your attention more than people?

"Consider the lilies of the field."

I am your lighter traveling sister in Christ,

Lucy