

Wrapped in God's Love

Needlework Group Sends Prayer in the Shape of a Shawl

By Suzanne Hill

Many saints' stories have their origins in the mists of time. It's difficult to sort fact from fiction. This is true of St. Brigid, sometimes called the patron saint of needleworkers. Legend tells us she helped the poor with food and clothing, even giving away her father's possessions.

She is associated with St. Brigid's crosses made of woven reeds and the St. Brigid sweater pattern.

And, this is why Holy Family's needlework group is called "St. Brigid's."

The group has its roots in another named for a saint, the St. Catherine of Sienna Women's Bible Study.

Mary Linda Hughes mentioned starting a prayer shawl group to other women in the Bible study. She knew someone who was going through "a terrible divorce and was very distraught." That woman received a shawl as a gift from her church's prayer shawl ministry.

"She told me that when she wrapped herself in the shawl, she felt as if she was being embraced by the loving arms of her church and surrounded in Christ's love and healing," Mary Linda explained.



Other women responded positively to her idea. Beth Kasper told them about St. Brigid and so their group was named. They first met June 22.

The group meets the third Sunday of each month in the chapel at 9:45 a.m. About 20 members now belong.

"Since the first meeting, we have continued to gather weekly to be available to help others get started with projects and simply have a community of people gathering for a common purpose of providing God's healing grace to others," she noted.

Members may use their own patterns or choose ones from the prayer shawl ministry book or Web site. Each provides her own supplies, with some donating extra yarn when needed. Yarn selection is up to the individual, but several members prefer Lion Brand for



Prayer Shawl Ministry Movement

The prayer shawl ministry movement is ten years old. Janet Bristow and Victoria Galo graduated from the Women's Leadership Institute at The Hartford Seminary, Hartford, Conn., the year before, according to the Prayer Shawl Ministry home page.

They had participated in professor Miriam Therese Winter's program of applied feminist spirituality. Their experiences led them to start the prayer shawl ministry.

According to the ministry home page, "Compassion and the love of knitting/crocheting have been combined into a prayerful ministry and spiritual practice which reaches out to those in need of comfort and solace, as well as in celebration and joy. Many blessings are prayed into every shawl."

For information on the prayer shawl ministry, check out www.shawlministry.com.

its softness.

They also use a variety of prayers, including those from the ministry Web site, as they make the shawls.

Pastoral associate Peggy Petersen assists the group by identifying people who need comfort and support from the parish. She is a member, too, and created the first shawl that was delivered. As of mid-September, the group had delivered ten shawls.

If people are interested in participating in this ministry, but don't know how to knit or crochet, they are welcome to come learn from members. If they are unable to attend meetings, members can make arrangements to meet with them.

The group also plans to help the homeless by making denim quilts for them, a suggestion Lori Stark made. They need someone to help organize

this effort.

Members have some denim available for quilting. It just needs the hands and prayers to do so.

To recommend someone who needs the comfort and support offered through this ministry, contact Peggy Petersen at 436-9200, ext. 24, or peggy@holy-family.com.

Also, if anyone is interested in organizing the quilting or to join the group, contact Peggy Petersen or Mary Linda Hughes at 591-9304.



Comments From Recipients

'Thank you for sending me the beautiful prayer shawl. I feel warm and blessed with it wrapped around my shoulders.'



'Your gift both comforted and humbled me. Being cared about and for, made my heart jump in joy and appreciation. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the faith you have lived for me.'