

*... the Spirit
itself intercedes
with inexpressible
groanings.*

ROMANS 8:26

Crochet Instructions

Use a size M hook. Chain 54 stitches or desired width of shawl. Chain 1, turn, single crochet in each of the stitches to end. Chain 3 and turn. Double crochet in top of each single crochet. Repeat this row two more times. Chain 1 and do 1 row of single crochet to end. Chain 3 and turn. Do 3 rows of double crochet. Repeat pattern to end (1 row single, 3 rows double) End with 1 row of single. Finish with fringe. *This pattern was developed by Rita Glod and is used with permission.*

Crocheting typically uses more yarn than knitting, so consider buying four skeins or making your shawl narrower or shorter. If you purchase four skeins, you will probably have yarn left over (for your Joseph shawl).

Knitters around the world are developing other shawl patterns. We praise their ingenuity and creativity. At the same time, people frequently share stories with us about wearing a shawl knit in the K3, P3 pattern in a public place; someone will invariably exclaim, "That's one of those shawls, isn't it? Tell me where you got it!" There will always be tension between conformity that brings with it the delight of immediate recognition and a sense of solidarity, and the creativity that makes individual expression possible. It would be a sad and dull world indeed if we all wore orange shirts and khaki pants. May your choices for knitting shawls be guided by the urgings and groanings of the Spirit.

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I tie each bundle with a slipknot to keep from losing them and getting them tangled, and put them in a sealed plastic bag for safekeeping.

7. *Finish the shawl.* Attach the inside end of the third skein of yarn to your shawl and continue knitting until all the yarn is used up, or until you have achieved the desired length.
8. *Attach the fringe.* Double the yarn and, using a small crochet hook, pull the loop through the stitch; insert the ends of the fringe through the loop and pull tight, creating a knot.

Victoria A. Cole-Galo creates fringe with a tassel effect. She uses two strands of yarn that she doubles and then inserts in every third stitch where the trough or ridge is created when you change from knit to purl and vice versa. This creates fringe that is eight strands thick, spaced every third stitch. You may find the details of this process on her website.

9. *Knot the ends of the fringe.* Some people knot the ends of each strand to keep the fringe from fraying. This is an individual decision. Some people would rather leave it alone. I prefer to knot the ends when I am using any yarn that frays easily.
10. *Give away your shawl.* If you are making the shawl for a particular person, you may want to include the history of the shawl-knitting ministry and a prayer. Many people wrap the shawl in tissue and tie it with a leftover piece of yarn. See Chapter 10, "Giving Away a Shawl," page 81 for more on this.

A modified version of this pattern appears on page 145. Please feel free to copy it as the need arises.

through about three inches, pull gently to test the yarn. It should hold. If it slips or pulls out, continue to take tiny stitches through the old yarn or start again. The result should be a joined piece of yarn that is smooth and slightly thicker than a single strand; it disappears easily into the fabric of the shawl. Take care as you knit the joint. Once you have knit the joint into the shawl, you can clip the ends that have frayed in the knitting process (generally quite short). This process works with thin or thick, smooth or nubby yarn.

5. *Selvages.* You may want to create a selvage edge for your shawl. This creates a smoother finish for the sides of your shawl. At the beginning of each row, slip the first stitch purlwise; the yarn will be in front of your work. Carry the yarn to the back, K2, and continue with the pattern to the end of the row.
6. *Make fringe.* The length of the fringe is an individual decision. It can be long or short. You can put a piece of fringe through every stitch, or you can skip several stitches. Some people tie or sew beads to fringe, especially if the shawl is for a child. Whatever your preference, here is what you do:

Decide how long you want the fringe. Because the fringe is doubled when you fasten it to the shawl, you must cut the fringe twice the desired length: for 6" (15 cm) fringe, each piece must be 12" (30 cm) long; for 12" (30 cm) fringe, cut pieces 24" (60 cm); and so on. A stiff piece of cardboard cut to the finished length of the fringe helps with this process. Wrap the yarn around the cardboard as many times as you want pieces of fringe, and cut only one end.

For standard fringe, cut 57 (63) lengths for each end of the shawl, or 114 (126) total. Reserve fringe until you have finished knitting the shawl.

2. *Select your yarn.* You might pick a yarn for its color, for its name, or for its texture as described in the previous chapter. A standard shawl requires three skeins of yarn that are six ounces (170 g) net weight and 185 yards (166.5 m) each.
3. *Cast on.* Cast on 57 stitches for size 13 (9) needles, 63 for size 11 (8). The pattern is K3, P3 every row. This means that you will always begin each row with K3 and end each row with K3. The pattern is a modified seed or moss stitch. Any odd multiple of three will work for your shawl, depending on how wide you want to make it: 57, 63, 69, 75, 81, and so on. Follow this pattern until you achieve the desired length. You may also decide to knit every row, which is called a garter stitch. **Before you begin the third skein, make your fringe.**

An alternative for men: If the gift is going to a man, making a lap blanket may be a good alternative to the shawl. In this case, cast on 87 stitches (size 13 (9)). This gives you a blanket approximately 45" (114 cm) wide. Use four skeins for this project. Rather than fringe, consider creating a selvage edge by crocheting a single crochet around the entire blanket. If you decide to do this, make sure you reserve yarn for that.

4. *Attaching the next skein or ball.* An alternative to tying a knot and then weaving the ends of the two strands of yarn into the shawl when you are all done is to weave the new end into the old with a darning needle. This eliminates knots and having to weave in all those ends (a tedious process at best). Clip the ends of both pieces of yarn. Thread the needle with the end of the new skein. Beginning at the end of the skein you are finishing, hold the end taut and insert the needle. Take tiny stitches in a slightly spiral fashion, maintaining firm and even tension. When you have woven

*Buddhists say
that enlightenment
may be achieved
through the
repetition of sutra,
or prayer.
Pattern also is
formed by
repetition;
its beauty deepens
and grows each
time it is repeated.²²*

SUSAN GORDON LYDON

on page 109, Vicky said that she didn't want to create "just any shawl. . . . The pattern of knitting in threes . . . came to me in prayer." The website that Janet and Vicky (www.shawlministry.com) maintain describes in detail the significance of this pattern of threes. Let me say a few things here.

The pattern of threes can be found in every religion and society. Human existence has three stages: birth, life, and death. Time has three divisions: past, present, and future. The panorama of colors is based on three primary colors. Human "being" has three parts: body, mind, and spirit. The virtues frequently mentioned together are faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 12). The rhythm of the waltz is 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3. The ability to compromise—to take two seemingly different (and oftentimes hotly disputed) points of view and create a third possibility—is another way the pattern of threes plays out in our world: not this or that, but this (w)holy other thing. Upon this ability to see the third, peace springs forth if we have eyes to see it.

Knitting Instructions

These instructions assume you know how to knit already.

Note: The second set of numbers is for our friends who use the metric system.

1. *Decide what size needle you will use.* Size 11 (8) needles create a slightly denser shawl and the K3, P3 pattern will be more noticeable. Conversely, size 13 (9) needles create a slightly looser, less definable pattern. Approximate finished sizes, not counting fringe, are 26" x 60" on size 11 needles (66 cm x 152 cm on 8) and 30" x 64" on 13 needles (76 cm x 162 cm on 9). You may use smaller or larger needles as well, depending on the yarn that you have chosen; knit up a sample and do the math so that your shawl is the size you desire. The smaller the needle, the more stitches you will need; the larger the needle, the fewer.

CHAPTER 6
BASIC
INSTRUCTIONS

Susan S. Jorgensen

For all these mysteries, I thank you:
for the wonder of myself, for the wonder of your works.

—PSALM 139:14 JB

To begin at the beginning is to say that the idea of knitting shawls for others and the original shawl pattern were developed by Janet Bristow and Victoria Cole-Galo. Susan and I are indebted to the gift they have given to us and to all who engage in this ministry, and we honor the creativity of the Spirit as it is expressed through them in this particular way.

The original shawl is based on a K3, P3 pattern. Before getting into the basic instructions for this shawl, I would like to explore the significance of the K3, P3 pattern. Deciding to make a shawl in this pattern was not a random event for Vicky. In her story about the shawl-knitting ministry, which appears

Tace, or "be silent," is the second step in knitting alone. "Be still, and know that I am God," writes the Psalmist in Psalm 46:10 (RSV). Contemplative prayer requires silence, but that's often hard to find. In our postmodern era, our lives are filled with noise. But being quiet means leaving noise and interruptions behind. Excuse yourself from family members for a half an hour or so, and turn off the television, radio, computer and telephone. Even harder, being quiet and contemplative means resolving within yourself that you won't answer the doorbell or respond to any kind of interruption during this time of prayerful knitting. As best as possible, create an atmosphere of silence in order to be present to God in contemplative prayer.

Becoming inwardly still, *quiesce*, is the third step in knitting alone. Once you have settled in your quiet space with your knitting and separated yourself from the various distractions, become inwardly still and wait into the silence for the presence of God. Sometimes it helps to begin with intercessory prayer for the person for whom you're knitting. You might also choose to begin with a favorite prayer or hymn to help get settled into the quiet and be still. Knitting in silence gives God an opportunity to be with you, nurture you, guide you, and heal you. As you knit in silence, you wait for the Mystery of God to unfold within you.

Unfortunately, becoming inwardly silent is often difficult. Even though you create a quiet environment, you might find that your inner world is noisy and cluttered. Real silence can seem almost impossible. All kinds of inner thoughts can interrupt the silence. The schedule for the day can pop into your head. All of a sudden, you find yourself making mental notes about the things you need to do—you must not forget apples at the grocery store or to call the person you forgot about yesterday. Conversations you want to have, vacations you want to

*It is in silence
that we can truly
acknowledge
who we are and
gradually claim
ourselves as a gift
from God.²⁶*

HENRI J. M. NOUWE

*Contemplation
is a deep resonance
in the inmost
center of our spirit
in which our very
life loses its
separate voice
and re-sounds
with the majesty
and the mercy of
the Hidden and
Living One.²⁷*

THOMAS MERTON

go on, or old memories that creep in can all interrupt your attempt to find inner silence and quiet time to listen for God.

Father Thomas Keating, the champion of centering prayer, suggests that when you find yourself preoccupied with your thoughts rather than resting in inner silence, you let go of those thoughts and return to your original desire for inner quiet. In centering prayer, a prayer word is used to bring you back to inner stillness. With contemplative knitting, K3, P3 can be a way to return to inner quiet. By refocusing on the rhythm of the knitting, you can return to inner stillness and God's presence. The flow of your hands can be the grounding point for this contemplative prayer.

Letting go of inner busyness and sinking into the silence of God is one way you can experience God's presence. Your knitting and your very being will be blessed.

Needles . . . click
 the click of comfort,
 of a crackling fire,
 of a rocking chair
 by a cradle, the
 click of warmth
 and security.²⁴

SHULAMITH OPPENHEIM

younger daughter's violin lessons knitting shawls. I have come to look forward to her lesson, not just because I love listening to her play, but also because I love to knit for an hour without any interruptions.

Knitting alone can be more than a peaceful, rejuvenating activity, however. It can be a time for contemplative prayer and a window into Mystery. In her book, *The Practice of Prayer*, Margaret Guenther reminds us that the desert father, Abba Arsenius, gives three commands about prayer: "Fuge! Flee! Remove yourself physically to a quiet place, away from distractions good and bad. Tace! Be silent! Stop talking. Quiesce! Be inwardly still."²⁵ These instructions are also good guidelines for practicing knitting as contemplative prayer.

Fuge, or "flee," is the first step in knitting alone. Find a place in your home where you can be alone to knit. For those of you who live alone or have long periods of time when you are alone in your homes, this is easy. A favorite chair in the den or living room can be a perfect place for quiet knitting. For others who still have children at home, pets who adore you and want to be with you at every moment, or partners or spouses who work at home, this can be more of a challenge. It might require some ingenuity to find a place to knit and pray contemplatively. Sometimes it means creating a prayer corner in your bedroom, basement, or attic where you can close the door and set yourself apart. One woman told me she took an old junk closet and turned it into her prayer room. She cleaned everything out, repainted it, and placed a small chair and lamp in the closet along with devotional objects that she loved. She was delighted to have created her own prayer space. As you search for a prayer space, trust your inner desire to find a place to knit contemplatively and be creative until you find it, even if it means sitting in your car or finding a park bench where people won't interrupt you.

24" x 60"

48 stitches

CHAPTER 7 KNITTING "ALONE"

Susan S. Izard

The important thing is not so much what you knit as what happens to you while you knit it. Where the interior journey takes you. What you find there. How you are transformed when you come back home.²³

—SUSAN GORDON LYDON

*K*nitting a shawl alone can be a relaxing, peaceful activity. Many of us lead hectic lives filled with multiple responsibilities. Finding time to sit and knit can be wonderfully rejuvenating and calming. Knitting allows us to sit and relax our bodies as well as our minds. Once the K3, P3 pattern is established, you don't need to think very hard about knitting a shawl. You can allow yourself to surrender to the repetitive movement of your hands and relax into the flow of knitting. Having a shawl to knit can also be a way to occupy our hands as we wait in the doctor's office, sit through meetings, or wait for children to finish a lesson or activity. Over the past few years, I have sat through hours of my

could wrap herself in her mother's love and prayers for the rest of her life.

A Sacred Circle

These are just three stories born of three shawls. I could also tell you about one knitter who comes to spiritual direction. Knitting the shawls has been so important in her life that we have spent at least three sessions talking and reflecting on God's transforming presence as a result of her knitting. Another directee received a shawl and in thanks composed a tape of music for the knitters so we now knit to beautiful, reflective music each month. And yet another directee told me that her knitting group begins each session asking the question: "How is the Holy Spirit at work in my life as I knit?" As I reflect on these and many other stories that have come from the ministry, I am struck by the sacred work being done in our knitting circle. For centuries, women have been creating man-

gles of caring with their knitting, weaving, and sewing. These mantles sustain us when life is hard and remind us that God chooses to dwell with us. As one woman wrote: "Thank you for the beautiful shawl and prayers on behalf of my husband's recovery. We had a very difficult day last week and I had occasion to draw strength from the shawl and the readings. I believe that the prayers everyone has said for my husband are giving him the strength to fight this infection. I also believe the prayers are giving my children and me the strength to sustain him."

It is a gift to be a knitter and a woman knitting into the mystery of God. ■

The Rev. Susan Schenck Izard is the Director of the Spiritual Life Ministry at First Church of Christ Congregational, West Hartford, CT, USA. She is also on the Editorial Board of Presence. Anyone who is interested in more information on the Knitting Ministry is invited to contact her at Izard@snet.net.

Prayer for Healing

In the beginning, Creating God, you formed my being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. To my flesh and blood you gave the breath of life. O Loving One, renew me this day in your love. Grant me life as gift of your faithfulness; grant me light to journey by; grant me hope to sustain me. May this mantle be for me a sign of your healing presence. May it warm me when I am weary; may it surround me with ease of my suffering; may it encircle me with caring when I am in pain.

O Christ who healed the broken in body and spirit, be with me and all that suffer this day. Be with the doctors, nurses, technicians, chaplains and all that care for the sick. Be with the families and friends of those abiding with and comforting the sick. May your gentle yet strong touch reach out to heal all the broken and hurting people and places in our world.

Prayer for a Mantle of Healing

I call nine blessings from above in the name of God: the Creator, the Giver of Life, the Holder of time; in the name of Jesus: the Savior, the Healer, and the Lifter of Pain; in the name of the Spirit: The Comforter, the Consoler, and the Sustainer of Life. I knit/wear a mantle of caring. I knit/wear a mantle of protection. I knit/wear a mantle of wholeness. I knit/wear a mantle of strength. I knit/wear a mantle of healing. I knit/wear a mantle of patience. I knit/wear a mantle to enfold you/me. I knit/wear a mantle to encircle you/me. I knit/wear a mantle to empower you/me.

—Prayers by Cathleen Murtha, DW

own shawl knitting ministry (see box, p. 50). We now include the prayers with each shawl along with a short description of the purpose of shawls.

We meet in the morning on the first Thursday of every month for an hour and a half. While each meeting varies, there is always time for opening and closing prayers, deciding who needs a shawl and who will deliver each shawl, the reading of the cards we have received thanking us for the shawls, and the sharing of the stories of the shawls that have been distributed. The stories of the shawls, now numbering over fifty, have encompassed us in God's mysterious love.

Some Stories

It is hard to choose which stories to tell. We've given shawls to many in our congregation who are sick; to the woman in our Bosnian refugee family and two women in Covenant to Care (a program that pairs churches in Greater Hartford with families in need); to the recent widow of one of our former ministers and to a former minister who was recently widowed; and to all of our ministers and current lay leaders for various reasons — an installation, an illness, and gifts of thanks for years of work and love for our church. Each shawl has a story. Some of the most powerful stories come from shawls we've given away to people not connected with our church.

A few days before Holy Week, a minister I know called to ask if there were any extra shawls and if so, could she have one to give to a parishioner of hers who had just had a double mastectomy. Fortunately, there were two on hand. On Maundy Thursday, my friend took the shawl to her parishioner. Later that night the woman came to the Maundy Thursday service at her church wrapped in her shawl. My friend said it was the most remarkable experience to have her there among those reenacting the Last Supper. Sometime during the service, which was around a long table, the woman stood up to lean against the wall still wrapped in her shawl. When my friend looked up and saw the woman

standing there she felt it was as though the Wounded One was among them. The shawl is this woman's constant companion. She has worn it to all of her chemotherapy appointments and to church on Sundays. She wraps herself in it when she naps and carries it with her wherever she goes.

Around the same time, my mother had a similar experience in another part of our state. One night right after Easter she bumped into a doctor she knew. He told her that the woman who had helped care for an elderly aunt of ours before she died was in hospice and would die any day. He suggested that Mom visit her if she wanted to say "goodbye." Later that night Mom woke from her sleep knowing that she would take the shawl I had given her at Christmas to this woman in the morning. When she arrived, the woman was sitting in the garden, so Mom wrapped the shawl around her and prayed the prayers that Cathy Murtha had written. At the end of the prayer, the woman told my mother she had been in Cathy Murtha's parish 10 years ago. Mom said it made them all weep. My mom, who is United Church of Christ to the bone and has never met Cathy, was touched and surprised by the mystery of this ecumenical moment. In God, there are no denominational distinctions.

Also surprised by the power of these shawls was a woman in our knitting circle. While this woman doesn't participate in many church events any more, she decided to join the Knitting Ministry because it was something she could do at home. At our first meeting she was very quiet. At the next meeting, however, she told us that she had taken a shawl to a sick friend with the prayers and a card and was very surprised and moved by how much the shawl meant to her friend. She so was surprised and moved that she told her daughter about it. Her daughter then asked her to make a shawl for a friend of hers who had cancer. When the daughter came to pick up the shawl she asked her mother if she would make her a shawl. The woman asked her daughter why she would want a shawl since she was healthy. Then, with tears in her eyes, she said her daughter wanted a shawl so she

Knitting Directions

Supplies

3 skeins of Lion Brand Homespun yarn. (In the United States, this is available at Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Ames and other discount stores.) Size 11 or 13 needles. Some knitters prefer the round needles and some like size 15, although they are hard to hold. The idea is to get a loose, comfortable weave.

Pattern

Cast on 54, 57, 60 or 63 stitches, or some multiple of three. Knit three, purl three to the end of the row. Turn and knit the purl and purl the knit (if you have 57 or 63 stitches you'll begin every row with knit). A weave pattern will develop. Knit about 2 and 2/3 skeins in pattern. Use the rest of the yarn for fringe. The fringe can be as short as 3 inches and as long as 8 or 9 inches. It is up to you.

Prayers

We suggest you weave prayers into your shawl as you knit, at the beginning or the end of the project. Many gather for a collective blessing of the shawl before it is given away. There is no right or wrong way to knit or create these mantles of love and care. Enjoy!

me to be a part of. For now, the knitting has become one of my teachers, a way of prayer.

The Knitting Ministry

Last fall an older woman in my church who comes for spiritual direction made a prayer shawl for me to keep on my rocker in the Quiet Room, the home of the Spiritual Life Ministry at First Church of Christ Congregational in West Hartford, CT, USA. This woman heard of the shawls from a friend of hers who participated in the first class of the Women's Leadership Institute at Hartford Seminary. There, two women began knitting shawls for women undergoing breast cancer and other illnesses as well as women becoming new mothers. Soon, shawls were being knit for many purposes, including important celebrations and as Mantles of Wisdom. As I was thanking my friend for the shawl she knit me, it occurred to me that we needed a Knitting Ministry at First Church. There were many people who could use a shawl and many women who would enjoy being a part of a knitting circle.

About ten women showed up at our first knitting circle one cold morning last January. We gathered around a

candle in rockers and wooden chairs with our knitting needles and yarn. Many of us had already begun to make the shawls, having received the directions ahead of time (see box, above). Others were just getting started. The Quiet Room was abuzz with activity and excitement. Calling us together, we began with a prayer asking that God's love be woven into the yarn in our hands and that those who would receive the shawls might know God's comforting and healing presence. Little did we know how we would begin to be encompassed in God's love as well.

From the start, creating the Knitting Ministry was a process. At our first meeting, we came up with names of people who might need a shawl. We also decided to record the names of those who received a shawl in a small journal along with the names of the women who knit the shawls. We agreed to make visits with the shawls given to people in town and decided to accompany each shawl with a card explaining the ministry and the reason why we were giving the shawl along with words of comfort and love for the recipient. Soon after our first meeting, Cathy Murtha, DW, the Director of the Spiritual Life Center in Bloomfield, CT, USA, and one of the women who trained me in spiritual direction, shared prayers she had written for her

48

KNITTING INTO THE MYSTERY OF GOD

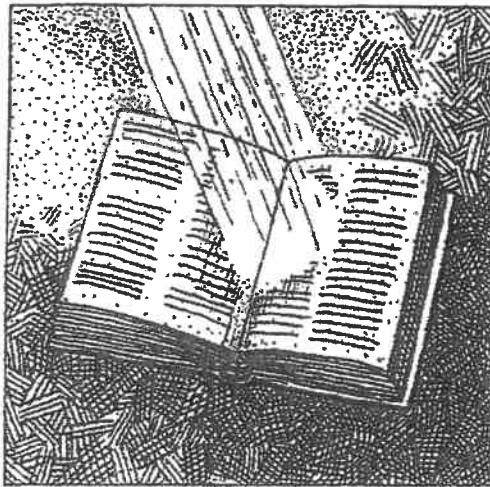
BY SUSAN SCHENCK IZARD

*You created my inmost self,
knit me together in my mother's womb.
For so many marvels I thank you;
a wonder am I, and all your works are wonders.*

—Psalm 139, New Jerusalem Bible

Ever since my pregnancy with my oldest daughter, I have loved this psalm. Early on a friend gave me a picture book about the first nine months of life. The book showed a picture of the fetus during each month of gestation. I can remember coming home from my monthly check-ups, after listening to my daughter's heartbeat, and staring at the pictures for the corresponding month. It seemed impossible that the baby within me could be growing like the one in the pictures. How could something so mysterious be going on within me? The hours I spent poring over the book did not prepare me for the moment of my daughter's birth when her body was placed on my chest and my husband and I watched her take her first breath and come to life. It was then that I knew the power of God's mysterious gift of life. Nothing less could have created the child in my arms.

Over the years of being a mother, giving birth two more times, and being a minister and spiritual director, my sense of awe and wonder of God's mysterious love has deepened. Time and again I have been struck by the variety of ways God knits together the mystery of the sacred in my daily life. I have come to understand that I live for those moments of revelation, for they



sustain, teach, and guide me. Until recently, however, I have seen God's knitting as a one-way street — God has been the active one and I have been the recipient. It never really occurred to me that I could take part in the knitting. That changed as I began knitting prayer/healing shawls with the Knitting Ministry at my church. Throughout the past few months, I have discovered that knitting yarn into shawls and weaving prayers into the

shawl creates a vessel for God's mysterious presence in other people's lives. The old expression, "Our hands are God's hands" has taken on new life. The ministry isn't just about how I care for others, but how God chooses to care for others through my caring. The simple act of knitting, a skill my grandmother taught me when I was eight, has allowed me, and many others, to witness God's mysterious love in a very tangible, concrete form.

At times I wonder at the ease of this ministry. How could a simple shawl mean so much? After years of studying theology and preparing for ministry, could it be possible that all I really need to know is how to knit? When I ask these questions, I am reminded that God's love isn't for me to understand — it is only for

Gathering Prayer and Blessing (for group work) © 2015 All rights reserved

By: Cathleen O'Meara Murtha, DW

www.shawlministry.com

✓ **As we gather in community to share our prayer,
our stories, the work of our hearts and hands,
we pray for God's blessing on our endeavors:**

**A blessing to my mind –
to be free to enter this time of contemplative activity...**

✓ **A blessing to my hands –
to be the source of creating something of beauty and love...**

**A blessing to my soul –
to be open to the promptings of loving and caring...**

✓ **A blessing to my yarn –
to be shaped into patterns of loving and caring...**

✓ **A blessing to my needles –
to be the holders of stitches as they become a whole garment...**

✓ **A blessing to my knitting –
to be a work of heart and hands, body and spirit...**

✓ **A blessing on the one
who will receive the fruit of my prayer and my knitting...**

✓ **May this shawl be welcomed in the spirit in which it was knitted...**

**May we become one with the One
who knitted each of us in our mother's womb...**

**I join my blessing, my prayer and my knitting with women all over the earth in
this common effort to bring healing and wholeness, comfort and celebration.**

✓ **We pray this in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
AMEN!**

Heavenly Father.....you who know the deepest desires of our hearts.....to encourage.....to nurture.....to soothe the weary worn travelers of this earth.

As we wait expectantly for the return of your Son, Jesus.....we create these shawls with purpose. Purpose to lift the heavy loads and burdens from the backs of the bearers.

With each stitch that is made, let it be a representation of the love that flows freely from the throne room of grace.

Merciful Redeemer.....gives us the were withal to accomplish this labor of love.

Bless every part of our being, so that we are able to create one shawl after another, never growing weary.

Let all be done to Your Honor and Glory.....in the Precious Name of Your Son, Jesus. AMEN

Submitted by.....June Gauthier © 2014 All rights reserved

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY PRAYERS

by Corinne De Leonardo

Let us pray together:

(right) Bless our hands that will start with nothing and create something warm and comforting.

(left) Bless our hearts that put the love into these shawls.

(right) Bless our souls, that they be open to continue to make these shawls for those in need.

(left) Bless our families and friends who encourage us to continue making these shawls of faith, hope, and love.

(ALL) Bless everyone who will receive the shawls we create. May it help remind them of our love and support each time they wrap it around their soul.

(ALL) And, thank you for blessing us with the ability to make these hugs that will warm someone. Let it bring healing and joy to those who need it and be a reminder that someone cares.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord, AMEN.

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St. Francis Xavier & St. Mary's Prayer Shawl Ministry



What is the "Prayer Shawl Ministry"?

The Prayer Shawl Ministry is a group of volunteers from St. Francis and St. Mary's parishes who come together in prayer and fellowship to knit and/or crochet shawls for those who may be experiencing a difficult challenge in life. The shawls are then blessed at a weekend mass and are given to fellow parishioners so they may feel and know the prayerful support of their parish community. At the present time, there about 30 volunteers who knit or crochet the prayer shawls.

How are the prayer shawls made?

The prayer shawls are knitted or crocheted and made of soft yarn that is gentle to the skin. They can be machine washed and tumble dried. Each shawl is unique. They are made in a variety of shapes and colors; some have symbols such as a cross woven into the yarn, or beads on a fringe that can be used to pray the rosary, or other religious symbols. The shawls come in a variety of colors and patterns. All come with a card that includes a prayer blessing.

How are the Prayer Shawls used?

The prayer shawls can be used for comfort, warmth, or nurturing. The prayer shawl can be put around the shoulders, laid across the lap, or just held in one's hands. The prayer shawl is a gentle reminder of God's tender love and care, and the ongoing prayers being said for the one receiving the shawl.

Who are the prayer shawls for?

Prayer Shawls are given to someone who may be experiencing a difficult challenge in life such as grief, a serious illness, a divorce, chemotherapy, dialysis, etc. Distribution of the shawls is handled through the parish pastoral staff. Names of recipients are confidential and not known to the one making the prayer shawl. The Prayer Shawl Ministry is an outreach service of the parish communities of St. Francis Xavier and St. Mary Parishes and are free of charge.

If you or a family member is experiencing a difficult or challenging time in your life and would like to receive a prayer shawl, please call the parish office or contact one of the pastoral staff and we would be happy to give one to you.

Prayer For Comfort

As you wrap yourself in the prayer shawl of comfort...

May God wrap you with an all-encompassing love and surround you with peace and comfort.

May you find comfort

when you feel like it is too much to bear at this moment

when you feel as if you might be the breaking point

when you feel a threat to your peace of heart.

May this prayer shawl be

a shelter for time of overwhelming grief

a shade in times of sorrow too deep for words

a shield from times of unimaginable loss.

May you be comforted

by the presence of those who love and support you

by faith in the eternal Loving One

by the memories of what you hold most dear.

May you be strengthened

in your daily comings and goings

in your tentative new beginnings

in your unfolding new memories.

May God send you Angels of Comfort to be with you, your family, and your friends now and forevermore.

Mantle of Love, Healer of Hearts

I ask a blessing from all who have come before me;
whose hands have been instruments of creation and beauty;
who have used humble tools and homespun wool in order to provide cover and
warmth for
themselves and those they loved;
who have felt, as I will feel, the yarn in their fingers;
who have seen, as I will see, the growth of the fabric;
who have heard, as I will hear, the click of the needles.

Guide my attention to stay on course.
Hold me close and ground me.
Bless, also, this yarn and these knitting needles.
May any negative energy connected to them be cast away as I cast on;
and all positive energy bound in as I bind off.
In their simplicity, may I find comfort and solace.

Bless my hands...
Often just appendages at the end of my arms...
workers doing their job without appreciation...looked at, yet not really seen.
These instruments of love have done mundane tasks, yet also create beauty.
They reach out, touch, stroke, scrub, lift, grasp, gesture and guide.
These hands, my hands, gifts of great importance,
Blessing be on them and in them as I begin.
May the fruits of their labor be good!

May God's blessing on My Endeavor

As I begin I pray for blessings . . .
A blessing to my mind - to be free to enter this time of contemplative activity...
A blessing to my hands - to be the source of creating something of beauty and love...
A blessing to my soul - to be open to the promptings of loving and caring...
A blessing to my yarn - to be shaped into patterns of loving and caring...
A blessing to my needles - to be the holders of stitches as they become a whole
garment...
A blessing to my knitting - to be a work of heart and hands, body and spirit...
A blessing on the one who will receive the fruit of my prayer and my knitting...
May this shawl be welcomed in the spirit in which it was knitted...
May we become one with the One who knitted each of us in our mother's womb...
I join my blessing, my prayer and my knitting with women all over the earth in this
common effort to bring healing and wholeness, comfort and celebration.

Blessings

I ask for blessings from above

**Creator, the giver of life, the holder of time
To the One who listens to our hearts and is the healer and the lifter of pain.
You are the comforter, the consolator, the sustainer of life.**

**I knit a mantle of caring
I knit a mantle of protection
I knit a mantle of wholeness**

**I knit a mantle of strength
I knit a mantle of healing
I knit a mantle of patience**

**I knit a mantle to enfold you
I knit a mantle to encircle you
I knit a mantle to empower you.**

Prayer For Healing

**Spirit of Life,
You knitted me together in my mother's womb.
To my flesh and blood you gave the breath of life.**

**O loving One, renew me this day in your love, grant me life as gift of Your
faithfulness; grant me light to journey by; grant me hope to sustain me.**

**May this mantle be for me a sign of Your healing presence. May it warm me
when I am weary; may it surround me with ease of my suffering; may it
encircle me with caring when I am in pain.**

**You give comfort the broken in body and spirit, be with me and all who
suffer this day. Be with the doctors, nurses, social workers, home health
aides, support staff, volunteers, and the chaplains and all who care for the
sick.**

Be with the families and friends who give care, love and comfort the sick.

**May Your gentle, and loving touch reach out to heal all the broken
and hurting people throughout our world.**

Prayer shawl

16-22 in. wide

60-70 in long

Knit robe

40 X 40

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