

CROCHETING FOR JESUS

Spirit in Action Sunday, February 27, 2011

By Jan Bass

I have been crocheting for over 35 years and I just love the craft. When the crochet bug really hit me several years ago after a short lapse, it didn't take me long to consider that I wanted to put my crochet to work in some sort of ministry.

I grew up in a family of crafters and handy people who often made things for church, school, scouts, etc., so I learned at a very early age to put my faith into action through my hands.

I knew there were lots of charitable groups looking for handmade items, such as hats, scarves, even toy bears, but I was really blown away by the hundreds of groups listed on a website of charitable crafting. There were so many worthy projects, but the one that I was immediately drawn to was one I had never heard of before, The Prayer Shawl Ministry. It was the first one I found on the list (and that list was alphabetical) that seemed to combine handcrafting with spirituality. Not only that, it was all about doing something in your local faith community and, even better, it crossed all faith traditions.

For those not familiar with this ministry, a prayer shawl is a handmade item, such as a shawl, a wrap or a small blanket, that is typically crocheted or knitted. The person making the shawl works in an attitude of prayer and, in fact, I like to start and finish each session with a moment of quieting prayer. As I stitch, I try to crochet in a contemplative manner, saying or thinking lots of little prayers.

If I know who will be receiving the shawl, I will pray about their specific situation. If I don't, it is because the shawl will be given to the church for Pastor Arlene to give to someone who would benefit from receiving it. I pray all sorts of little prayers. God of love; God of hope; God of healing; God of peace, Bless this shawl, Bless the person who receives it.

When the person ultimately receives the prayer shawl and is wrapped in it, they are wrapped in all the prayers that have been infused in it. I know that person will take from it the prayers they need. One way of thinking of it, it's sort of like a prayer hug.

Along the way, I have added other charitable projects to my list, such as crocheting hats for chemo patients and the homeless, afghan squares for Warm Up America and scarves for Special Olympics, and even a few fun things like crocheting pears and mushrooms for the church bazaar. These are great projects to take on the go and I love doing these projects. But prayer shawls continue to have a special place in my heart. For me the making and giving of prayer shawls is not about production, but rather it is both a spiritual discipline and a special ministry of faith in action, of prayer and of a bit of yarn.