

A soft purple gift of love, faith and healing wishes



BARB GUY

I am wearing a gorgeous, impossibly soft, purple shawl. It's a prayer shawl, actually. I don't wear shawls normally, and if you must know, I don't typically pray, either. Yet I am overjoyed and humbled by this shawl.

This warm, comforting wrap, knitted out of love and faith and healing wishes, was given to me by my church. Somehow I am comfortable saying "my church" even though I haven't been to a service there since probably 1978. Not that I've been attending elsewhere.

It was my late mom who planted me firmly in this particular church, raising me with Sunday school and vacation Bible school and cherub choir and youth fellowship and confirmation. It was she who loved and was loved by so many of the people there. It was she whose heart

broke when I stopped going. And she who smiled cheerfully when I was married by a hippie at the International Peace Gardens in Jordan Park.

My shawl has passed through the hands of loving women who do good for its own sake, women who believe in God and ask him for things on your behalf when you need it. They are honest, unassuming church women. They bake cakes and hold yard sales and cater funerals and visit the sick and write checks for the poor and worry about where the homeless sleep because that's what's in their hearts - and because it's the kind of thing Jesus did.

Some of these women also get together and knit amazing shawls; then they enclose a couple of pages of prayers and give them to people.

One day back in May, when I was well and vacationing in Italy, a woman named Margot knitted my shawl and probably put it on a shelf, waiting to hear of a need. She didn't know she was knitting it for me; she did it out of anonymous charity, not needing to know where it would end up.

But it turns out that Margot was one of my mom's dear friends and by extension one of my own; in fact, she came to my wedding in the garden. She is a woman I never see but whose voice and

laugh I can hear in my head, and I could not have been happier or sadder to see her name pinned to my gift, as in, "This shawl was made by Margot so-and-so."

Margot's beautiful violet shawl was delivered to my house by Pam, a friend from Sunday school days, a friend who grew up among the church women as I did, and a woman whose own mother's efforts took root more permanently: Pam is now one of the good church women. At some meeting of the women, she recognized the name of an old pal and volunteered to find me and give me the gift.

After a very pleasant lunch with Pam I cried stinging chemotherapy tears on the prayer shawl all afternoon. What are my responsibilities to this shawl and the women who gave it to me? I can't at age 47 transform into a person who uses it for its intended purpose. But I love it so much.

One of the prayers asks, "May the one who receives this shawl be cradled in hope, kept in joy, graced with peace and wrapped in love." That prayer has already come true, but it's not my prayer, it's one on my behalf.

In the end, I decide to make a promise. My promise to the shawl and the women and God if he's listening is that I will endeavor to realize how many

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opportunities there are to
perform this kind of quiet
kindness for other people.

*BARB GUY is a regular contributor to
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