

The wait is over

Though most parents like to find out the sex of their baby about halfway through their pregnancies, I prefer to wait for the big reveal. A major reason parents learn whether they're having a boy or a girl is to settle on one name and begin using it before the baby arrives. But there's a new twist on the old pregnancy suspense game. Rather than sharing the name they've chosen to friends and family, some couples are waiting until the big day to reveal what everyone will be calling their new little boy or girl.

If I made the wait to learn my boys' names agonizing for you, I apologize. My family experienced this phenomenon for the first time this past April. My cousin Jenny, who recently gave birth to her first child, is one third of the reason I decided to become a teacher.

Jenny has always been passionate about reading, writing, and working with young people. While the other kids played on the beach in Ocean City, she plowed through novel after novel. Jenny has a cat named Gatsby and posts teasers on Facebook - with page numbers! - for the books she's reading.

Jenny wrote, produced and directed St. Michael the Archangel's Christmas pageant when she was in the eighth grade. She's written plenty more since then, earning a creative writing degree from Emerson University. Even the personal notes she writes in greeting cards are poetic.

Although she's a few years older, Jenny was never too "cool" to hang out with me. She earned her master's in teaching from NYU, and has taught an incredibly diverse range of high school students from the Bronx to the quiet Massachusetts suburbs, where she and her husband Mike now live.

Jenny is calm, creative, hip and enthusiastic, all of which are important traits for being a good teacher and parent.

I was so excited when I found out that Jenny and her husband Mike were expecting

their first baby a few days after I discovered I was pregnant again. Though I felt awkward doing so, I shared my good news with the family at her baby shower. I didn't want to upstage Jenny's special day, but she lives so far away, and I doubted I'd see her again before we had our babies. Like Mary running to Elizabeth, I wanted to share with my cousin the joy of the new lives forming inside of us.

When Jenny's due date came and passed, our family grew more and more anxious (though nowhere near as unnerved as Jenny and Mike) in anticipation of the arrival of our new little girl and her name. Finally, Tabitha Sadie was born on April 10th. Like her name and her mother, she's strikingly beautiful. Her little face makes me smile every time I see the announcement on my refrigerator.

After Tabitha was born, I knew I was on deck. Though I'd done it before, I was still just as nervous about bringing my baby into the world. Most of all, I was worried about the baby's big brother - Collin Patrick.

I always wanted my children to have a saint's name as their middle name. It gives them someone to look up to and someone to watch over them. In case you've been living under some Connemara marble, Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland. His feast day just so happens to be my favorite holiday. Collin's middle name is also in honor of his father, my wonderful husband who shares my love of all things Irish.

I'm still not exactly sure where the name Collin came from. The meaning of the name varies, depending on where you look. Some places say it means "little cub." Others, "dove." Or my favorite, "strength." We went to high school with a couple of nice guys named Collin. Matt Damon plays a rouge police officer named Collin Sullivan in my favorite movie, "The Departed." Most likely, it showed up in a Google search I did for Irish baby names and it was the only one my husband and I could agree upon. (Sorry, Seamus).

I just asked my husband why we chose the name Collin. "It's a good, strong Irish name," he said. That's good enough for me.

The one stipulation was that I wanted him to have two "l"s rather than one, despite knowing firsthand the complications associated with an untraditionally spelled name. I didn't want anyone calling him "colon," which is how former Secretary of

State Colin Powell's first name is pronounced. So, what happened during that all important first sacrament when we present our children to God by name?

Collin was baptized by a visiting priest, a fascinating Rwandan refugee named Father Bienvenue who spoke in a thick African French accent. He was difficult to understand sometimes, but his homilies were incredible, especially the one he gave about genocide on the day he baptized Collin. When he began the ceremony after Mass, Father Bienvenue asked that my family and friends gather closer to Colin Powell. At first I thought it was a mistake, but didn't want to correct him. Then, he said it again. The third time, he caught himself and said in his deep, inflected voice, "I don't know why I keep calling this baby Colin Powell. Maybe someday he will be Secretary of State." We all laughed, and Collin Patrick was freed from original sin.

Frank Michael will be baptized soon and has the added bonus of one and a half saint's names. His first name is a little more meaningful than Collin's. Tomorrow you'll find out why.