

# Wrap mother-to-be in prayer

Baby showers are wonderful. I have attended - and hosted - more than my share. When my sister was expecting her second baby, we were excited to celebrate this little one on the way. But we didn't want to throw yet another shower.

Then my sister-in-law described how she had gathered with friends to pray for an expectant mother and her baby.

A prayer gathering! It seemed intuitive and obvious. Why had I never thought of it before? I could simply invite friends and family to come together and pray for the mother and child. I sent out invitations, and we waited for the guests to reply.

Almost immediately I started hearing from people.

"What's wrong?" one asked. "Why are you praying for the baby?"

Everything was perfectly fine. We just wanted to gather and surround this baby and her mother in prayer. So we did. We sat together in my living room and prayed the joyful mysteries of the rosary, asking our Blessed Mother to intercede for this child and her parents, praying for a healthy pregnancy, an easy delivery, and for years of happiness for the family as they grew.

As our voices rose and fell together with the rhythm of the words, our fingers moving along the beads, I was moved by the power of prayer. As we prayed, I glanced at my sister, awaiting her little one with hope, excitement and, very likely, anxiety. I couldn't help feeling that although she might have been able to use a few more lavender onesies or organic blankets, what she, her husband and their baby needed more than anything were prayers.

That was three years ago. Since then we have hosted prayer gatherings for other babies on the way, children of friends and relatives, and again for my sister as her family has continued to grow. When I hosted yet another this summer, I wondered all over again why it took me so long to consider gathering friends and family for prayer for a little one on the way.

We always say a rosary - and always the joyful mysteries because they are so appropriate for this particular journey in life. But we take time just to be together in a fun and festive way, celebrating our love for one another and this new little life in our world.

Each time I design a simple holy card to mark the event so the guests have something to take along to remember our time together. I like to think they will place those cards on a desk or dresser or mirror, think of our gathering, and continue the prayer we started together.

Naturally, we always enjoy something delicious, and the house fills with noisy, energetic conversation until one of the guests touches my arm and says, "How will you ever get everyone to stop talking and pray?"

Somehow we always do. And, as we take turns saying the decades of the rosary, I am moved by the strength and peace of prayers uttered in my crowded living room.

As we begin October, the month of the rosary, and the month in which we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the final apparition of Our Lady of Fatima, I find myself thinking about the rosary.

It's such a powerful prayer. And clearly we don't need to wait for a baby on the way to pick up our beads. We could gather to pray for a loved one's healing, a new job or home, or the beginning of a new chapter in life. Or, as the Blessed Mother told us a century ago at Fatima, we could pray the rosary daily to obtain peace in the world.

"The rosary is the most beautiful and the most rich in graces of all prayers," said Pope St. Pius X. "If you wish peace to reign in your homes, recite the family rosary."

Maybe during the month of the rosary, we can turn our hopes, needs and concerns over to Mary through the rosary and let her carry them directly to her Son.