

DISCOVERING THE LONGING FOR GOD AS A FRUIT OF SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to explore the concept of spiritual motherhood from the perspective of helping the other to discover the desire for God within their life story. I will work with the hypothesis that the desire for God can be revealed through awareness and reflection on profane desires. To support this hypothesis, the article outlines a perceptual journey that enables the other to gain a deeper understanding of their desires by learning to perceive the objects of their longing as they are, using a phenomenological method. The goal of this journey is to place desires in their proper place within the order of love, known as *Ordo Amoris* and to discover their identity as a child of God.

Keywords

Desire; *Ordo Amoris*; Motherhood; the Common priesthood of the faithful; Attachment; Detachment; Restlessness; Favourable moment; The other; Care

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One cannot overlook the lively discussion about the active participation of women in the Church, ‘in every sphere, not just within the family’.¹ Pope Francis emphasises women’s unique abilities to transform the world into a more humane society through creative

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¹ ‘Women’s way: Pope opens path for more women at Vatican, in church,’ USCCB, accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.usccb.org/news/2023/womens-way-pope-opens-path-more-women-vatican-church>.

perspectives and tenderness.² Contributing significantly to this dialogue, the Synodal Church in Mission document highlights the shared spiritual potential of men and women, created in God's image and likeness. The emphasis on the equal baptismal dignity of women and the historical contribution of women in the church, including their roles as missionaries, saints, theologians and mystics,³ reinforces the importance of spiritual motherhood in the wider context of church history.

Thanks to Baptism, all the faithful share in the priesthood of Christ, known as the common priesthood of the faithful.⁴ I aim to demonstrate that spiritual motherhood realises this common priesthood and embodies its mission in a significant way by accompanying the other⁵ on the perceptual journey to discover a desire for God in their lives.

Central to this exploration is the definition of spiritual motherhood as a ministry that transcends conventional gender concepts, essential for accompanying the other toward uncovering their desire for God. I will begin to define spiritual motherhood by presenting key aspects of maternal love as defined by Erich Fromm, expanding these into a spiritual aspect. Following this, I will explore the symbiotic relationship between caring for life and nurturing the Spirit, demonstrating how these two facets of motherhood are inseparably linked. Finally, a detailed presentation of the perceptual journey as an effective tool for uncovering the longing for God will be illustrated. At the heart of this journey is the role of the spiritual mother: a companion who, having walked this journey themselves and been filled with the joy and peace of God's gifts,⁶ is prepared to accompany the other through each stage

² Cf. 'Women's way: Pope opens path for more women at Vatican, in church.'

³ Cf. 'A Synodal Church in Mission,' accessed November 17, 2023, https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report_IMP.pdf

⁴ Cf. CCC 1591.

⁵ 'The other must be seen in its (infinite) otherness, heterogeneity, in how it is determinative of ourselves.' Jiří Olšovský, *Slovník filozofických pojmů současnosti* (Vyšehrad, 2018), 74. Translated by Hana Benešová.

⁶ This experience was also familiar to the convert C. S. Lewis, who, as Barbora Šmejdová reflects, communicates the joy of God through his works. Lewis naturally invites readers of his literary works into the radiant picture of the fullness of the Christian Trinitarian life, which reveals an almost tangible sensory world brought to perfect splendour in the light of its supernatural source. C. S. Lewis, who wants to share his inner life with God with his readers, thus gives an irreplaceable witness to the Christian Joy that gives life. He does it through authenticity and persuasiveness to his apologetic arguments.' Translated by Hana Benešová.

of their quest to recognise God as Creator, Saviour, and ever-present Companion.

The hypothesis of this discourse is that the desire for God, which is ‘written on the human heart, because man is created by God and for God’,⁷ can be revealed through awareness and reflection on profane desires and giving them a proper place in Augustine’s *Ordo Amoris*.⁸ It serves as a framework for understanding and forming one’s desires so that they reflect the order of love. In this context, profane desires are not necessarily rejected but are instead put in their proper place beneath the desire for God. This theoretical framework is explored through a phenomenological lens, providing a methodological basis for the practical part, which is the realisation of the perceptual journey.

1. Definition of Spiritual Motherhood

To introduce spiritual motherhood⁹ as it is perceived in this article, I shall refer to a description of motherly love mentioned by Erich

Barbora Šmejdová, ‘Argument, nebo svědectví? Radost, potěšení a touha jako téma fundamentální teologie u C. S. Lewise,’ *AUC Theologica* 6, no. 2 (2016), 187–200, doi:10.14712/25363598.2016.21.

⁷ CCC 27.

⁸ Augustine and Chadwick Henry, *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 120.

Augustine’s concept of *Ordo Amoris* is described in *The Confessions* as follows:

“I roared from the groaning of my heart, and my desire was before you, and the light of my eyes was not with me” (Ps. 57: 9–11.). That was inward, while I was still in externals. It was not in a place; but I was fixing my attention on things contained in space, and there I found no place to rest in, nor did those external things receive me so that I could say “It is enough and it is well”. Nor did they allow me to return where it was enough and well for me. I was superior to these external objects but inferior to you, and you are my true joy if I submit to you, and you have made subject to me what you created to be lower than me. This was the correct mean, the middle ground in which I would find health, that I should remain “in your image”, and in serving you be master of my body.’

⁹ There are some examples of the contemporary research on the theme of spiritual motherhood: Noelia Molina, *Motherhood, spirituality and culture* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019). This book explores spiritual skills that assist women during the transition to motherhood.

Kitty Bouwman, ‘Spiritual Motherhood of Monnica,’ *Studies in Spirituality* 29 (2019): 49–69, doi: 10.2145/SIS.29.0.3286957. The study is set within the context of spirituality, drawing from Augustine’s *Confessions* to analyse Monnica’s spiritual motherhood.

Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Medieval West*. Ithaca (NY: Cornell University Press, 2019). The book is a historical exploration of the complex roles, perceptions of motherhood within the Christian tradition, from ancient times through the Middle Ages and into the modern era.

Fromm in his book *The Art of Loving*. Fromm identifies two key aspects of maternal love. The first involves the basic care and responsibility that is essential for the child's survival and development. The second aspect goes beyond mere survival and fosters a positive attitude to life in the child. This approach helps the child to enjoy and value his or her existence, identity, and place in the world.¹⁰

Based on these thoughts, a third aspect arises that is integral to the perception of spiritual motherhood. This aspect involves caring for the Spirit, awakening in the other a longing for God and an understanding of the beauty of being a child of God. This care is not limited to physical care but extends to a spiritual mission, as emphasised in *Mulieris dignitatem*.

The motherhood of every woman, understood in the light of the Gospel, is similarly not only 'of flesh and blood': it expresses a profound 'listening to the word of the living God' and a readiness to 'safeguard' this Word, which is 'the word of eternal life' (cf. John 6:68). For it is precisely those born of earthly mothers, the sons and daughters of the human race, who receive from the Son of God the power to become 'children of God' (John 1:12).¹¹

The deep connection between the care for the Spirit and the Word of God is illuminated in John's Gospel verse 6:63. 'The words I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life.' This verse reaffirms the third aspect of spiritual motherhood, as will be further shown. Roskovec, in his commentary, clarifies the significance of the Greek word used in this verse, *ῥήματα*, which is a synonym for *λόγος*. He emphasises the fundamental truth that the 'incarnate' nature of Jesus is, in fact, the embodiment of the Word of God. Roskovec further argues that understanding the words of the incarnate Word is only possible through attentive listening to those words (John 6:60–63). Only through attentive listening, according to Roskovec, a person can encounter the work of the Spirit and understand Jesus' words.¹²

¹⁰ Cf. Erich Fromm, *The art of loving* (Centennial ed. New York: Continuum, 2000), 44–45.

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year*, 19, available at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html.

¹² Cf. Jan Roskovec, *Evangelium podle Jana* (Praha: Centrum biblických studií AV ČR a UK v Praze ve spolupráci s Českou biblickou společností, 2020), 302.

This discussion leads us to a relevant question: Why is it important for a person to encounter the Spirit? The answer lies in the belief that ‘the Spirit is the giver of life’ (John 6:63). Therefore, spiritual motherhood is also exercised through sharing the Word of God. This theme of sharing personal experience of how the Word of God penetrated their lives is explored further.

Central to the role of a spiritual mother is the sharing of the Word of God, which becomes alive in the life of the other like a vine from which the life-giving sap flows to the branches (John 15:5). Sharing the personal testimony of how ‘listening to the word of the living God’ impacted her life is an effective way to mediate Christ. Having experienced God’s presence significantly helps to glimpse God’s interventions in the life story of the other. This assistance often occurs in dialogue, where shared experiences evoke recognition and understanding. And just as the disciples of Emmaus comprehended the pivotal event of their lives in a conversation with Jesus,¹⁵ so can the other comprehend their own story through dialogue¹⁴ with someone who has already embarked on the perceptual journey.

Spiritual motherhood refers to the mission of inspiring a desire for God in the other and making Jesus Christ identified as the source of life¹⁵ available to them. This mission is not limited to women but pertains to anyone who accompanies the other on their journey towards a new life. Although the term traditionally used for this role is spiritual fatherhood,¹⁶ I choose to use the term spiritual motherhood in this article due to its connection to specific intimate moment and its historical association with women. This preference is also rooted in understanding the Church as a mother¹⁷ through which a person receives new life (Gal. 4:26). Spiritual motherhood is a gender-inclusive term that applies to both male and female companions. The essence of spiritual motherhood is nurturing the longing for God and accompanying the other on their perceptual journey.

¹⁵ Cf. Luke 24:13–53.

¹⁴ Cf. Ivana Noble and Zdenko Širka, *Kdo je člověk? Teologická antropologie ekumenicky* (Praha: Karolinum, 2021), 76.

¹⁵ Cf. John 14:6, Rom. 6:23, and 1 John 5:20.

¹⁶ Stefano de Fiores, et al., *Slovník spirituality* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1999), 614.

¹⁷ Cf. CCC 169.

2. Opening to Maternal Love

Having explored the threefold nature of motherhood – encompassing care, promotion of a love for life, and care for the Spirit, I turn to foundational motivations that lead one to embrace motherhood. The dialogue between Michele M. Schumacher and Elizabeth Badinter¹⁸ provides a critical background to this exploration. Badinter argues that maternal love is not a natural affection but rather a social construct influenced by biological impulses and cultural expectations.¹⁹ Schumacher challenges this view by questioning who would choose to become a mother if not for love.²⁰ In answering this question, she first summarises Badinter’s encouragement to women to prioritise their authentic desire for fulfilment (e.g., in society) over the merely biological desire for motherhood. Schumacher argues that maternal desire fulfils a woman and contributes to her happiness, even though the object of desire is not her but a child. Schumacher supports her argument by citing Franz Pieper’s definition of love as ‘something that comes over us and happens to us like an enchantment’.²¹ Schumacher applies this definition to maternal love and explains that maternal love for a woman comes from a desire whose object is a child, who is also its cause.

Opening to motherhood therefore involves more than biological or social influences; it requires an encounter with a deep love that transcends the self. In the realm of spiritual motherhood, a woman must encounter the love of the heavenly Father (1 John 4,16). This is deepened by a sacramental bond with the Son of God²² through baptism. In this relationship, women find the full expression of their femininity and are therefore inclined to give themselves sincerely to others.²³ In this selfless act of love, the woman discovers her true self. In this way, she opens herself to life and lovingly cares for that life. She also sees God, herself and others more clearly through selfless love, and acquires the vision to care for life in all its dimensions, both earthly and spiritual.

¹⁸ Cf. Michele M. Schumacher, ‘Woman’s Self-interest or Sacrificial Motherhood: Personal Desires, Natural Inclinations and the Meaning of Love,’ *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 77, no. 1 (2013): 71–101, doi:10.1353/THO.2013.0038.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*

²² Cf. LG 7.

²³ Cf. John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem*, 31.

3. Fostering the Longing for God and Life in the Spirit

As I have explored, maternal love, in both its physical and spiritual forms, is deeply intertwined with the act of caring – caring for life and especially caring for the spirit in the other. This care is ignited by the profound recognition of being loved by God, which in turn fosters a nurturing attitude towards others, helping to ignite the longing for God in them.

Maternal love is expressed in caring for others. The ability to care is awakened in a person by knowing they are loved. Similarly, as the desire to care for life is awakened through awareness of being loved, the desire to care for the Spirit is awakened through awareness of God's love for people. Just as a mother creates in her child a positive attitude toward life, a spiritual mother can convey to the other a positive attitude toward God and ignite a desire for a life in the Spirit. I want to show how the care for a life in the Spirit is deeply connected to the theme of life, which is central to John's Gospel.

Life in the Spirit entails an opening to the horizon of eternal life. The key to experiencing immortality lies in rooting one's life in Jesus Christ (John 5:24)²⁴ through baptism as '[b]aptism is linked with the gift of the Spirit, who enables this unveiling and understanding of the mystery of existence'.²⁵ One can distinguish God's presence in life stories by reflecting on the mystery of Jesus' life. As mentioned earlier, listening to the Word of the living God is a means of discovering divine intervention. Hence, listening to the living Word opens a conversation with God, traditionally called prayer. Through prayer, a person learns that people, relationships, and things are not stable and unchanging. However, the prayer, especially the Psalms, leads a person to the recognition that despite human frailty, they can anchor their lives through Jesus' life, suffering, death, and resurrection in the eternal and good God.²⁶ Through this knowledge, a person discovers God's care and love in the events of their lives and experiences that Jesus, the Son of God,

²⁴ 'What Jesus brings into a person's life is eternal – whoever lives and believes in me will not die forever John 5:24.' Jan Roskovec, *Evangelium podle Jana* (Praha: Centrum biblických studií AV ČR a UK v Praze ve spolupráci s Českou biblickou společností, 2020), 468.

²⁵ Mireia Ryšková, 'Odcizený a vykoupený člověk,' in *Kdo je člověk*, ed. Ivana Noble and Zdenko Širka (Praha: Karolinum, 2021), 149. Translated by Tim Noble.

²⁶ Cf. *What Is Man? A Journey Through Biblical Anthropology: The Pontifical Biblical Commission* (Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2021), 44. 'In the biblical tradition, and

can satisfy the deepest desires and help us understand God's magnitude (John 6:58).

Grounded in the life of the Spirit and awakened by the recognition of God's love, our hearts are drawn to a longing for God. This longing is nourished through prayer in which we encounter God and the acknowledgement of His presence in our lives. Indeed, to truly know God and Jesus Christ is to possess eternal life, as stated in John: 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent' (John 17:3). This intimate knowledge of God intertwines our desire for God with the quest for eternal life, revealing that our longing for God is in fact a journey towards eternal life.

So far, the article has explored the concept of spiritual motherhood as a ministry of helping the other to discover their desire for God. The essence of the ministry is defined as the care for the Spirit, which is manifested through dialogue and by highlighting favourable moments in the other's life story that reveal God's interventions. These actions lead the other to recognise that it is good to be a child of God. In the next section, I will explain the process of spiritual transformation, which I have termed the perceptual journey. This journey involves a movement through the secular desire to the desire for God. I will outline the various stages of this journey, including the initial recognition of the desire for a personal experience with God. By exploring these stages, I aim to show that the perceptual journey can be an effective means of rediscovering that a human being is created for God and for eternity.

4. The Perceptual Journey as a Way to Discover the Desire for God

Accompanying the other to help unveil the desire for God, I propose the transformative process I call the 'perceptual journey', which unfolds in three stages: first, the identification and acknowledgement of one's profane desires; second, the discernment of favourable moments that hint at the divine presence; and third, the recognition of oneself as a child of God. The initial stage involves the discernment and articulation of the profane desires that obscure the revelation of one's true identity

in particular; in the Psalter, the fragility of the human being is taken up in prayer that becomes a desire directed to the eternal and good God, attentive to human weakness.'

as a child of God. The second phase prepares the other to glimpse the favourable moment in personal events, which is essential for entering the third phase. This phase involves recognition of being a loved and desired God's child and the decision for constant striving toward the desire for eternity through reflection on and reordering one's desires according to Augustine's *Ordo Amoris*. Engaging in this journey, the other can better understand their desires and discover God as the source of eternal fulfilment.

The first phase involves the discernment and articulation of the profane desires. However, this process is not about eliminating them but placing them through distance and detachment in Augustine's Order of Love. Since cravings influence human perception²⁷, the journey of perception leads through reflection and transformation of perception to see objects of one's desire as they are; on the one hand, with their limitations, and on the other hand, with their potential to recognise the Creator in themselves (Rom. 1:20).

The transformation of desire happens through a perceptual journey that begins with awareness and reflection on desires. I suggest a phenomenological approach in this process. Barbaras writes 'that it is the "immanence" of what we "live" that we find a path toward transcendence; the phenomenological return to the things themselves signifies ipso facto a return to perception'.²⁸ He stresses here that understanding things as they appear to our perception, that is, our immediate experience of phenomena, is the key to understanding the world. Immediate experience of phenomena also suggests that it is a personal experience, without mediation and interpretations according to phenomenological slogans. It is therefore a return to unmediated experience, to seeing the world without the filters of our previous expectations.

The preceding paragraph refers to Husserl's slogan of phenomenology – a return to things themselves. To realise this pure experience without prejudice, Husserl uses the concept of *epoché*, which is explained as a withdrawal (renunciation) from the supposed reality of the world to reality.²⁹ For our purpose, however, I will not analyse his definition, but the definition developed by Barbaras in his book *Desire*

²⁷ Cf. Jakub Čapek, 'Fenomenologie života. K nejnovějším úvahám Renauda Barbarase,' *Reflexe* 48 (2015): 85–102.

²⁸ Renaud Barbaras, *Desire and Distance: Introduction to a Phenomenology of Perception* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 2.

²⁹ Cf. Jiří Olšovský, *Slovník filozofických pojmů současnosti* (Grada, 2011), 82.

and Distance. He understands by *epoché* the method that allows access to the true being of the world through the removal of the obstacles that hinder this understanding.⁵⁰

Since I want to explore the practical implications of desire on our perception of the world, I will follow the same path proposed by Barbaras and ask what obstacles may prevent the experience and perception of desire for God and recognition of being loved and desired God's child.

My concern, then, will be to recognise the obstacles that prevent us from glimpsing the constant and present action of God in the world. The goal is not to eliminate desires but, following the model of the phenomenological *epoché* as defined by Barbaras, to rid them of the 'obstacles' through which one does not glimpse God's presence in the world, which is like the world, present but not perceived (not experienced) because of obstacle.

When Barbaras speaks of obstacles, he is referring to those that hinder a true understanding of being. These obstacles can be prejudices, assumptions, conceptual schemes, or any preoccupation that prevents a deeper and truer understanding of the world. The practice of *epoché*, as Barbaras defines it, allows a person to see the world not as a set of objects for external examination, separate from the observer, but allows for a deeper understanding of phenomena as they are experienced directly by consciousness.⁵¹ When discussing an obstacle that prevents a person from seeing God in created things and His loving interventions in their lives I suggest that it often manifests as a form of attachment to something that is not God. This clinging to what is not God prevents a person from seeing and perceiving God's desire for people and His constant presence in their life story. By practising *epoché*, a person efforts to detach themselves from these obstacles, thereby creating the avenue to glimpse the favourable moment and perceive the desire for God.

Besides reflection of the profane desires, restlessness is an important component at the beginning of the perceptual journey. Through restlessness, a person can enter an unknown space where they discover their vulnerability, insecurity, and longing for an eschatological culmination of their life. The effort a person is willing to put into giving

⁵⁰ Cf. Barbaras, *Desire and Distance*, 62.

⁵¹ Cf. Barbaras, *Desire and Distance*, 62.

a proper place to their desires within *Ordo Amoris* is triggered by the restlessness that often arises after experiencing the favourable moment. At this point, it is appropriate to cite the words of St. Augustine: ‘Our heart is restless until it rests in you.’⁵² These words are vital for this article as I want to show that the peace a person can find in anchoring their life in God is above all that can be found and experienced in this world (1 Cor. 2:9).

The second phase of the journey is characterised by glimpsing the favourable moment. The time in which God acts (Mark 1:15).⁵³ Nevertheless, the question of how a person can identify these favourable moments remains. The passage from *The Confessions*⁵⁴ in which Saint Augustine describes divine intervention may answer this question:

The tumult of my heart took me out into the garden where no one could interfere with the burning struggle with myself in which I was engaged, until the matter could be settled. You knew, but I did not, what the outcome would be. But my madness with myself was part of the process of recovering health, and in the agony of death I was coming to life. I was aware how ill I was, unaware how well I was soon to be. So I went out into the garden. Alypius⁵⁵ followed me step after step. Although he was present, I felt no intrusion on my solitude. How could he abandon me in such a state?⁵⁶

The story begins with a rush out into the garden. We can recognise in this movement a symbol of the *epoché* (detachment) from his familiar milieu and from which Augustine could discern God’s presence in his life and the transience of his ambitions and desires. He mentions the searing struggle and death agony that precedes his healing and entry into a new life with Christ. St. Paul calls this new existence being

⁵² *Conf.* I. 1,1 (CCL 27, 1; tr. Chadwick, 3). *Inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.*

⁵³ ‘Through the qualitative understanding of time the evanescent presence of human existence gained in importance and singularity in Christian thought because it is a favourable time, which should not be allowed to pass by.’ Ondřej Kolář and Matin Vaňáč, ‘Člověk v čase,’ in *Kdo je člověk*, ed. Ivana Noble and Zdenko Širka (Praha: Karolinum, 2021), 269. The quotation translated by Tim Noble.

⁵⁴ This event happened after a meeting with his friend Nebridius, who had told him about two young men who, influenced by the life of St Anthony, had discerned the transience of their aspirations and ambitions and had decided to serve God. Augustine was deeply touched by their story and after this incident was no longer able to continue his way of life and thinking. Cf. *Conf.* VIII 8, 19 (CCL 27, 126).

⁵⁵ Alypius was baptised alongside with Augustine and Adeodatus. Cf. *Conf.* IX 3, 5 (CCL 27, 135).

⁵⁶ Chadwick, *Confession*, 146.

in Christ, a new creation and being clothed in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). This narrative of Augustine's profound personal crisis and subsequent revelation in the garden serves as an example for discerning key moments of spiritual awakening during the perceptual journey.

The final phase of the perceptual journey is the determination to move continuously towards the desire for eternity through reflection on profane desires. This pursuit cannot be realised without the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that a person grasps the mystery of being and discerns the favourable moments in which they perceive God's love and promise.⁵⁷ However, as Ivana Noble aptly defines, the gift of the Holy Spirit also obliges:

‘Human beings oriented anew to the goal already know that they must cooperate with God so that not only they reach the goal but with them the whole of creation.’⁵⁸ Pilgrims continue their perceptual journey by accompanying the other to reveal their desire for God. They recognise Him as a loving parent who blesses His children on their way to Him. In doing so, they bear witness to the hope revealed (1 Pet. 3:15).⁵⁹

Conclusion

In conclusion, the main argument presented in this paper revolves around the significance of a spiritual mother in discovering a longing for God. It asserts that helping the other to reflect on profane desires and glimpse favourable moments of divine intervention within one's life story leads to the unveiling of a desire for God. This transformative process, the perceptual journey, involves perceiving and comprehending one's profane desires. The aim is not to eliminate them but to integrate them into Augustine's *Ordo Amoris*. The perceptual journey consists of three phases which are described in detail. The paper also highlights the prerequisite for embracing spiritual motherhood: a spiritual mother who embarks on and passes through each phase of the perceptual journey desires God as she experiences His love and care; this enables her to be a valuable companion to the other on their perceptual journey.

⁵⁷ Cf. John 16:15; Rom. 8:14–16.

⁵⁸ Ivana Noble, ‘Obraz a podoba Boží,’ in *Kdo je člověk*, ed. Ivana Noble and Zdenko Širka (Praha: Karolinum, 2021), 142. The quotation translated by Tim Noble.

⁵⁹ Cf. LG 10.

This article does not mention any of the great spiritual mothers of the Church because I wanted to describe the ministry of spiritual motherhood more as the realization of the common priesthood of the faithful to which every baptised person is called. By being baptised, a person is joined to Christ and becomes a beloved child of God. This awareness ignites in them the same desire that determined the journey of the Son of God. His life was permeated with the desire for all to know the Father because in this knowledge is eternal life (John 17:3). The motherhood I have written about is a challenge to all believers, regardless of faith, gender, or other considerations. It involves a deep caring for the Spirit, which involves sharing the Word of God and helping to make Jesus Christ known as the source of a new life that a person receives through baptism. The role includes accompanying the other on their perceptual journey, often through shared experiences and dialogue. It is about helping to reveal a longing for God in the other that leads to recognition of being a beloved God's child.

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