



SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD

*"Every priestly vocation
comes from the heart of God
but passes through the heart of a mother."*



FROM THE REQUEST OF THE VATICAN'S CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF POPE BENEDICT XVI, THE TASK TO SPREAD *SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD FOR PRIESTS* IS BEING ANSWERED BY FAMILY VOCATION MINISTRIES.

THE DOCUMENT ENTITLED "*EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF PRIESTS AND SPIRITUAL MATERNITY*" WAS RELEASED ON DECEMBER 8, 2007 BY THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY REQUESTING ALL DIOCESES AND THE LAY FAITHFUL TO HELP THE PRIESTHOOD BY THEIR CONSTANT PRAYER AND EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION.



"Jesus confirms the meaning of motherhood in reference to the body, but at the same time he indicates an even deeper meaning, which is connected with the order of the spirit: it is a sign of the Covenant with God who "is spirit". [...]

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'."*

*—Blessed Pope John Paul II
Mulieres Dignitatem, 8*

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD?

In imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Spiritual Motherhood is a vocation “within a vocation” for women who are called to pray and sacrifice for priests.

WHY SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD?

The initiative for Spiritual Mothers was established for the good of the Clergy.¹ According to the Spiritual Motherhood document, the Congregation for the Clergy has three main goals in mind:

- I. An Authentic Renewal of Priestly Life
- II. The Fruitfulness of Priests’ Pastoral Ministry
- III. An Increase of Vocations to the Priesthood

Pope John Paul II said this in one of his Addresses regarding womanhood and motherhood:

“There are so many mothers today in the same situation as St. Monica. Nobody can thank them enough for what they have done through prayer and sacrifice for the Church and the Kingdom of God. May God reward them for it. If the desired renewal of the Church depends for the most part on its priests, then it will also depend to a large degree on the families and in particular women and mothers.”

—May 4, 1987

1) Cf. Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy, “Eucharistic Adoration for the Sanctification of Priests and Spiritual Maternity”, Page 5



“SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD...REACHED
ITS CULMINATION AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS...”

*“...any woman can
become a mother for
priests. This type of
motherhood is not only
for mothers of families,
but is just as possible
for an unmarried girl,
a widow, or for someone
who is ill...”*

*—Congregation for the Clergy,
Eucharistic Adoration for Priests and
Spiritual Maternity, Page 11*

HOW WAS SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD ESTABLISHED?

Spiritual Motherhood started with Mary's *Fiat* (her "Yes" to God) through the Archangel Gabriel and reached its culmination at the foot of the Cross when Christ entrusted the Blessed Virgin Mary to St. John the Apostle with the words, "Behold your Mother" (John 19:27).

Jesus willed His Eternal Priesthood in and through a Mother. In God's providence, that is the way the Lord ordained it to happen and that is also the normal way the Church fosters vocations to the priesthood: **Through good family life**; through **holy mothers!**

WHO CAN BECOME A SPIRITUAL MOTHER?

"Independent of age or social status, any woman can become a mother for priests. This type of motherhood is not only for mothers of families, but is just as possible for an unmarried girl, a widow, or for someone who is ill." – *Eucharistic Adoration for the Sanctification of Priests and Spiritual Maternity*, Page 11



“SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD IS
A ‘VOCATION WITHIN A VOCATION’...”

WHAT DO SPIRITUAL MOTHERS 'DO'?

"If the desired renewal of the Church depends for the most part on its priests, then it will also depend to a large degree on the families and in particular women and mothers."

—Blessed John Paul II, May 4, 1987

It is important to note, Spiritual Motherhood is not a vocation in itself. It does not replace the married state, the consecrated life, or celibacy for the *sake of the Kingdom*. Spiritual Motherhood is a vocation "within a vocation" for women who discern a calling to assist priests in their vocation and pastoral ministry. The first and foremost duty for any Christian is to answer the universal call to holiness within their particular state of life.² After answering that call, then, women may choose to assist priests by being Spiritual Mothers.

Some ways to assist priests as Spiritual Mothers are:

- Full and Active Participation at Mass and the offering of Holy Communion
- Eucharistic Adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament
- Praying the Liturgy of the Hours, especially Morning Prayer (Lauds) and Evening Prayer (Vespers)
- Praying the Holy Rosary
- Making Spiritual Communions (throughout the day)
- Offering up work and sacrifices
- Praying for them on a daily basis
- Doing penance and mortification for them (prudently)

N.B. The duties of Spiritual Mothers do not bind under sin. All extra prayers and sacrifices from Spiritual Mothers should be done after they answer their own universal call to holiness and the duties of their state of life.

²) Cf. Vatican II, *The Light of the Nations*, 40



THE ESSENCE OF SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD IS EUCHARISTIC!

"And does not physical motherhood also have to be a spiritual motherhood, in order to respond to the whole truth about the human being ...? Thus there exist many reasons for discerning in these two different paths — the two different vocations of women — a profound complementarity, and even a profound union with a person's being."

*—Blessed Pope John Paul II
Mulieres Dignitatem, 21*

THE ESSENCE OF SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD IS EUCHARISTIC!

Spiritual Motherhood cannot be separated from the Paschal mystery of our Lord.

The Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and the Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary are both connected and are one and the same mystery in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Although all of Christ's apostles were present at the institution of the Eucharist, all but one fled the scene of the crucifixion.

The only priest (besides Christ Himself) present at the foot of the Cross was St. John the Apostle. According to Sacred Scripture, the rest of those present could be identified as Spiritual Mothers:

John 19:25 *But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Mag'dalene.*

Matthew 27:55 *There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him; among whom were Mary Mag'dalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zeb'edee.*



“...LET US SAVE ESPECIALLY THE SOULS OF PRIESTS...”

SUPPORTING PRIESTS IN THEIR OFFERING OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

*"Let us live for souls,
let us be apostles, let us
save especially the souls
of priests. . . . Let us
pray, let us suffer for
them, and, on the last day,
Jesus will be grateful."*

—St. Therese of Lisieux

The main duty for priests is to offer sacrifice, namely the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and to consecrate bread and wine into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. The Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is being re-presented at every Mass and requires the constant yes of the ordained minister. Hence, one of the main roles of Spiritual Mothers is to aid the priest by her prayers and sacrifices so the priest can persevere in his duty to offer the Holy Sacrifice as both a priest and victim of Jesus Christ. "Jesus completes His Perfect Sacrifice by entrusting our Lady to St. John the Apostle."³

It is evident the call of being a Spiritual Mother for priests reaches its apex when it is UNITED with the Holy Eucharist, the re-presentation of Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross.

Spiritual Motherhood bears much fruit and is sustained when the Holy Eucharist is the center of a Spiritual Mother's life.

3) Blessed John Paul II, quote from *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, 30 April 1997, page 11.



“I HAVE MY MOTHER TO THANK FOR WHAT I HAVE BECOME...”

*“The hour is coming,
in fact has come, when
the vocation of women is
being acknowledged in
its fullness, the hour in
which women acquire in
the world an influence,
an effect and a power
never hitherto achieved.”*

*—The Closing Message of the Second
Vatican Council*

THE ORDER OF GRACE AND BEARING SPIRITUAL CHILDREN

“The Order of Grace” can be explained by recalling the Blessed Virgin Mary’s life.

The Second Vatican Council document *The Light of the Nations* explains the order of grace through the Blessed Virgin Mary in this way:

“Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and in a singular way, the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore *she is our mother in the order of grace*. This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the Cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect.”⁴

The motherhood of the Blessed Virgin was not only physical to Jesus, but also spiritual to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. At the foot of the Cross, our Lady received her *pangs of birth spiritually*⁵, when the Church was born from the side of Christ.

4) Vatican II, *The Light of the Nations*, 61-62

5) Cf. Sacramentary of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Votive Mass in honor of Mary at the Foot of the Cross II, Preface II, 117



“MOTHERHOOD CONCERNS THE WHOLE PERSON,
NOT JUST THE BODY...”

BEARING SPIRITUAL CHILDREN

Likewise, Spiritual Mothers, who spiritually adopt priests, help the People of God with their sacrifice and suffering in identity with the priest-victim who offers the Holy Sacrifice.

By following the example of Mary, the Mother of God, Spiritual Mothers are able to bear children in the order of grace. Because we as human beings, are composed of Body and Soul, all women are capable of bearing spiritual children.⁶ As seen in the life of our Lady, Mary's "Yes" to God's Will precedes her role as the physical mother of Christ.⁷ Her fidelity of conforming her will to God's Will supersedes her physical motherhood of Christ.

Mat 12:50 *For whoever does the Will of God is my brother, sister and mother.*

Thus, for women who are not capable to bear children physically, for those who are not called to married life (i.e., those who are *consecrated* or *celibate for the sake of the kingdom*), and for those who are widows, they also, are capable of bearing children in the order of grace.

Cloistered nuns who do not have a physical spouse are the primary example of women who bear children in the order of grace. By their conformity to God's will, they have many spiritual children outside of their monastery walls! They pray unceasingly for priests and their pastoral ministry.

*"Yet woman will be
saved through bearing
children, if she continues
in faith and love and
holiness, with modesty"*

— 1 Timothy 2:15, Revised Standard
Version, Second Catholic Edition

6) Cf. Blessed John Paul II, *Mulieres Dignatatem*, 21

7) Cf. St. Augustine, Sermon 25, 7-8: PL 46, 937-938



“I WILL FOREVER BE THANKFUL TO MY MOTHER, WHO HAD THE
COURAGE TO ONCE AGAIN SAY ‘YES’...”

“In the great Christian tradition the woman is recognized as having her own dignity and — following the example of Mary... — her own place in the Church which, though not coinciding with the ordained priesthood, is equally important for the spiritual growth of the community.”

*—Pope Benedict XVI,
October 27th 2010*

BEING IDENTIFIED WITH PRIESTS

The victimhood of Priests is nurtured by the “pierced hearts” of spiritual mothers.

SPIRITUAL MOTHERS, UNITED WITH PRIESTS:

- Pray that priests will be holy, that they become SAINTS!
- Pray they will be conformed to Christ the Eternal High Priest and Victim
- Pray that they will have the Heart of Jesus, having the humility to allow Christ to work through them
- Take priests as their sons by spiritual adoption
- Love priests as their very own
- Recognize saintly priests help make holy people of God

If one priest falls, she does not abandon him, but prays and sacrifices all the more so that he, like the prodigal son, may return to his Father.

Just as St. John the Apostle was entrusted to the Blessed Virgin Mary at the foot of the Cross, she entrusts herself to watch over Priests.

Spiritual Mothers become the mother of the other Christ, the *alter Christus*, the mother of an ordained Priest!



“BY PRAYERS AND SACRIFICES, MANY WOMEN HAVE
CHOSEN TO SUPPORT PRIESTS IN THEIR VOCATION...”

*“Within Christianity,
more than in any other
religion, and since its
very beginning, women
have had a special
dignity, of which the
New Testament shows
us many important
aspects...; it is evident
that women are meant
to form part of the living
and working structure
of Christianity in so
prominent a manner
that perhaps not all their
potentialities have yet
been made clear”*

*—Pope Paul VI from *Mulieres
Dignitatem* by Blessed John Paul II, 9*

HOW DO I SIGN UP TO BE A SPIRITUAL MOTHER?

Any woman can be a Spiritual Mother without formally “signing up” to be one. By prayers and sacrifices, many women have chosen to support priests in their vocation to be Spiritual Fathers to God’s people. *Family Vocation Ministries* is formally offering to assist women in becoming Spiritual Mothers and would like to help with their ongoing formation according to the Magisterial teachings of the Church.

If you would like more information and/or would like to be assigned a priest to become a Spiritual Mother, please fill out the form below, or visit our website: SpiritualMaternity.org. Also, if you would like to start a women’s group of Spiritual Mothers for Priests, we have the resources to assist you in that endeavor.

.....
NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____ PHONE _____

Please return completed form to:

Family Vocation Ministries
7375 Day Creek Blvd., Ste. 103-223
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91739

Family Vocation Ministries
7375 Day Creek Blvd. Ste. 103-223
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91739
(800) 818-0584 / info@spiritualmaternity.org
www.SpiritualMaternity.org