



Towards a Theology of the Intercession of the Holy Spirit. Pneumatological and ecumenical inspirations of Augustine of Hippo in letter 130

**Ku teologii wstawiennictwa Ducha Świętego.
Pneumatologiczne i ekumeniczne inspiracje
Augustyna z Hippony w liście 130**

Keywords: letter of St. Augustine to Proba (130); Spirit Intercessor; theology of intercession

Słowa kluczowe: list św. Augustyna do Proby (130); Duch Święty Orędownik; teologia wstawiennictwa

Abstract

In Catholic theology and ecclesial practice, the intercession of the angels, of the Mother of Jesus, and of the saints is particularly apparent. The justification for this position often do not satisfy Christians from other communities. Yet, the letter of St. Paul to the Romans, particularly 8:27, draws attention to itself: “The Spirit intercedes for us.” Augustine of Hippo proposed a very interesting interpretation of this biblical text in Letter 130. He pointed to the Spirit of the Lord as Intercessor. In a short explanation, he attempts to convince the addressee of the letter that the mission of the Spirit is to enable man to pray. His activity is to remove obstacles in man, not in God the Father, so that he may listen. This small text of Augustine constitutes an important inspiration for a pneumatological-ecumenical interpretation of the intercession of the angels, the Mother of Jesus and the saints

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as intercessors in the Intercessor. This theological approach preserves the primacy of God's action.

Streszczenie

W katolickiej teologii i praktyce kościelnej wstawiennictwo aniołów, Matki Jezusa i świętych jest szczególnie widoczne. Uzasadnienie tego stanowiska często nie zadowala chrześcijan z innych wspólnot. Jednak list św. Pawła do Rzymian, szczególnie 8,27, zwraca na siebie uwagę: "Duch przyczynia się za nami". Augustyn z Hippony zaproponował bardzo ciekawą interpretację tego biblijnego tekstu w Liście 130. wskazał na Ducha Pańskiego jako Orędownika. W krótkim wyjaśnieniu stara się przekonać adresata listu, że misją Ducha jest uzdolnienie człowieka do modlitwy. Jego działanie polega na usuwaniu przeszkód w człowieku, a nie w Bogu Ojcu, aby ten mógł słuchać. Ta perspektywa posiada wymiar doczesny i wieczny. Ten niewielki tekst Augustyna stanowi ważną inspirację dla pneumatologiczno-e-kumenicznej interpretacji wstawiennictwa aniołów, Matki Jezusa i świętych jako orędowników w Orędowniku. Takie podejście teologiczne zachowuje prymat Bożego działania.

1. Introduction

Recent decades have borne fruit in many studies in pneumatology. One cannot complain that the Holy Spirit is the "Great Unknown" in Catholic theology today (De Sanctis 2017; Pek 2000; Laurentin 1997). However, this does not mean that there are no more unanswered questions. One of them is the following: is the Holy Spirit our intercessor? The justification for this question is found in Romans 8:26. St. Paul writes of the Spirit who "intercedes" for the saints. The word in Greek is ἐντυγχάνω and in Latin *interpellare*. This term occurs 5 times in the New Testament.² Contemporary exegesis inspires us to theological-dogmatic

² "... according to St. Paul, the Holy Spirit performs an intercessory ministry towards Christians. The Apostle describes this in Rom 8:26-27. The word for such intercession is ἐντυγχάνω and ὑπερεντυγχάω, which means 'to address someone with a supplication or petition on behalf of another person.' The Holy Spirit helps the 'saints' to deal with the weaknesses and difficulties of their earthly life, and He also helps

reflection (Harvey 2017; Comfort 2015; Bauernfeind 1972). Even more so is this true because in the Bible the concept of intercession is quite dynamic (Rossi 2013).

Contemporary literature on the subject, especially practical theology, emphasizes above all the intercession of the Mother of God, saints and angels. There are no references to the teaching of St. Paul expressed in the Letter to the Romans, especially to the role of the Holy Spirit in the prayer of Christians. The emphasis is laid on the action of humans and angels. God's action is passed over in silence. Did the Lord leave us only an encouragement to pray?

The research hypothesis of this study is therefore as follows: the theology of intercession is conditioned by the image of God, and especially the image of the Holy Spirit. This position is prompted by the reading of letter 130 of St. Augustine of Hippo. Based on this text, the hypothesis will be verified. Although one document of this Father of the Church will be selected, it can be assumed that it is consistent with the entire teaching of the Bishop of Hippo on the theme of the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation history. St. Augustine, who verified certain of his ideas in *Retractationes* does not refer to Romans 8:27-28 or to the idea of intercession.

The research method will consist in a contextual analysis of St. Augustine's. Extensive fragments of Augustine's letter are quoted in order to see better the author's train of thought and thus inspire other researchers to further research³.

believers to formulate their thoughts regardless of their weaknesses, because, according to the Apostle, 'the Spirit himself intercedes with unspeakable groans' (Rom 8:26). Supplications that cannot be expressed in words and sighs (Rom 8:26) may refer to the non-discursive language of prayer that, according to Paul's earlier statements, was used by some Christians. Romans 8:26 is not about the right way to pray – καθὸ δεῖ but rather about the content of prayer. What matters is not what words we pray with, but what we pray for. The function of the Spirit, then, is to intercede for us 'according to the will of God' (Rom 8:27)" (Šipavičius 2021, 60).

³ Among the sources from the fifth century, the description of St. Patrick's

St. Augustine's theological argument, presented to Proba, is of particular substantive importance. According to him, the Holy Spirit, being God, removes obstacles in humans so that he can cry out to the Father. In this way, the idea of intercession acquires a completely different perspective. It is not so much that God must be persuaded of man's expectations and requests, but humans of God's plan. The Spirit of Christ appears as an intercessor.

The question about the intercession of the Spirit was posed by Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski, professor emeritus of the The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Poland). He made a considerable theological inquiry but did not give an affirmative answer to the question posed (Napiórkowski 2013). Inspired by the teaching of the Church, he suggested looking for a term other than intercession or mediation in relation to the action of the Spirit of the Lord. Indeed, colloquially, the first words associated with intercession are saints and angels. They are the ones who are called intercessors or efficacious advocates. It seems, however, that the published results of S. C. Napiórkowski's research deserve attention. Among the texts consulted was the letter of St. Augustine to Proba. He quoted a significant fragment of it, but in the conclusion of his study he did not point to the thought of the Bishop of Hippo as having special theological import.

Meanwhile, St. Augustine's letter to Probe from 1600 years ago (from the year 411 to be precise) is of great importance for the creative development of the theology of the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Not only

experience merits a separate study, as he was also inspired by Romans 8:26-27. He interpreted his missionary zeal as a fruit of the Holy Spirit's intercession: "[25] Another time, I saw in me one who was praying. It was as if I were inside my body, and I heard above me, that is, above my inner self. He prayed strongly, with sighs. I was amazed and astonished, and pondered who it was who prayed in me; but at the end of the prayer, it was clear that it was the Spirit. At this I awoke, and I remembered the apostle saying: 'The Spirit helps the weaknesses of our prayer; for we do know what it is we should pray, but the very Spirit pleads for us with unspeakable sighs, which cannot be expressed in words.' And again: 'The Lord is our advocate, and pleads for us'" (Patrick Saint nd.)

does it shed light on one of His missions, but it can also inspire us to shed new light on the intercession of the saints, including the Mother of God and the angels. The Bishop of Hippo, inspired by Romans 8:26-27, leads his reflection on prayer in such a way that it can be hypothesized that the theology of intercession depends on the image of God, particularly on the image of the Holy Spirit.

The addressee of Letter 130 of St. Augustine (Greco 2014) is Anicia Faltonia Proba (d. 432), widow of the Grand Consul Sesto Petronio Proba and granddaughter of Valeria Faltonia Proba (d. 370), a well-known Christian poet (Ekmann 2012). She belonged to an aristocratic family, and after the invasion of Rome by the Goths, she settled in one of the provinces of the Roman Empire (in today's Tunisia).

St. Augustine wrote a letter to Proba about prayer. This thematic context is extremely important, given that it refers to a particular activity of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Holy Spirit – the source of unity with man

St. Augustine, writing about prayer, puts in the foreground the truth about man, his life horizons narrowed to what is temporal. Even the sincerest desire for a good prayer doesn't matter when it doesn't involve eternal life:

Why, then, are our desires scattered over many things, and why, through fear of not praying as we ought, do we ask what we should pray for, and not rather say with the Psalmist: One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple? For in the house of the Lord all the days of life are not days distinguished by their successively coming and passing away: the beginning of one day is not the end of another; but they are all alike unending in that place where the life which is made up of them has itself no end. In order to our obtaining this true blessed life, He who is Himself the True Blessed Life has taught us to pray [...], not with much speaking,

as if our being heard depended upon the fluency with which we express ourselves, seeing that we are praying [...] (Augustine, *Letter* 130, 8, 15).

An illustration of man's narrow desires may be that he relies on many words. In this case, he does not refer to contemporary examples. According to him, this word of God invites us to broaden man's expectations and therefore presupposes that the problem exists in every age. Fundamental is St. Augustine's conviction about the dynamic life of God, who communicates himself through his word, that is, through his words. The word not only informs but causes what it signifies. It possesses power:

Why this should be done by Him who before we ask Him knows what things we have need of, might perplex our minds, if we did not understand that the Lord our God requires us to ask not that thereby our wish may be intimated to Him, for to Him it cannot be unknown, but in order that by prayer there may be exercised in us by supplications that desire by which we may receive what He prepares to bestow. His gifts are very great, but we are small and straitened in our capacity of receiving. Wherefore it is said to us: Be enlarged, not bearing the yoke along with unbelievers. 2 Corinthians 6:13-14 For, in proportion to the simplicity of our faith, the firmness of our hope, and the ardour of our desire, will we more largely receive of that which is immensely great; which eye has not seen, for it is not color; which the ear has not heard, for it is not sound; and which has not ascended into the heart of man, for the heart of man must ascend to it. 1 Corinthians 2:9 [...] And therefore, what else is intended by the words of the apostle: Pray without ceasing, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 than, Desire without intermission, from Him who alone can give it, a happy life, which no life can be but that which is eternal? (Augustine, *Letter* 130, 8, 17).

For the theology of intercession, the seeds of which can be found in the Letter to Proba, St. Augustine's teaching on happiness is important. In the text under discussion, he emphasizes several times that prayer and the whole of life require the perspective of eternal life. This is one of the topics that he took up in *Retractationes* (Augustinus, *Retractationes* 1.2, 1.4, 1.13, 1.18), expressing his belief that he had to change

his view expressed in his earlier writings. Ultimately, he confessed that full happiness cannot be achieved in earthly life. Later in the Letter to Proba, when the Advocate Spirit is indicated, it will become clear that He is the source of directing people to eternal life, that is, to Himself.

In the conviction of St. Augustine, expressed in his letter to Proba, questions about the circumstances of prayer and its duration are irrelevant, especially if they assume the belief that its essence consists in informing God about the situation of man's life:

This, therefore, let us desire continually from the Lord our God; and thus let us pray continually. But at certain hours we recall our minds from other cares and business, in which desire itself somehow is cooled down, to the business of prayer, admonishing ourselves by the words of our prayer to fix attention upon that which we desire, lest what had begun to lose heat become altogether cold, and be finally extinguished, if the flame be not more frequently fanned. Whence, also, when the same apostle says, Let your requests be made known unto God, Philippians 4:6 this is not to be understood as if thereby they become known to God, who certainly knew them before they were uttered, but in this sense, that they are to be made known to ourselves in the presence of God by patient waiting upon Him, not in the presence of men by ostentatious worship (Augustine, *Letter* 130, 9, 18).

The addressee of St. Augustine's letter, reading about prayer, also received a brief image of the God of Christians: a personal image, the image of the Triune God, the image of the Father revealed in the eternal Word made flesh:

Wherefore it is neither wrong nor unprofitable to spend much time in praying, if there be leisure for this without hindering other good and necessary works to which duty calls us, although even in the doing of these, as I have said, we ought by cherishing holy desire to pray without ceasing. For to spend a long time in prayer is not, as some think, the same thing as to pray with much speaking. Multiplied words are one thing, long-continued warmth of desire is another. For even of the Lord Himself it is written, that He continued all night in prayer, Luke 6:12 and that His prayer was more prolonged when He was in an agony; and in

this is not an example given to us by Him who is in time an Intercessor such as we need, and who is with the Father eternally the Hearer of prayer? (Augustine, *Letter* 130, 9, 18).

Linguistically, the Letter to Proba appears to be a simple meditation on prayer that contains many practical observations. Most of them refer to a form of external prayer. However, the advice given by St. Augustine aims at indicating the greatness of the interior of human beings. However, the original anthropological concept of the Bishop of Hippo is revealed in his seemingly banal advice. The “interiority” of each human is the place of encounter with God (Trapè 1978, 386). The concept of Saint Augustine is not conditioned by the trend of Platonic philosophy, but by reading the truth about humans in the light of God as the Trinity (Augustinus, *De Trinitate* 15 {CCL 50, 474}). This anthropological perspective is confirmed and deepened by the theology of the intercession of the Holy Spirit. So, it is understandable that St. Augustine, at the end of his letter to Proba, recalled the Letter to the Romans, which speaks about the Spirit sent into human hearts.

According to St. Augustine, many words in prayer also limit the greatness of human. He cannot be reduced to a creature that is capable only of speaking. He stands before the Lord of mankind with all his faculties of body and spirit, which have their origin and foundation in His creative word:

Far be it from us either to use much speaking in prayer, or to refrain from prolonged prayer, if fervent attention of the soul continue. To use much speaking in prayer is to employ a superfluity of words in asking a necessary thing; but to prolong prayer is to have the heart throbbing with continued pious emotion towards Him to whom we pray. For in most cases prayer consists more in groaning than in speaking, in tears rather than in words. But He sets our tears in His sight, and our groaning is not hidden from Him who made all things by the word, and does not need human words (Augustine, *Letter* 130, 10, 20).

The quoted fragments of St. Augustine's letter about the human attitude in relation to prayer may suggest that his anthropology is negative. It is true that the Bishop of Hippo did not praise people's efforts to pray well and did not cite praiseworthy attitudes. This, however, does not matter when the true image of God is revealed to man. In such an approach, the most important thing is the true narrative about man.

3. The Holy Spirit – the source of unity with the Father and the Son

God cares for humans and knows what is good for him. He does not need to be persuaded to take care of man's destiny. Is it not true that, as St. Augustine said above, "The life, which became flesh, taught us to pray"? The Bishop of Hippo reveals a specific feature of the God of Christians, who is Father, which He demonstrated by sending his Son for the salvation of men (Siwecki 2020). In the face of this truth, humans place themselves in the position of a receiver.

Catholic soteriology knows the category of *receptio*. It allows us to understand *cooperatio* correctly. Emphasizing only "cooperation" with God can blur the distinction between the Creator and the creature. You cannot recreate the position of humans as God's partner. Even the "holiest" of men and angels should not be called effective intercessors, lest the image of God be falsified. St. Augustine wants to focus above all on God's action towards humans and his ability to "receive" His Creator and Savior:

To us, therefore, words are necessary, that by them we may be assisted in considering and observing what we ask, not as means by which we expect that God is to be either informed or moved to compliance. When, therefore, we say: Hallowed be Your name, we admonish ourselves to desire that His name, which is always holy, may be also among men esteemed holy, that is to say, not despised; which is an advantage not to God, but to men (Augustine, *Letter 130*, 11, 21).

According to the Bishop of Hippo, it is enough to stop at the Lord's Prayer to discover that specific image of God, the Father of Christians,

which was revealed in the incarnate Son of the Savior. The fruit of the Father's self-communication, on the path of forgiveness, is the renewed condition of man, because he becomes capable of a relationship with God and with his neighbor:

When we say: Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, we pray for ourselves that He would give us the grace of obedience, that His will may be done by us in the same way as it is done in heavenly places by His angels. When we say: Give us this day our daily bread, the word this day signifies for the present time, in which we ask either for that competency of temporal blessings which I have spoken of before (bread being used to designate the whole of those blessings, because of its constituting so important a part of them), or the sacrament of believers, which is in this present time necessary, but necessary in order to obtain the felicity not of the present time, but of eternity. When we say: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, we remind ourselves both what we should ask, and what we should do in order that we may be worthy to receive what we ask. When we say: Lead us not into temptation, we admonish ourselves to seek that we may not, through being deprived of God's help, be either ensnared to consent or compelled to yield to temptation. When we say: Deliver us from evil, we admonish ourselves to consider that we are not yet enjoying that good estate in which we shall experience no evil. And this petition, which stands last in the Lord's Prayer, is so comprehensive that a Christian, in whatsoever affliction he be placed, may in using it give utterance to his groans and find vent for his tears — may begin with this petition, go on with it, and with it conclude his prayer. For it was necessary that by the use of these words the things which they signify should be kept before our memory (Augustine, *Letter* 130, 11,21).

St. Augustine, after this extensive introduction, which was largely a proclamation of the mystery of God and a purification of many human (naturalistic) ideas about prayer, draws attention to the special action of the Spirit that began at the moment of Baptism:

For whatever other words we may say — whether the desire of the person praying go before the words, and employ them in order to give definite form to its requests, or come after them, and concentrate attention

upon them, that it may increase in fervour — if we pray rightly, and as becomes our wants, we say nothing but what is already contained in the Lord's Prayer. And whoever says in prayer anything which cannot find its place in that gospel prayer, is praying in a way which, if it be not unlawful, is at least not spiritual; and I know not how carnal prayers can be lawful, since it becomes those who are born again by the Spirit to pray in no other way than spiritually (Augustine, *Letter* 130, 12,22).

The last sentence of the quoted passage from the letter of St. Augustine signals the action of the Holy Spirit in the baptized, but it does not state that this is the beginning of the Spirit's communication to man. First was the word of God, which formed the People of God. This word was accompanied by the Spirit, who is the principle of unity in God. Therefore, the word accepted in faith not only created an individual (personal) relationship with the Triune One, but also brought about unity among those called by God:

You have now, if I am not mistaken, an answer to two questions — what kind of person you ought to be if you would pray, and what things you should ask in prayer; and the answer has been given not by my teaching, but by His who has condescended to teach us all. A happy life is to be sought after, and this is to be asked from the Lord God. Many different answers have been given by many in discussing wherein true happiness consists; but why should we go to many teachers, or consider many answers to this question? It has been briefly and truly stated in the divine Scriptures, Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord. That we may be numbered among this people, and that we may attain to beholding Him and dwelling forever with Him, the end of the commandment is, charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. 1 Timothy 1:5 In the same three, hope has been placed instead of a good conscience. Faith, hope, and charity, therefore, lead unto God the man who prays (Augustine, *Letter* 130, 13, 14).

The Bishop of Hippo, in revealing God's mercy to man, does not hesitate to touch upon the human experience of suffering. It influences the image of one's own happiness and thus the image of God and can

result in the tendency to look for advocates for one's own cause and within one's narrow horizons:

Perhaps you may still ask why the apostle said, We know not what to pray for as we ought, Romans 8:26 for it is wholly incredible that either he or those to whom he wrote were ignorant of the Lord's Prayer. He could not say this either rashly or falsely; what, then, do we suppose to be his reason for the statement? Is it not that vexations and troubles in this world are for the most part profitable either to heal the swelling of pride, or to prove and exercise patience, for which, after such probation and discipline, a greater reward is reserved, or to punish and eradicate some sins; but we, not knowing what beneficial purpose these may serve, desire to be freed from all tribulation? To this ignorance the apostle showed that even he himself was not a stranger (unless, perhaps, he did it notwithstanding his knowing what to pray for as he ought), when, lest he should be exalted above measure by the greatness of the revelations, there was given unto him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him; for which thing, not knowing surely what he ought to pray for, he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. At length he received the answer of God, declaring why that which so great a man prayed for was denied, and why it was expedient that it should not be done: My grace is sufficient for you; my strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor 12:7-9) [Augustine, *Letter* 130, 14, 25].

The author of the letter to Proba does not merely encourage us to remain confident in the conviction that the Father has prepared a good plan for his children. He invites the widow to focus on the words of Jesus Christ's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane:

For of this the Mediator has given us an example, inasmuch as, after He had said, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, transforming the human will which was in Him through His incarnation, He immediately added, Nevertheless, O Father, not as I will but as You will (Mt 26:39). Wherefore, not without reason are many made righteous by the obedience of One (Rom 5:19) [Augustine, *Letter* 130, 14, 26].

Although St. Augustine writes about this example of the Son's prayer, it nevertheless also reveals the truth about the Spirit. In this way, he

makes it clear that what happened to the One begotten of a woman, by the power of the Spirit, becomes available to the baptized:

For inasmuch as we cannot present it to our minds as it really is, we do not know it, but whatever image of it may be presented to our minds we reject, disown, and condemn; we know it is not what we are seeking, although we do not yet know enough to be able to define what we seek. There is therefore in us a certain learned ignorance, so to speak — an ignorance which we learn from that Spirit of God who helps our infirmities. For after the apostle said, If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it, he added in the same passage, Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the hearts knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God (Rom 8:25-27) [Augustine, *Letter 130*, 14,27-15,28].

The author of the Letter to Proba does not focus on the term “intercession” itself, but only describes one of the ways in which the Holy Spirit works based on the Letter to the Romans. It should be noted, however, that this corresponds to the contemporary philological analysis of the compound verb ὑπερεντυγχάω (ὑπέρ, ἐντυγχάνω), which was found in the teaching of St. Paul. It refers to the action (‘intercession’) of the Holy Spirit, which is constant and full of power and full of kindness for the person (Comfort 2015, 262; Šipavičius 2021, 60).

In such an extensive theological discourse, the Bishop of Hippo recalled the words of St. Paul in Romans 8:26-27 and explained very clearly the mystery of the Spirit in human. This is the specific passage where St. Augustine shows the Spirit of God as an intercessor. His work consists in convincing humans of the mystery of the Father which has been revealed in the Son. The intuition of the Father of the Church was built on the teaching of St. Paul:

This is not to be understood as if it meant that the Holy Spirit of God, who is in the Trinity, God unchangeable, and is one God with the Father

and the Son, intercedes for the saints like one who is not a divine person; for it is said, He makes intercession for the saints, because He enables the saints to make intercession... (Augustine, *Letter 130*, 15, 28).

It should be noted that Saint Augustine first explains how the intercession of the Spirit should not be understood. It cannot undermine the truth that the Spirit is God and cannot overshadow the truth about the Triune God. In this way, the author of the letter to Proba indirectly shows that there may be different ideas of intercession and some of them should be rejected. One of them assumes that an intercessor can be someone who is not God. In this concept, God is passive and human action is in the foreground. Saint Augustine, based on the Trinitarian concept of God (finding its justification, among other sources, in the Letter to the Romans), shows the action of God's Spirit as being in the foreground. The position of the Bishop of Hippo is fully justified, because the Hebrew Bible actually announces a stage in history when an 'intercessor' will be appointed by God (Rossi 2013, 377). Therefore, the new intercession will be based on God's action.

After recalling the biblical text, the author of the Letter to Proba returns once again to the human experience, which is renewed by the work of the Spirit:

...that He may make you know. He therefore makes the saints intercede with groanings which cannot be uttered, when He inspires them with longings for that great blessing, as yet unknown, for which we patiently wait. For how is that which is desired set forth in language if it be unknown, for if it were utterly unknown it would not be desired; and on the other hand, if it were seen, it would not be desired nor sought for with groanings? Considering all these things, and whatever else the Lord shall have made known to you in this matter, which either does not occur to me or would take too much time to state here, strive in prayer to overcome this world (Augustine, *Letter 130*, 15, 28).

4. Summary

Based on Letter 130 of St. Augustine, the hypothesis about the dependence of the theology of intercession on the image of God, especially on the image of the Holy Spirit, is positively verified. The Bishop rightly notes the need to purify people's ideas about God and thus the concepts of intercession. Intercession implicitly proclaims the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. This same Spirit convinces human of the mystery of God. The text of St. Augustine is extremely inspiring to build a pneumatological interpretation of the intercession of saints and angels. They can be seen as intercessors in the Intercessor, that is, in the Holy Spirit.

The following reason supports this theological thesis. When Saint Augustine speaks of saints, following the author of the Letter to the Romans, he means the Church, persons already incorporated by baptism into the mystery of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the ontological dimension. However, in the perspective of the communion of the Divine Persons, there is still a functional dimension. The Church, i.e. the communion of persons established through baptism, is constantly developing in openness to God and to each other. The Holy Spirit, who "continues" the work of Jesus Christ, co-creates this communion by removing obstacles in human persons so that they remain in prayer (and so that they would be together) and glorify God as Father-Abba. The Spirit intercedes or advocates for them. However, his work has a timeless dimension. Therefore, the reality of the Church is not exhausted by earthly reality. The communion of "saints" (of the Church on earth) also includes those who have ended their earthly life. The mother of Jesus is also among them. If she and other saints are called intercessors (advocates), it means that they participate in the work of the Advocate Spirit.

Augustine wrote a letter to Proba on prayer. He encouraged her to pray to grow in her desire for eternal life. However, he warned against verbosity. For these reasons, he referred to the Letter of St. Paul to the

Romans 8:27: "The Spirit intercedes for us..." Augustine presented the Spirit of the Lord as Intercessor. In a brief explanation, he convinced the addressee of the letter that the mission of the Spirit is to enable humans to pray. His action is to remove the obstacles, not in the Father, but in humans who must listen. This small text of Augustine constitutes an important inspiration for a pneumatological-ecumenical interpretation of the intercession of the angels, the Mother of Jesus and the saints as intercessors in the Intercessor. This theological approach preserves the primacy of God's action.

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