

## **“As with one heart only”: Our Lady Coredemptrix**

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“My Son and I redeemed the world as with one heart.”

“My Mother and I saved man as with one heart only, I by suffering in my heart and my flesh, she by the sorrow and love of her heart.”

-St. Bridget of Sweden, *Revelationes*

The term “future shock,” coined fifty years ago, referred to a mental state caused by profound change occurring so quickly that the human mind can’t deal with it. The latter half of the twentieth century saw significant cultural shifts, positive and negative, depending on one’s own outlook and upon which aspects one chooses to emphasize. An appreciation of difference, in individuals and in cultures, became more of an ideal; this can mean less prejudice and discrimination; or it can mean an abandonment of any norms, from cultural to moral and even an abandonment of the notion of ultimate, objective truth. For the United States, this meant everything from civil rights legislation on the one hand, to the legalization of abortion-on-demand and the rise of no-fault divorce on the other. Within the Church, a growing emphasis on ecumenism was accompanied, unfortunately, by downplaying the rich tradition of Marian devotion, seen as a stumbling-block to dialogue with Protestants and hence to hopes of future reunification. Subsequent to this, the role of women was examined, in a milieu increasingly hostile to anything perceived as traditionally feminine, without the contextual influence of the feminine role model *par excellence*.

For some time, there has been a growing movement in the Church calling for the proclamation of Our Lady Coredemptrix as the fifth Marian dogma. Mary is the Coredemptrix of mankind because she gave us Jesus incarnate, by whose body and blood we are saved and sustained. In addition, she entered with thorough and full consent into Christ’s Passion, suffering with Him and accepting the pain she sustained both through His death and in giving birth to all of us, as members of His Body, the Church. As St. Lucia said, “Mary, in becoming one with Christ, is the Coredemptrix of the human race.”

She did not feel the sufferings of Her Son by mere sympathy, but truly entered into the Passion with all her being, with Her heart, with Her soul, with the most intense love and with the most serene tranquility. She suffered in her heart everything that Jesus suffered in His Flesh, and there are theologians who state that she also felt in her body the same sufferings experienced by Jesus in His.<sup>82</sup>

As with other Marian dogmas and doctrines, Coredemption has a long history in the thought and devotion of the Church, is rooted in both Scripture and Tradition, and comes to full fruition over time. Many are convinced that the time for the proclamation of this fifth Marian dogma has arrived. But there is opposition.

The documents from the Second Vatican Council, presented to the world at a tumultuous time, regrettably lack the guidance, help, and encouragement that would have been afforded by a clear statement affirming as dogma, the identity of Our Lady as Co-Redemptrix.

It [the fifth Marian dogma] could also be the providential remedy for radical feminism, and even, against all appearances, for an ecumenism which, in the case of Protestants, the ordination of women has made humanly impossible.”<sup>83</sup>

This seems counterintuitive (“against all appearances”): looking for areas of agreement is generally a surer road to consensus than pointing out differences, an approach which may be expected to lead to argument and discouragement. How and why could it be advisable (conventional wisdom notwithstanding) to assert a dogma distasteful to Protestants, while endeavoring to win them over? For two reasons: first, hiding or even downplaying the truth is never acceptable, and second, trusting Our Lady and her place in the divine economy means entrusting the outcome to her. The Mother of God is so intimately involved in our redemption that it is dishonest, unjust, and ungrateful to leave her out of our discussions.

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See sources in Bibliography

<sup>82</sup> (Perillo 2005) p.459

<sup>83</sup> (Trower 2001) p.xiii

...the Catholic truth on Mary, as with all the truths of our faith, can never be the fruit of compromise. Truth, as such, is intransigent: The Gospel “let your ‘yes’ mean ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ mean ‘no’” (Mt. 5:37) defines it in its unique character better than any other learned definition.<sup>84</sup>

Interfaith dialogue of any kind must always be wholly honest. With other Christians, in particular, while it may be helpful in some conversations to emphasize the points we hold in common, we cannot make progress towards unity while ignoring those truths accepted primarily, even solely, by the Catholic Church. As our understanding of redemption grows, under magisterial guidance, we cannot ignore aspects of truth. If we acknowledge the role of Our Lady and our dependence upon her, we cannot hope to advance toward Christian unity without her.

The actual redemption worked by Christ is, in fact, perceived as a most perfect redemption by a most perfect Redeemer because the fruit is so perfect in the Immaculate Coredeematrix. And this precisely is for ecumenical reasons: the unity of the Church and of all Christians in fellowship (*koinonia*) with the sufferings of Christ, made possible by the continuous mediation of the Immaculate Coredeematrix in the Church.<sup>85</sup>

As Msgr. Arthur Burton Calkins points out, Vatican II came at a time when Marian devotion was at a high point. The council was called shortly after the centennial of the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception.

This Marian orientation had accelerated notably during the 19-year reign of the servant of God Pope Pius XII with the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on October 31, 1942, the dogmatic definition of the Assumption of Our Lady on November 1, 1950, the establishment of the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1944 and of the Queenship of Mary in the Marian Year of 1954.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> (Fr. Alessandro M. Apollonio 2003)p. 353

<sup>85</sup> (Fr. Peter Damian M. Fehlner 2008) p. 2

<sup>86</sup> (Calkins 2007)

Of course, Pope John XXIII had declared that the Council was to be pastoral, so that the proclamation of a dogma was not to be expected. It is far from my intent to assert that the Holy Father was wrong. However, the avoidance of the title in conciliar documents is another matter, and in the event led to further misunderstanding and attacks on Coredeemption even from within the Church, including attacks from ordained priests and theologians. Looking back at the early 1960s from the perspective of the 2020s, it is my belief that a golden opportunity was missed to change the course of history for the better, by bringing the Co-redemption to the attention of many who needed to hear this truth.

The chief reason behind this was a fear that references to Our Lady as Coredeemprix would offend the separated brethren, referring to those in the Protestant tradition of western Europe more than to the separated churches of the East, where Marian devotion is emblematic. While the first dogma, that Mary is the Mother of God, is widely accepted implicitly if not explicitly, the other three are questioned more frequently. Mary's perpetual virginity is accepted by some Protestants, rejected by others. The dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are not widely well understood outside the Church.

The Marian dogmas are so closely interrelated that it is difficult to separate them. It is not as though each recognized attribute of Our Lady is something added to her, in the way an athlete or a composer may earn medals and awards, one by one. Newly realized truths are facets of one truth.

Because she is Coredeemprix, therefore Mary Most Holy is *Mediatrix of All Graces*. In Mary Most Holy *distributive* mediation of all graces of redemption is the fruit of the universal coredeemption. One might still better say that *distributive* Marian mediation is the connatural complement of coredeemption, and the title *Coredeemprix* becomes, then, the foundational title postulating the title *distributive Mediatrix* of all graces.<sup>87</sup>

Maternity and coredeemption are therefore, in Mary, correlatives, since She is the Mother of Christ and hence of God, Mary is the first and efficacious instrument of the

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<sup>87</sup> (Manelli 2008)p. 407

redemptive incarnation of the Word. As such She is objectively and properly co-cause of the Redemption; therefore, She is objectively and properly Coredemptrix.<sup>88</sup>

None of the Marian dogmas were without detractors. The identity of Mary as the Mother of God was defended at the Council of Ephesus, against Nestorius and his followers. This early example also illustrates how inextricably linked are a proper understanding of Christ and of His Mother, so that one cannot be attacked without the other suffering. It is not surprising, though, to find critics of each dogma; happily, the criticism leads in the end to elucidation.

Increased understanding of Mary in terms of Divine Motherhood, Immaculate Conception, Queen of Heaven, Mediatrix, and Coredemptrix shows that while these dogmas and doctrines can certainly be proclaimed and examined individually, they cannot be separated out, one from another, like so many strands of yarn. An attempt to do so, to accept some and reject others, is a heretical road already traveled by European Protestantism over the past five centuries.

It is therefore ironic that the argument was made at the Second Vatican Council, and continues to be made, that Marian dogma and references should be toned down in order to effect better dialogue with Protestants. It is difficult to see how encouraging error could aid in correcting it.

The Anglican theologian Dr. Judith Marie Gentle, tracing her communion's road away from the Catholic Church and looking for a way back, sees a strong connection between attitudes toward the Real Presence in the Eucharist and towards Our Lady as Co-Redemptrix. Absent belief in the Sacrament being truly the Body and Blood of Christ and the importance of His Mother in giving Him to us also fades, and with these there is also lost the understanding of redemption. She writes:

And, without this basic understanding of Redemption, it is impossible to realize that the only person who can bring us into this blessed life of communion with the Trinity is the Lord's Mother, whose very flesh and fiat make any hope of our communion with the Blessed Trinity possible in the first

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<sup>88</sup> (Gherardini 2004)

place. But, oh, with this understanding, the Holy Spirit can reveal the mystery that Our Lady is present in each and every Consecration of the Mass as Co-Redemptrix. She is Co-Redemptrix because She is the ever-Virgin Mother of the Lord—and therefore, Mother of the Eucharist—and therefore, Mother of us—not in some mere sentimental way but, rather, ontologically and corporally.<sup>89</sup>

The Founding Father of Protestantism (so to speak), Martin Luther, of course had a reverence for Our Lady which did not disappear overnight. In 1521, five years after the posting of his 95 theses in Wittenberg, Luther wrote, “It should also be meditated in the heart what that means: to be the Mother of God.” Sadly, and predictably, meditation of this kind undertaken outside of the Church, without guidance, did not bear good fruit. Had the “reformers” read the Bible in a better frame of mind, they would have seen the many ways in which Our Lady is prefigured in the Old Testament and honored in the New.

The most important comparison is of course that of Our Lady with Eve. Documented reference to Mary as the new Eve goes back to the second century; she is so identified by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Tertullian, all evoking St. Paul’s description of Christ as the new Adam. This idea, developed over the centuries, relates strongly to the doctrine of co-redemption: Mary’s obedience to God parallels, contrasts with, and corrects Eve’s disobedience, and Mary is the helpmeet to the New Adam that Eve should have been, but dismally failed to be, to the Old. This also helps to establish her place in redemption, and her relation to her Son and to us, her adopted children.

She represents the feminine component of the dimension of the human causality of the objective redemption, and is thus the associate of the historical Christ or the Second Adam and Savior. Mary, therefore, is soteriologically active only in relation to other men, not already in relation to herself. In the work of redemption it is necessary to distinguish two logical moments: Christ alone redeems

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<sup>89</sup> (Gentle 2008) p.283

Mary, and, together with her, redeems the rest of humanity.<sup>90</sup>

To summarize what is presented in much greater detail by Fr. Stefano M. Manelli in *All Generations shall call me Blessed*, there are many other women in the Old Testament who prefigure Mary in a number of ways: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Abigail, Judith, Esther, and the heroic martyred mother of heroic martyred sons in 2 Maccabees. (That last-named book was of course rejected by the reformers, but their doing so was an effect of their disobedience to the Church; they were already willfully cutting themselves off from the sources of truth where they could have found their answers.)

Sarah, like Mary, became a mother in a miraculous way; not on the same level, obviously, but she became the mother of the promised heir, Isaac, after it would normally have been possible due to her age. Rebecca was sought to be the wife of Isaac, prefiguring the Annunciation: Gabriel seeks out Mary as the future mother of the Messiah. (St. Louis de Montfort draws out in detail the comparison of Our Lady with Rebecca, in terms of the relationship between Rebecca and Jacob, and Rebecca's care for and defense of him, as a prefiguring of Jesus and also of Mary's spiritual adopted children.<sup>91</sup>) Rachel continued the covenant line with a son who was betrayed and sold for silver, yet who became the means of salvation for his brothers who had betrayed him. Miriam the prophetess, the only woman so identified in Scripture, worked alongside her brothers; she may be called a coredemptrix with them. Deborah worked with Barak to free her people from Sisera. Ruth, calling herself a servant, prefigures the "handmaid of the Lord;" a foreigner who followed her Hebrew mother-in-law out of filial love, she became the great-grandmother of King David and an ancestress of Jesus. Abigail presents as a mediatrix, humbling herself before King David and assuaging his wrath. Judith decapitates Holofernes, recalling the Protoevangelium and thereby prefiguring Our Lady. Esther stands out among her people and is destined to save them, stepping out in humility as a mediatrix with the King. Finally, the mother of the Maccabees stands by and encourages her sons in their suffering, as Mary will stand at the foot of the Cross, accepting and participating in the suffering of her Son, becoming Coredemptrix with Him in their shared Passion, endured by them both as with one heart.

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<sup>90</sup> (Calkins 2007) p. 383

<sup>91</sup> (Montfort 1941) pp.116-134

Marian typology in the Old Testament should make Mariology more acceptable to Protestants, who place Scripture above Tradition; the image of Our Lady as Coredemptrix may be more easily understood by some when she is regarded as the New Eve, since nobody denies that Eve was instrumental in humanity's general fall through Adam.

In terms of relatability and appeal to women, the Old Testament types foreshadowing Mary, from Miriam to Judith to the heroic mother in the Book of Maccabees, show us a woman who is courageous, strong, and entirely unselfish. Certainly this is entirely relatable to Mary, described by St. Bonaventure as a "strong and tender-hearted Woman" who embraces the suffering contingent on her role as Coredemptrix. This ideal can be embraced by a true feminism which is not self-seeking and certainly is not inclined to sensual indulgence in a misguided imitation of the lowest behaviors of the male half of humanity.

As Pope John Paul II wrote in *Mulieris Dignitatem* the male's tendency to dominate is a result of the Fall. So it must be said that men cannot shrug off feminism as nothing to do with them. Most feminists in the western world begin from a bitter feeling of ill-usage, which transforms itself into a determination that women should do whatever men do, good, bad, or indifferent.<sup>92</sup>

Insofar as feminism is understood as an attempt to declare and further the human rights and the dignity of women, it is a good thing. What is sometimes known as "radical feminism" may be said not to go too far, but to go in too many directions with too little discretion. Some complaints are valid; some questions merit answers, although the answer may not be the one looked for; attacks on dogma, sacraments, and the authority of the Pope and the Magisterium are never allowable. For instance, the question of whether women could be ordained to the priesthood may have been allowable at one time but now has been settled, by Pope John Paul II; the only question which now could be asked is why this is so, in terms not of defiance but of truly seeking understanding. Yet there is defiance, and vituperation. A better understanding of Mary, completely humble and yet exalted, best illuminates the dignity of womankind.

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<sup>92</sup> (Robinson 2001) p.287



In the Gospels, Mary shines out as the Theotokos and the Mother given to all of us by Christ from His Cross. The Book of Revelation makes this still clearer with the description of the woman clothed with the sun, the Mother of the Church.

Revelation is notable for being particularly rich in Marian imagery. Much of this can readily be interpreted in an ecclesiotypical manner. It may be easier to see Mary as an image of the Church than a unique cooperator with Christ. But there are verses in Revelation which may, particularly when read in the context of Scripture as a whole and of Tradition, be seen to support the image of Our Lady as Coredemptrix. The woman in Revelation 12 groans with labor pains, which cannot refer to the birth of Christ in the Incarnation as Mary was not subject to the curse put upon Eve.

To groan in the pains of labor means waiting for the adoption of sons and the redemption of the body. To be given birth to, in a spiritual sense, as from labor pains has, as its consequence, adoption as sons and redemption. In these two texts, then, [Revelation 12 and Romans 8] the expression “labor pains” is metaphorical and indicates the truly great suffering of someone who is about to give life to another in a spiritual sense. We can say, then, that the reference to labor pains in Revelation 12 indicates the woman’s spiritual maternity and not the natural one. In fact, it is clear that in Revelation 12 the pains also have a symbolic value, given the tone of the Book and of the context. They indicate the strong pain that Mary had to bear and offer, united and obedient to the will of God to save, in order to give adoption as sons of God and redemption to the Mystical Body of Christ. This is why she is called “Coredemptrix.”<sup>93</sup>

And in the Last Supper Discourse in the Gospel according to John, Fr. Peter Damian Fehlner finds an implicit reference to the Coredemption, as Christ predicts the suffering of the Apostles, to be followed by joy, and compares this with the suffering and joy inherent in labor and childbirth (John 16:20-21).

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<sup>93</sup> (F. S. Manelli 2010) pp 231-232

In a word Christ is speaking here of what we might call the Coredeemption, and he is so speaking in order that we might grasp why the Woman in the new and eternal economy-covenant of salvation (cf. form for consecration of wine at Mass) is the real-true Mother of the living because through the coredemptive mediation of the Mother of the priest-victim the dead are brought back not only to life, but to transcendently better life, first in soul and then in body.<sup>94</sup>

So John's Gospel and his Revelation both relate Our Lady to Genesis 3, where Eve falls, and incurs the curse, but also is given her name, signifying "the mother of all living." This name better describes Mary, since the fallen Eve could pass on to her children only a limited, corrupted life, so that as *Lumen Gentium* reminds us, the patristic phrase is "death came through Eve, life came through Mary."

Some modern exegetes outline a Pauline Mariology which supports Marian Coredeemption. Don Arellano develops this from a reading of Romans, the Biblical book which inspired Luther to proclaim the principle of *sole fides*. Romans 5:12 ("sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin") must include Eve in the phrase "man", based on Genesis 3:1-7, and Mary's inclusion with Christ is also implicit.

The inclusive reading which introduces Mary into the "man" of Romans 5:12 is a possible and legitimate exegesis, with great possibilities for shedding light on the problems involved in the collaboration of the Virgin in the salvation of the world. At the same time, this hermeneutic makes possible an understanding of other Pauline texts in terms of Marian Coredeemption. That Coredeemption will probably be the fifth Marian dogma placing the mystery of Mary in full light.<sup>95</sup>

Admittedly (and anticipating feminist objections) the women who figure prominently in the Old Testament are noteworthy partly because they are relatively few in number, compared with prominent men. This is true to a

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<sup>94</sup> (Fehlner 2004) p. 5

<sup>95</sup> (Arellano 2010)

lesser extent in the New Testament, but this makes it all the more noticeable that Mary stands out in so many ways: as the mother of Jesus at a time when identity came from the father, as the one “filled with grace,” completely imbued with the Spirit of God, as the chief mourner at the Cross and the one to whom He there entrusts the fledgling Church in the person of John, the Beloved Disciple.

Marian Coredemption begins there, at the foot of the Cross, and if this image of Our Lady achieved widespread attention in the twentieth century, it was not a product of the twentieth century. As stated earlier, Mary’s role as Coredemptrix is seen in her identity as the New Eve; Jesus is explicitly called the New Adam by St. Paul, in First Corinthians, and the parallel of Mary as the New Eve, while not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, dates back to the Apostolic Era. This is found in the writings of St. Irenaeus of Lyons. Irenaeus refers to Mary as the New Eve in matter-of-fact terms, suggesting that it is not an idea new with him, but rather something already known and accepted.

Put simply, Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John. There is every reason, then, to believe that what he transmits to us about Mary as the “New Eve” is an integral part of “the Tradition that comes to us from the apostles.”<sup>96</sup>

The theme of coredemption was further developed during the counter-Reformation in response to the rise of Protestantism in Europe. The sixteenth-century Carmelite mystic St. John of the Cross wrote of Mary’s intimate relationship with the Holy Trinity and her participation in the Passion of her Son.

St. John of the Cross teaches the efficacious collaboration of the Virgin Mary in the Redemption, even if he does not use those precise words. In virtue of her *consent* she brought to pass in her most pure womb the Incarnation of the Son of God. This was the beginning of the Redemption, with which she cooperated with her faith, her burning charity, and her obedience to the will of God...With his experience

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<sup>96</sup> (Calkins 2007)p. 34

and in his teaching the Mystical Doctor describes the image of the Virgin Coredemptrix.<sup>97</sup>

Mariology as a branch of theology flourished during the seventeenth century, with the appearance of such notable figures as Francisco Hurtado, St. John Eudes, and St. Louis Grignon de Montfort. These laid a foundation of Marian thought which would weather the coming attacks from Jansenism and the so-called Enlightenment.

Prosper Louis Pascal Gueranger, a nineteenth-century French Benedictine who dedicated his life to reviving the monasticism crushed by the French Revolution, was also a copious writer. Drawing on Scripture, Liturgy, and the Litany of Loreto he examined Mary's role in the divine economy. He was a strong advocate of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, proclaimed as dogma in 1854. He believed that this dogma, along with the first two Marian dogmas, Divine Maternity and Perpetual Virginity, were revealed by Jesus to the Apostles, and further stated that further revelations were also made to them, carried in the Church as tradition. "The cooperation of Mary in salvation is therefore a truth that the Abbot of Solesmes traces back to apostolic times."<sup>98</sup>

However, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Marian devotion became a source of contention even among Catholics, as well as being criticized by Jansenists and Protestants. Unfortunately, this problem has persisted, even though in terms of doctrine, dogma, and recognized apparitions the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were decidedly Marian in nature. It is difficult to understand why resistance to the Coredemption grew after the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to the point of some Catholic theologians claiming that Coredemption, rather than arguments against it, were of recent growth and lacked the weight of tradition.

The theology of Marian coredemption was not born in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was not a novelty introduced by the mariologists of this century, as certain prominent mariologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century claimed, precisely to downgrade and reject the validity of this thesis. The authors of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, particularly the Spanish

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<sup>97</sup> (Fr. Enrique Llamas 2007)

<sup>98</sup> (Mother Maria Francesca Perillo 2005) p. 447

Mariologists, were conscious of having received this teaching from authors of earlier times.<sup>99</sup>

To turn away from a true appreciation of Our Lady and her role in salvation history and in our personal redemption is foolhardy. To do so at a time following at least ten Marian apparitions, followed by two devastating World Wars and the rise of murderous Communism—against all of which Our Lady had warned us—is to compound that foolishness. Predictably, this leads away from God as well as from Mary. Denial of the miraculous, of the Resurrection, of the Trinity, follow: this isn't speculation, it has happened and is happening.

It is the Marian dimension which truly exalts Christ most, achieves His absolute centrality, not the “*Christus solus*” theories popularized by the Protestant reformers. Marian minimalism always tends to this as Newman after Bonaventure saw so clearly: far from exalting Christ it tends to exclude Him and ends by completely forgetting Him when the Mother has been repudiated.<sup>100</sup>

And so we return to the twentieth century, to the 1960s and to the Second Vatican Council. The documents in their final form were the results of long discussion. Four hundred bishops had requested a dogmatic definition of Mary's mediation, including Coredemption and Mediatrix of All Graces. Then the Pope stated that this council was to be pastoral, so that dogmatic pronouncements were not expected. Even after this, though, the first schema of the document about the Blessed Virgin Mary outlined the history of the doctrine of co-redemption, including references by Pius X and Pius XI. All of this is conspicuously absent from *Lumen Gentium*.

One certain reason for the absence of the Co-redemptrix title in the final version of the conciliar treatment on the Blessed Virgin is the inclusion of a “prohibition” for the title written by a theological subcommittee in the form of an “Explanatory Note” (*Praenotanda*) which immediately follows the text of the original Marian schema as it was distributed to the Council Fathers. The subcommission's

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<sup>99</sup> (Fr. Enrique Llamas 2007) p. 273

<sup>100</sup> (Fr. Peter Ma. Fehlner 2001)

prohibition reads: “Certain expressions and words used by Supreme Pontiffs have been omitted, which, in themselves are absolutely true, but may be understood with difficulty by separated brethren (in this case, Protestants). Among such words may be numbered the following: ‘Co-redemptrix of the human race’ [Pius X, Pius XI]...<sup>101</sup>

Advice, then, was presented and eventually taken that even the simple use of the time-honored term Coredemptrix was to be avoided, lest the separated brethren be scandalized. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that creating an explanation of Mariology palatable to Protestants was more important than honoring Mary rightly.

This explanatory note is of great importance, because it responds on its own to the objection of those who oppose the Coredemption solely on account of the fact that the term was not included in the text promulgated by the Council. If, on the other hand, this term is in itself most true, but difficult to understand by Protestants, this means that the Protestants, who do not accept Marian Coredemption, are considered to be closed to *catholica veritas*—closed to the Catholic truth. One can hold, then, that the acceptance of Marian Coredemption would signal a passage from a sterile dialogue with a counterpart who is closed to Catholic truth, to a dialogue which is fruitful, because it is open to the truth in its entirety. <sup>102</sup>

At the 81<sup>st</sup> General Congregation of Vatican II, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, speaking on behalf of the 70 bishops of Poland, proposed that the Church be consecrated to the Blessed Virgin by the Pope in union with all the assembled bishops. These bishops would then repeat this in their own dioceses.

In the intentions of the Polish bishops, this consecration to the Virgin constituted the most efficacious means of putting into effect on the pastoral plane that which, in their judgment, was the central Mariological truth of the recent

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<sup>101</sup> (Miravalle 2003) p171

<sup>102</sup> (Fr. Alessandro M. Apollonio 2003) pp. 320-321

Papal Magisterium: the universal Spiritual Maternity. Yet this same Spiritual Maternity of the Virgin is nothing else than the effect of her universal Coredemption. The logical sequence turns out as follows: Coredemption — Spiritual Maternity—Consecration — Unity.<sup>103</sup>

This might, then, have amounted to a de facto acknowledgement of Coredemption as the fifth Marian dogma, as well as following the instructions of Our Lady at Fatima— in the wake of the devastation which she had accurately foreseen, in the form of two world wars and the rise of Communism. It didn't happen. Fr. Fehlner, as quoted by Msgr. Arthur Burton Calkins, observed:

Vatican II left the question open, like Trent with the Immaculate Conception, teaching the mystery of coredemption, but not dotting the “i’s” and crossing the “t’s.” Is this why the crisis continues, and why the hoped-for fruits of the Council have not been realized, above all the resolution of the ecumenical question (division among the baptized) and the problem of a genuine, and radical renewal of theology (confusion, even in the Roman schools)?<sup>104</sup>

If Vatican II left the question open, it's fair to ask when the question was raised. As described earlier, Marian coredemption had been part of tradition and of the *sensus fidelium* for centuries. Acknowledgement of coredemption can be traced back to the time of the Apostles. Coredemption was addressed by Mariologists in depth by the seventeenth century and thereafter in response to Jansenism and rationalism. What about official specific attention from the Vatican? It is fair to say that Marian dogma developed incrementally, one building upon another in order to make up a cohesive whole.

The word “Co-redemptrix” makes its preliminary appearance on the magisterial level by means of official pronouncements of Roman Congregations during the reign

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<sup>103</sup> (Fr. Alessandro M. Apollonio 2003) p. 333

<sup>104</sup> (Calkins 2007) p. 399

of Pope St. Pius X (1903-1914) and then enters into the papal vocabulary.<sup>105</sup>

Pius X, in the 1904 encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*, referred to Mary as “a partaker in the sufferings of Christ and the associate in His Passion.” Pius XI built on this in a 1933 letter, writing that Mary’s immaculate conception prepared her “to be associated with Him [Christ] in the Redemption of mankind.”

During his pontificate the Servant of God Pope Pius XII (1939-1948) would show particular favor to describing Mary as the beloved associate of Christ... In his Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* of 1 November 1950, by which he declared Mary’s assumption into heaven a dogma of the faith, Pius referred to her as “the noble associate of the divine Redeemer. He would underscore this association also in his Encyclical on the Queenship of Mary, *Ad Caeli Reginam* of 11 October 1954, explaining that “in this work of Redemption the Blessed Virgin Mary was closely associated with Christ.”<sup>106</sup>

Popes John XXIII and Paul VI continued to use the term “associate” in describing Mary, as in being associated with Christ in the work of redemption. Paul VI also referred to Our Lady as the associate of the Holy Spirit. And in his homily on the occasion of the beatification of now-St. Maximilian Kolbe, he stated:

We all know how this humble, meek Franciscan, with incredible courage and remarkable talent for organization, developed this initiative of his, and made of the devotion to the Mother of Christ, the Woman clothed with the sun, the center of his spirituality, his apostolate, and his theology.... It is precisely from the way Mary completes and serves the universal plan of Christ for the salvation of all men that she draws her prerogatives and all her greatness. (October 17, 1971)

Pope John Paul II never referred to Mary as Coredemptrix in an encyclical. Since this Pope was so strongly Marian, adopting “Totus Tuus” (from *Total Consecration to Mary*) as his papal motto, this omission is noteworthy.

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<sup>105</sup> (Calkins 2007) p. 375

<sup>106</sup> (R. M. Calkins 2002) pp. 57-58



However, John Paul II did use the term in other contexts on a number of occasions.

This repeated use takes on added importance, since the only other modern Pope to use the term *Coredemptrix* is Pius XI, who used it at least twice. Thus, John Paul II must have reflected at length before deciding to use it. He would have been aware that Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, and Pius XII, while choosing not to use the term *Coredemptrix*, all taught this doctrine. The fact that theologians and bishops have been using the term since the fourteenth or fifteenth century and that prior to 1960 the vast majority of theologians subscribed to this doctrine, undoubtedly were factors favorably influencing his decision.<sup>107</sup>

Pope John Paul II was among those tracing the doctrine back to Irenaeus and John the Geometer, and by implication to the Apostles. Pope Benedict XVI, though, expressed a concern that the specific title *Coredemptrix* departed too far from Scripture and the Fathers, and that other terms and titles better expressed Mary's role in salvation. Benedict XVI had, in his first public address after his election, entrusted the Church and his pontificate to Mary's maternal protection.

Pope Francis, who seems fated to set off media storms on a regular basis, drew criticism after his homily on December 12, 2019, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Headlines announced that the Pope had declared *Coredemptrix* to be 'foolishness,' but this is not true. Here is what he actually said:

When they come to us with stories about having to declare this, or make this or that other dogma, let's not get lost in foolishness. Mary is woman, she is Our Lady, Mary is the Mother of her Son and of the Holy Mother hierarchical Church.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> (Fr. James Kelleher 2002) p.163.

<sup>108</sup> (D. M. Miravalle 2020)

As Dr. Mark Miravalle pointed out a week later, in a commentary in *The National Catholic Register*, the Pope's remarks may have been taken to convey the opposite of what he intended:

While it is certainly true that a desire for a formal definition of a Marian truth could theoretically distract from the central truth that Mary is "Our Lady" and the Mother of the Church, fortunately in this particular case, it is *precisely the central truth of Mary being the Spiritual Mother of the Church and of all peoples that would be the very subject and focus of this proposed fifth Marian dogma.*<sup>109</sup>

St. Louis de Montfort, in his classic *True Devotion to Mary*, writes that revelation concerning Our Lady has been very deliberately gradual, as part of God's plan for salvation. The Protoevangelium shows the beginning; Scripture goes on to relate the continuation; the culmination approaches.

It was through Mary that the salvation of the world was begun, and it is through Mary that it must be consummated. Mary hardly appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ, in order that men, as yet but little instructed and enlightened on the Person of Her Son, should not remove themselves from Him in attaching themselves too strongly and too grossly to her....But in the second coming of Jesus Christ, Mary has to be made known and revealed by the Holy Spirit in order that, through her, Jesus Christ may be known, loved and served.<sup>110</sup>

This sheds light on the emergence of Mariology, and on reason there was an increase in Marian apparitions in relatively recent times. The first of these to be recognized and approved in modern times was in Guadalupe, Mexico, in 1531. There was another in Lezajsk, Poland, in the sixteenth century; two in the seventeenth century, in Lithuania and in France. During the nineteenth century there were nine Marian apparitions: four (including Lourdes) in France, and the others in Italy, the United States, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Ireland. And in the twentieth century Our Lady appeared in Portugal,

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

Belgium, and Rwanda, as well as Medjugorje, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, still under consideration by the Church.

When Mary has appeared, she has urged us to prayer, repentance, and sacrifice, and warned of devastating consequences if we ignore her. The consequences have been clear enough. (In suggesting that she was not obeyed, I am referring to our own personal failings, more than to the span of years before her appearance at Fatima and the papal consecration made in 1984.)

Mary's example and intercession are needed desperately in our time specifically to offset an increased devaluation of human personhood, evident in the Culture of Death and in an increased fascination with "virtual reality" and with an avoidance of interaction. Many examples of this come to mind, from the perversion of sexuality in ever-increasing ways, to the perception of people as "consumers," to an obsession with entertainment and a tendency to distance ourselves, communicating in ways which keep us faceless and carry an easy escape route. It's always easy to blame the younger generation, but even with future shock, nothing comes from nothing: technology changes quickly, people don't.

As I began work on this paper, the nation and the world were struggling to cope with the coronavirus. In my native New York State, schools and stores and libraries and museums closed; most people were directed to stay at home. This crisis opened up two very different paths: an increased appreciation for our interdependence and the value of each human life, or increased selfishness and concern for our own lives or, at best, those of our immediate circle. What has developed so far (the pandemic is not over) is politicization of Covid-19 and drastic polarization of the population. Diatribe is rampant. Sadly, our culture has served to obscure so much truth so thoroughly that uncovering it cannot be easy.

There is more than enough evidence to make it credible if not obvious that the world would be in a very different, and better, state had we paid more attention and more honor to Our Lady. We can still turn to her, recognizing that she destroys all heresies and that ultimately, as she has promised, her Immaculate Heart will triumph.

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