

Ecce Mater Tua

A Journal of Mariology

Vol. 5

October 13, 2021

Anniversary of the Solar Miracle at Fatima

Editorial Board

Editor

Mark Miravalle, S.T.D.
Franciscan University of Steubenville,
Ohio

Associate Editor

Robert Fastiggi, S.T.D.
Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Michigan

Managing Editor

Andrew L. Ouellette
Holy Cross College, Notre Dame, IN

Advisory Board

Msgr. Arthur Calkins, S.T.D. Vatican
Ecclesia Dei, Emeritus

Fr. Giles Dimock, O.P.,
S.T.D. Pontifical University of St.
Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Emeritus

Dr. Matthew Dugandzic, Ph.D.
St. Mary's Seminary and
University, Maryland

Dr. Luis Bejar Fuentes
Independent Editor and Journalist

Mr. Daniel Garland, Jr., Ph.D.
(cand.) Ave Maria University, Florida

Scott Hahn, Ph.D.
Franciscan University of Steubenville,
Ohio

Fr. Daniel Maria Klimek
T.O.R. Franciscan University of
Steubenville, Ohio

Dr. Stephen Miletic
Franciscan University of Steubenville,
Ohio

Christopher Malloy, Ph.D.
University of Dallas, Texas

John-Mark Miravalle, S.T.D.
Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Maryland

Petroc Willey, Ph.D.
Franciscan University of Steubenville,
Ohio

Episcopal Advisors

Telesphore Cardinal Toppo Archdiocese
of Ranchi, India

Cardinal Sandoval-Iñiguez Archdiocese
of Guadalajara, Mexico

Bishop Jaime Fuentes
Bishop of Minas, Uruguay

Ecce Mater Tua: A Journal of Mariology

ISSN: 2573-5799

Instructions for Authors:

To submit a paper for consideration, please first make sure that all personal references are stripped from the text and file properties, then email the document in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx) or in rich text format (.rtf) to submissions@internationalmarian.com. To ensure a smooth editorial process, please include a 250–350-word abstract at the beginning of the article and be sure that formatting follows Chicago style. *Ecce Mater Tua* practices blind review. Submissions are evaluated anonymously by members of the editorial board and other scholars with appropriate expertise. Name, affiliation, and contact information should be included on a separate page apart from the submission. Please also submit a cover letter briefly describing the significance of the contribution. Please contact associate editor at the same email address if you are interested in participating in the advisory board.

We welcome scholarly contributions from all topics in Mariology, including but not limited to Marian doctrine, Mary in Scripture and the writings of the Fathers, Marian piety and devotion, Mary in the liturgy, Mary in the papal magisterium. Topics in Marian mediation are especially welcome.

Quotations of the Bible should use the RSV-CE, unless the essay necessitates the use of another version. Please include five keywords with your submission (e.g., Mariology, perpetual virginity, John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, Pope Pius IX). If an article or book review is accepted for publication, authors must verify that the piece conforms to style instructions. Greek and Hebrew do not need to be transliterated, but may be submitted in Unicode format, and the author should attend to making sure that words are spelled correctly with correct diacritical marks.

Book Reviews:

Ecce Mater Tua does not accept unsolicited book reviews. Publishers interested in having Marian titles reviewed in this journal should contact the editors at the email address above.

© October 13, 2021 – International Marian Association. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

October 13, 2021

Anniversary of the Solar Miracle at Fatima

Introductions

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Editor's Introduction</i> | 2 |
| Mark Miravalle, S.T.D. | |
| <i>Introduction to the Fatima Symposium Acta</i> | 4 |

Articles

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>The Mother Co-redemptrix and the New Evangelization</i> | 11 |
| LUIS CARDINAL APONTE MARTÍNEZ | |
| <i>Mary Co-Redemptrix as a Help in the Pursuit Of Inter-Religious Dialogue</i> | 17 |
| TELESPHORE P. CARDINAL TOPPO | |
| <i>Mary, Unique Coopeprator in the Redemption: A Reflection on the Role of Mary in our Redemption</i> | 21 |
| RICARDO J. CARDINAL VIDAL | |
| <i>Blessed Virgin Mary: Unique Cooperator in the Redemption</i> | 25 |
| VARKEY CARDINAL VITHAYATHIL | |
| <i>La Santísima Virgen María y el misterio de su peculiar cooperación en el plan de salvación</i> | 42 |
| JORGE A. CARDENAL MEDINA ESTÉVEZ | |
| <i>Fatima and Our Lady Co-redemptrix</i> | 47 |
| ÉDOUARD CARDINAL GAGNON, PSS, OC | |
| <i>Il culto di Maria nella Chiesa Orientale</i> | 55 |
| TOMÁŠ CARDINALE ŠPIDLÍK, S.J. | |
| <i>María “Corredentora” en San Alfonso Maria de Liguorio (Las Glorias de Maria)</i> | 70 |
| OBISPO ANTONIO BASEOTTO, C.Ss.R. | |

Ecce Mater Tua

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Maria Corredentrice nella vita e negli scritti del beato G. B. Scalabrini (+1905).....</i> | <i>74</i> |
| VESCOVO VELASIO DE PAOLIS, C.S. | |
| <i>Lettera al Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II.....</i> | <i>85</i> |
| ARCIVESCOVO GIUSEPPE GERMANO BERNARDINI, O.F.M., CAP. | |

Ecce Mater Tua

Introductions

Editor's Introduction

MARK MIRAVALLE, S.T.D.

On the days of May 3-7, 2005, six cardinals from five diverse continents hosted a theological symposium on the Mariological theme, “*Maria: Unica Cooperatrice Alla Redenzione*” (Mary: Unique Cooperator in the Redemption) in the hallowed Marian sanctuary of Fatima, Portugal.

The host cardinals, their Eminences, Telesphore Cardinal Toppo, Édouard Cardinal Gagnon, Luis Cardinal Aponte Martínez, Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, and Ernesto Cardinal Corripio Ahumada were joined in participation by several other cardinals, either by presenting in person or sending papers or endorsements, including Tomáš Cardinal Špidlík, S.J., Jorge Cardinal Medina Estévez, and Antonio Cardinal González Zumárraga. Some 25 archbishops and bishops from all parts of the world were likewise in attendance.

Many of the cardinals and archbishops present or represented at the symposium held major Roman curial positions, i.e., prefects and secretaries of Roman dicasteries, including the Congregation for the Clergy, Pontifical Council for the Family, and the Apostolic Signatura.

These esteemed members of the Catholic Hierarchy presented a series of theological and pastoral treatises on Our Lady's role as unique human Co-redemptrix with and under Jesus Christ, the sole divine Redeemer, from a multiform variety of aspects: from authentic Catholic Inter-religious Dialogue, to the New Evangelization; from its undeniable grounding in the sources of Public Revelation, to its dynamic presence in the Fatima apparitions.

At the close of the Symposium on May 7, several cardinals raised the possibility of a *votum*, or formal petition to the newly elected Benedict XVI for the solemn definition of Our Lady's Spiritual Motherhood, founded upon her role as Co-redemptrix, and exercised in her subsequent roles as Mediatrix of all graces and Advocate.

The *votum* for the dogma of Our Lady's Spiritual Motherhood of all peoples, founded upon her Coredemption, was unanimously approved by the 33 members of the Catholic Hierarchy present at that extraordinary Fatima Symposium. The *Acta*, along with the unanimous *votum* which came

forth from these global representatives of the Church's Magisterium for the solemn definition of the Spiritual Motherhood as a fifth Marian dogma was personally presented to Pope Benedict XVI in private audience by Cardinal Toppo in October 2005.

The *Acta* from the 2005 Fatima Symposium comprising the individual presentations by prelates and theologians were never published for public distribution, but rather privately published and distributed principally for participating members of the symposium. It is the honor and privilege of *Ecce Mater Tua* to now publish, with permission, the principal presentations from that extraordinary Marian symposium.

This present volume of *Ecce Mater Tua* will publish papers and presentations offered *by members of the Hierarchy* from the 2005 Fatima Symposium, followed in subsequent volumes of EMT with selected papers by attending theologians and philosophers. All papers will be published here in their original language of presentation, i.e., Italian, Spanish, or English, with the Introduction by the six host cardinals translated into English from its original Italian.

This esteemed global group of cardinal and bishop contributors could in no legitimate sense be categorized as “ecumenically insensitive,” “pre-Vatican” or “ecclesiological fringe.” To attempt to do so would be to manifest an unseemly bias, an a priori *ad hominem* that does not befit the honest theologian.

These prelates from a wide spectrum of the Church and world represent an authentic Catholic voice raised in honor of their universal Mother and Queen, seeking to solemnly acknowledge her unique cooperation with Jesus in the historic work of Redemption. They do so in due diligence to and application of the Hermeneutics of Continuity profoundly articulated by Benedict XVI. They do so with ardent hope of a new historic release of grace from such a dogmatic proclamation, that they believe would lead to the full exercise of Our Lady's roles of maternal intercession for a Church in grave crisis and for a beleaguered humanity in desperate need of a Mother.

Mark Miravalle, S.T.D.
Editor, *Ecce Mater Tua*
October 7th, 2021
Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary

Introduction to the Fatima Symposium Acta

“Applied to Mary, the term “co-operator” acquires a specific meaning. The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to spread through prayer and sacrifice. Mary, instead, co-operated during the event itself and in the role of mother; thus her cooperation embraces the whole of Christ’s saving work. She alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of all mankind. In union with Christ and in submission with him, she collaborated in obtaining the grace of salvation for all humanity...the participation of the Savior’s Mother in humanity’s redemption is a unique and unrepeatable fact.”

Pope John Paul II¹

“All is grace.” Yet grace does not remove freedom; rather, it brings it into being. The entire mystery of Redemption is present in this story and is summed up in the figure of the Virgin Mary: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord: let it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger²

Sustained by the certain doctrinal foundation of Marian Coredemption and Mediation as set forth by the Second Vatican Council,³ and inspired by the irrevocable doctrinal development of “Maternal Mediation”⁴ and Mary as “Co-redemptrix”⁵ as taught by the great Pope John Paul II of happy

¹ Pope John Paul II, General Audience of Wednesday, April 9, 1997, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, April 16, 1997, p. 7.

² Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “*Et incarnates est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine*,” in *30 Tage in Kirche und Welt* 5, 1995, n. 4, pp. 59-67, and in *Klerusblatt* 75, 1995, 107-110, as published in *God is Near Us*, Ignatius Press, 2003, p. 20.

³ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 56, 57, 58, 60-62.

⁴ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, Part III.

⁵ Pope John Paul II used the term “Co-redemptrix” at least six times: September 8, 1982, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, V/3, 1982, 404; November 4, 1984, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, November 12, 1984, p. 1; January 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, March 11, 1985, p. 7; March 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, April 9, 1985, p. 12; March 24, 1990,

memory, we, the six co-sponsoring cardinals of the May 2005 International Marian Symposium, *Mary*, “*Unique Cooperator in the Redemption*,” sensed the timeliness and appropriateness of convening brother members of the episcopate for the purpose of a greater examination of the unique role of the Mother of the Redeemer in the historic act of Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, divine and human Redeemer of the universe.⁶ And what better location to study and ponder prayerfully the unequalled human cooperation of the Mother of Jesus in Redemption than the site of her contemporary historic mediation on behalf of humanity, the Marian sanctuary of Fatima, so dear to the hearts of Catholic peoples the world over, and so dear to the heart of our recently deceased friend and Vicar, Pope John Paul!

Lumen Gentium 54 reminds us of the fact that in spite of her rich mariological teaching, the Second Vatican Council “does not, however, intend to give a complete doctrine on Mary, nor does she wish to decide those questions which the work of theologians has not yet fully clarified. Those opinions therefore may be lawfully retained which are propounded in Catholic schools concerning her, who occupies a place in the Church which is the highest after Christ and also closest to us.”

For those of us present at the Council, it was particularly clear that Our Lady’s universal roles as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate were among the strongest and most accepted mariological teachings present in Catholic theological schools and seminaries at the time of the Council and in the years preceding it. In fact, a significant number of Council fathers desired a solemn definition of Mary’s universal mediation under various formulations to take place at the Council itself,⁷ but it was a pastoral council and not a dogmatic, defining Council that had been envisioned by Blessed John XXIII of happy memory.

Inseg., XIII/1, 1990; October 6, 1991, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, October 14, 1991, p. 4.

⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, nn. 1, 22.

⁷ Cf. G. M. Besutti, O.S.M., *Lo Schema Mariano al Concilio Vaticano II*, Edizioni Marianum, 1966, p. 17; see also *Relationes*, Vatican Press, 1963, as quoted by Michael O’Carroll, C.S.Sp., in *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Michael Glazier, 1982, p. 308.

And yet, as we saw historically with the petition for the solemn definition of the Assumption at Vatican Council I by numerous fathers,⁸ a petition which was not granted at the Council itself but rather brought to fulfillment in its post-conciliar years, the Second Vatican Council's call for greater doctrinal and theological completion regarding Mariology, coupled with its clear teaching on Marian Coredemption and Mediation, can be recognized as a legitimate impetus for its doctrinal fulfillment in a post-conciliar definition of Our Lady's unique cooperation in the Redemption of Jesus Christ, along with her subsequent maternal roles as "Mediatrice" in the distribution of the "gifts of eternal life" (LG 62), and as "Advocate" in her universal intercession for humanity (LG 62).

It was from this genus of mariological considerations on Our Lady's role in salvation, and through the encouragement that came from both contemporary papal and conciliar grounding and development in this area, that we decided to convoke an international theological symposium at the beloved Fatima Sanctuary to examine the theological, historical, ecumenical, pastoral, and evangelical dimensions of the role of Mary Most Holy in the work of Redemption and its application for the Church at the beginning of the Third millennium of Christianity.

We wish first of all to offer our gratitude to our brother cardinals who either participated in the symposium in person or who sent papers in support of the symposium. In this regard, we wish to offer our specific thanks to Their Eminences, Alfonso Cardinal López Trujillo, Darío Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos, Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, O.P., Jorge Cardinal Medina Estévez, Tomáš Cardinal Špidlík, S.J., Bernard Cardinal Law, and Antonio Cardinal González Zumárraga.

We also here wish to thank Their Excellencies, the numerous archbishops and bishops from the five continents who attended the symposium. We also gratefully acknowledge the great number of brother archbishops and bishops who regrettably were not able to attend due to pastoral responsibilities, but who at the same time assured us of their support and prayers for its successful outcome, and, moreover, voiced their

⁸ Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, n. 7; *AAS* 42, 1950, p. 754.

support with a full solidarity of mind and heart for its purpose in honor of Our Lady and her unique coredeptive mission with Jesus.

The presentations were offered by a richly diverse assemblage of cardinals, bishops, and an international team of esteemed theologians and mariologists. Each presentation was typically delivered in the original language of the presenter, while attendees were generally provided with translations of the text into other languages. Therefore, the conferences will generally appear in this publication of the *Acta* in the original language of presentation.⁹ The Presentations covered a wide spectrum of mariological issues concerning Marian Mediation, from the dogmatic and historical foundations and development of Marian Coredeption, to Mary Co-redemptrix and the ecumenical mandate of the Church; from modern papal and conciliar teachings on Marian Coredeption, to Mary Co-redemptrix and the New Evangelization; from Mary as the providential instrument of East-West Unity of Churches, to the hagiographical testimony to the Mother Co-redemptrix and its presence in the Fatima Message.

Throughout the course of theological inquiry and discussion at the symposium, the primordial question which continually surfaced and re-surfaced with ever greater intensity was: what would be the contemporary ramifications and potential fruits of a solemn definition of the great patrimony of the Church's traditional teaching and ecclesial witness to Our Lady's spiritual maternity in its three essential roles as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate?

After three days of intense theological and pastoral examination and discussion, the symposium concluded with a final extended discussion on a proposed *votum*, which could potentially convey to our new pontiff, His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, the perspective hopes of his brother cardinals, archbishops, and bishops in attendance for a solemn papal definition of the spiritual maternity of Mary Most Holy, inclusive of her three principal exercises of that spiritual motherhood as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate. It was acknowledged by the general body of attendees that a solemn definition of Our Lady as the spiritual

⁹ For the sake of greater distribution, an English translation and publication of the Symposium *Acta* is also under consideration.

mother of all peoples would effect two great and primary spiritual fruits for the Church of the Third Millennium.

The first great fruit of this solemn papal definition, apart from initial appearances, *would be to effect a great advancement in the ecumenical mission of the Church, for a definition of clarification from the Church's highest teaching office would assure brothers and sisters from other religious traditions that the Catholic Church does distinguish between the unique and entirely foundational act of Redemption accomplished exclusively by Jesus Christ, the divine and human Redeemer, and the secondary, subordinate, and entirely dependent human cooperation uniquely offered by the Immaculate Mother of Jesus Christ.*

The second extraordinary fruit of this solemn definition for the Church would be a historic expansion in the Church's mission of the New Evangelization, precisely by bringing in Mary, the Star of the New Evangelization, into the most central role after her Divine Son in the Church's mission to "cast into the deep" as delineated in John Paul's Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. As was historically evidenced in the Church's greatest single evangelization since the first evangelization, that of Latin America (the largest Catholic continent in the world), the entrance of Mary Most Holy as Our Lady of Guadalupe insured the "greatest catch" of souls for Christ of any time in Christian history. The solemn proclamation of her universal spiritual motherhood would be to formally invite Our Lady to exercise fully her motherly roles in the Church's evangelical mission, and thus to also assure its greatest possible success and fulfillment of Christian evangelization.

Our body of cardinals and bishops also discussed the principal concerns and objections to a solemn definition of Our Lady's spiritual motherhood of all peoples that were raised by the ecumenical commission of theologians associated with the Pontifical Marian Academy (results published on June 4, 1997, in the *L'Osservatore Romano*). We found the first objection of the ecumenical commission, that the titles are "ambiguous," to be unfounded in light of the rich tradition of biblical, historical, dogmatic, liturgical, hagiographical, papal, and conciliar teachings which clearly articulate the three roles of Marian Coredeemption, Mediation, and Advocacy, and many of which have specifically utilized the specific titles of Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate, including their repeated magisterial usage by Pope John Paul II of happy memory.

The second principal objection that “the Church should not change the theological direction chosen by the Second Vatican Council which had decided against defining these titles” has already been adequately answered in our brief words of introduction here. The Second Vatican Council was established as a non-defining Council, *but Vatican II in no way wished to prevent post-conciliar mariological doctrinal development, which could include a potential solemn definition of the same Council’s certain teaching on Our Lady’s spiritual maternity and its principal threefold manifestations.* To this truth, those of us who were Council Fathers can here undeniably attest.

At the completion of the final discussion, the proposed *votum* for the solemn papal definition was accepted and approved by the symposium members, and was personally endorsed by each individual cardinal and bishop who so desired.

Once again, we jointly wish to offer our deepest gratitude to all symposium attendees, to the Fatima Sanctuary and their exceptional hospitality extended to us, and to all who made the symposium a reality in honor and tribute of our universal Spiritual Mother. As the *votum* is in process of being presented to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, we ask for your sincere and ardent prayers that, God willing and in his time, the dogma of Mary Most Holy’s Spiritual Motherhood of all peoples as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate may soon become a reality in the Church of the Third Millennium; for the authentic advancement of the ecumenical mission of the Church; for a generous expansion of the New Evangelization; and for the proper honor and recognition of the Woman and Mother to whom the Most Holy Trinity has granted these motherly functions for the perpetual spiritual benefit of the People of God.

+ Telesphore Cardinal Toppo

+ Luis Cardinal Aponte Martínez

+ Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, C.Ss.R

+ Edouard Cardinal Gagnon, P.s.s

+ Riccardo Cardinal Vidal

+ Ernesto Cardinal Corripio Ahumada

Ecce Mater Tua

Articles

The Mother Co-redemptrix and the New Evangelization

LUIS CARDINAL APONTE MARTÍNEZ

Pope John Paul II has prophetically summoned the Church to undertake with the greatest possible diligence and comprehensibility a new global promulgation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, a worldwide “New Evangelization” of the Word of God.

As we contemplate the imperative for the New Evangelization, particularly in light of Pope John Paul’s 2001 Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, which promulgates the ecclesial call for this New Evangelization, the question must be posed: who was the first to “hear the word of God and keep it” (cf. Lk 11:28)? It was the Mother of the Lord, who so completely accepted the Word and kept it that she literally “gave flesh” to the Word (cf. Lk 1:38, Jn 1: 14).

Who was the first to “meet Christ” (Lk 1:38, NMI, 4)? It was the Mother. Who was the first to “see Jesus” (Jn 12:21) and to “contemplate his face” (Lk 2:7, NMI, 16)? It was the Mother. Who was the first to “witness to the Gospel,” to live the “life of faith,” to participate intrinsically and uniquely in the “depth of the mystery” of the hypostatic union (NMI, 17, 19, 21)? It was the Mother.

The human face that most closely resembles and reveals “the Son’s face” (NMI, 24) is the Mother’s face. And no one more deeply experienced the paradoxical and redemptive “Face of Sorrow” at Calvary (NMI, 25) than the Mother Co-redemptrix (cf. Jn 19:26-27). For this reason, the same Mother was the first, as tradition holds, to see the “face of the One who is risen” (NMI, 28).

As we have been called by John Paul II in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* to “direct our thoughts to the future which lies before us,” and that “in the final analysis, this rooting of the Church in time and space mirrors the movement of the Incarnation itself” (NMI, 3), I believe that the exalted and unparalleled role of the Mother of the Lord in the Incarnation and in the First Evangelization, which was divinely ordained by the perfect will of the heavenly Father, must be acknowledged, imitated, and thereby essentially incorporated in our universal ecclesial mission for the New Evangelization of the Third Millennium.

As a native son of the Americas, I am happy to testify to the providential form and method implemented by the Eternal Father in His sixteenth century mission of evangelization that took place for our peoples of America. The Father of all mankind sent us Mary as Our Lady of Guadalupe to be the motherly means of intercession in preparing the way for the Good News of Jesus Christ to reach the peoples of America. The historical result of sending the Mother in the order of grace (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 61) to precede and prepare the way for the evangelization of her Son and his Good News was nothing short of arguably the greatest single Christian evangelization since the first apostolic evangelization, for the historic evangelization of America produced as its spiritual catch what is presently the most populated Catholic continent in the world.

Should we not imitate the Father's wisdom as manifested by "the catch for the Lord" accomplished by Our Lady of Guadalupe, which manifests the superabundant efficacy of inviting the Mother of the Lord into a historic program of Evangelization?

"Starting Afresh from Christ" (NMI, 29) in the work of the New Evangelization should also mean starting afresh with Mary. Should we not formally and freely invite the Virgin Immaculate to "give flesh" to the New Evangelization as she did with the first great evangelization, and again with the evangelization of America? If the Mother of Evangelization is formally and solemnly invited into this contemporary casting into the deep for humanity, we can be confident that she will initiate a similar historic and superabundant catch for our present Church and world situation.

If we formally invite the Virgin Mother into the New Evangelization, who says to all peoples "do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5), and who leads human hearts to the Heart of Christ as only the Mother's heart can, then she will guide the peoples of this new millennium into a "new holiness" (NMI, 30). She is the Mediatrix of all graces who "taken up into heaven did not lay aside this saving office, but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation" (LG, 62). She mediates the graces of first conversions and renewed conversion to her Son and his Church.

If we solemnly invite the Virgin Mother into the New Evangelization, she will guide the peoples of the new millennium in the "art of prayer" (NMI, 32). It was the motherly Advocate in the Upper Room who by her imploring prayers for the first disciples of the Lord uniquely interceded for the descent

of the Holy Spirit at the first Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:14; *Redemptoris Mater*, 24, 40).

The same maternal Advocate can instruct and intercede for the contemporary Church and world for the fulfillment of the conciliar petition of Bl. John XXIII of happy memory, that is for a “New Pentecost,” a new descent of the Spirit over the earth and into the hearts of all peoples as the “soul” of the New Evangelization.

If we formally invite the Virgin Mother into the New Evangelization, then she will lead the peoples of the new millennium to the “Sunday Eucharist” (NMI, 35) as Mother of the Eucharist, particularly during our present celebration of the Year of the Eucharist. Who better to guide the peoples of the Third Millennium as “Witnesses to Love” (NMI, 42) than the Mother of Love: she who both “gave Love flesh” (Lk 1:38), who was spiritually crucified and, in her heart, died with “Crucified Love” at Calvary (cf. Jn 19:27). It is the same Mother and Mediatrix of all graces who brings to us the graces of Resurrected Love so as to empower us to live the new commandment to “love one another” (Jn 13:34).

My brother cardinals, bishops, and priests, which one of us, reviving the memories of our priestly and episcopal vocations, does not recognize that we owe special gratitude to the intercession of the Mother of Priests and Queen of Apostles for our own vocations? Let us not deny that same maternal intercession for the desperately needed priestly vocations for the Church and for the peoples of this new millennium and its successful evangelization (NMI, 46).

The great ecumenical imperative of our day (NMI, 48), constitutes one of the most urgent of Christian necessities and therefore is in greatest need of the powerful intercession of the Mother of Unity. Is it not time to formally invite “our common Mother” (RM, 30) to utilize fully the spiritual power of her motherly heart in unifying the sons and daughters of God into the one Body of Christ? It is now time to definitively turn to the Mother of all Christians to implore the graces necessary to fulfill the yet unfulfilled “*ut unum sint*” prayer of the one Lord (Jn 17:21).

The Theotokos-Mediatrix especially awaits to be formally invited to bring unity amidst the “two lungs of the Church” (RM, 34), where her common maternal presence in the East and in the West, who both so

profoundly share the Mother's love and grace, can truly effect a final spiritual adhesion of the Churches. New unity requires new humility. We must humble ourselves as yet divided children and see that only by the Mother's intercession can the children return in peace and lasting unity within the one Heart and Body of the Lord.

Pope John Paul II calls us to "stake everything on charity" (NMI, 49). In our modern theological and philosophical advancements in the formulation of an authentic Christian "personalism," founded on the need to love and respect the freedom of the individual person, is it then of any surprise that the Mother of all peoples likewise respects humanity's freedom? She will not impose herself on the New Evangelization. She will not, in obedience to the Father's heavenly design, force the graces of her spiritual roles of mediation upon the Church and the world, even for the good end of the New Evangelization. She must be formally invited.

How much the Mother of all peoples desires to fully intercede with the heavenly grace, redemption and peace of the Son to remedy the grave crises constituting "Today's Challenges" (NMI, 51)! How the Mother of Life longs to crush under foot the Culture of Death and its ancient Protagonist (cf. Gen. 3:15). How the Queen of Peace eagerly longs to intercede for a true peace for the Holy Lands and for all global places of fratricidal struggle, by establishing the spiritual peace of Christ among nations through the presence of the Spirit in the hearts of peoples. How the Mother of the New Creation longs to implore the Sanctifier to renew the face of the earth, and thus safeguard both people and planet in a renewed and properly prioritized awareness of Christian stewardship.

But the Virgin Immaculate, always obedient to the Father of all mankind, awaits our free invitation. Without our human cooperation, the Mother cannot fully activate her titles and roles of sanctification for her contemporary children.

How then do we properly and formally invite the Mother of the Lord and Mother of all peoples into the New Evangelization for the new millennium?

The past two centuries were graced with the papal definitions of two great Marian dogmas, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. I believe the time is now for the papal definition of her relationship to each

one of us, her earthly children, in her roles as our Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate.

It is by solemnly proclaiming the Christian truth that Mary is the spiritual Mother of all peoples that the Virgin Mother is fully released to bring forth the fruits of the New Evangelization and even more for our present critical world situation. It is by formally recognizing the maternal gift of great price given from the Heart of the Crucified Christ to every human heart at Calvary that we would most fully show appreciation and obedience to, “behold, your mother” (Jn 19:27), that we rejoice and give thanks for the great gift of her as our Mediatrix and Advocate, as she is clearly called in *Lumen Gentium* (LG, 62).

Is not the Christian truth of her Maternal Mediation the theological foundations of our Marian conciliar teaching (cf. LG, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62), of the “Ave Maria,” of the praying of the Rosary, of the acts of Marian consecrations and entrustments, of the historic events of Guadalupe and Fatima, and of the Pope’s own personal motto, *Totus Tuus*?

To solemnly proclaim the Virgin Immaculate as the Mother of all peoples, Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate is to fully and officially recognize her titles and, consequently, to activate, to bring to new life the spiritual functions they offer for humanity. This free act on the part of the Church, which reflects the freedom of all humanity, thus releases the Mother in the order of freedom and grace to fully intercede with these spiritual and maternal roles given her by God for the sanctification of the peoples of the world. As such, the Mother of the New Evangelization would be fully commissioned by humanity’s exercise of free will to “bring us the gifts of eternal salvation” afresh and anew (cf. LG, 62), which in turn will bring to new life the Incarnation and the Gospel in the hearts of her earthly children.

The dogmatic proclamation of the Mother of all peoples, Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate is the gateway to the New Evangelization. It is the “new Cana,” the renewed bridge that connects the human heart with the newly announced Heart of Christ in this new evangelization which is properly effected only through the Heart of the Mother (cf. Jn 2:5).

My brothers, we must remember that the intercessory role of the Mother is not the invention of man, but the divine design and disposition of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The ultimate criterion which should guide our discernment concerning such a proclamation, beyond the limited understandings and strategies of the human mind, is “What would the Lord desire?” “What would please the Lord in implementing a new worldwide evangelization?”

I believe it would greatly please the Lord of the New Evangelization to solemnly recognize and invite His Mother into the mission of the New Evangelization by solemnly proclaiming that we do accept the gift of his Mother as our own, and that we do recognize her mediational role as the best way to “duc in altum” (Lk 5:4).

Contrariwise we must consider the challenging question: if we attempt to “put out into the deep” without the full intercessory power of the Mother and Star of the New Evangelization, how many fish, entrusted to us, his fishermen, may be lost? Why would we exclude the greatest possible mediation of the Mother from the task assigned her by the Heavenly Father, in union with the Son, and sustained by the Spirit, in the spiritual evangelization of her earthly children?

Pope John Paul II has asked the Blessed Virgin Mary, in his document on the New Evangelization to “behold her children” (NMI, 58). I believe it is now time that we, her children, raise our voices to solemnly and officially “behold our Mother” (cf. Jn 19:27), by positively responding to the request of over 550 episcopal brothers and almost seven million faithful worldwide to solemnly and papally define that the Virgin Immaculate is the Mother of all peoples, Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate. I would pray that as the fruit of our final deliberations at this symposium in Our Lady’s special shrine of Fatima, and through her extraordinary intercession that we, brother cardinals and bishops, may be inspired to resolve to a common petition for the solemn definition of the maternal mediation of Our Lady. I would like to further offer the invitation that perhaps one or two brother cardinals present here could personally present our joint fraternal petition, God willing, to our new Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, as a humble but authentic expression of our apostolic hearts for this proposed Marian dogma in honor of Our Mother Mary, and in obedience and solidarity to the final judgment of the heart of our new Vicar of Christ on earth.

Mary Co-Redemptrix as a Help in the Pursuit of Inter-religious Dialogue

TELESPHORE P. CARDINAL TOPPO

Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,

Last year I attended in Rome the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (May 2004) and also the Study Days on Vatican II's Decree *Ad Gentes* (October 2004). At both these events it was emphasized that the Church's commitment to Evangelization and to Dialogue go hand in hand. This eventually led me to dedicate this short reflection on "Mary Co-redemptrix as a help in Dialogue."

In inter-religious dialogue it is of the utmost importance that both sides come to know each other's faith position as accurately as possible. Now it is my contention that a Catholic's presentation and explanation of Mary's title and role as Co-Redemptrix would greatly help his/her dialogue-partner to understand correctly some basics of the Church's teaching.

The title "Co-Redemptrix" would naturally provide the occasion to present our doctrine concerning the Redeemer. This would be preceded by the explanation of the mystery of Redemption. This would presuppose a catechesis on God, even the triune God, and on Creation, including the creation of free human beings, who abused their freedom, with nefarious consequences for the entire human race, including its state of original sin and fall from grace.

These basic facts would lead one on to the history of salvation, of divinely initiated preservation from sin, of infinitely meritorious expiation for sin, of forgiveness of sin, of redemption, of reconciliation and restoration of communion with God. All this would show the primacy of God's divine initiative and the absolutely uncontestable uniqueness of the Redeemer.

That being the true position, the question will surely be raised as to how then we can speak of Mary as "Co-Redemptrix". The gender differentiation is not the issue. But the "Co" is. In fact, the Catholic faith uncompromisingly affirms one, divine, unique, universal Redeemer/Saviour.

And yet this truth concerning Redemption is to be complemented with the indispensable need for the co-operation of the human beneficiary. Humans can sin by themselves, but they cannot save themselves by themselves. Even God will not save them without their free consent. Popular preachers explain this with reference to the “monkey way” versus the “cat way”.

In other words, co-operation is required, from each one according to the freely designed and chosen plan of God. And it is our understanding and traditional Catholic teaching, revealed by God as defined by His Holiness Pope Pius IX on 8 December 1854, that: “The Most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of almighty God and in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.”

This having been the case, we can help our partners-in-dialogue understand many other things about Mary: her perpetual virginity, her co-operation with and submission to, the plan of God that she become the mother of Jesus, her closeness to Jesus, her nearness to him at the crucifixion, her intercessory advocacy and influence with Jesus, her assumption into heaven, her being Mother of the Church, Queen of Heaven and Mediatrix of all graces.

The title “Co” clarifies it all. She is in no way the Redemptrix of humanity and yet by the will of God and by her humble co-operation, she truly is, and deserves to be called/designated/honoured as “Co-Redemptrix”. I have no doubt that non-catholic Christians, participating in ecumenical dialogue, find this presentation acceptable, or at least have no valid/convincing argument against it. This is what happened to a Lutheran tribal girl of Ranchi in 1890 when she discovered that Catholics actually do not worship Mary, though they honour her because of her being the mother of Jesus. She (Ruth Kispotta) joined the Catholic Church and founded our first indigenous Congregation: the Daughters of St. Anne, Ranchi.

Adherents and followers of non-Christian faiths readily understand our position in the matter. This would also explain how it is that so many non-Christians flock to shrines of Our Lady all over the world, including the vast continent of Asia. They feel drawn to Mary because of her proximity to Jesus.

Some fifty years ago, a group of Hindu coalminers at Dhori near Jarangdih in the Dt. of Bokaro, Jharkhand, India, dug up a wooden statue of a Lady with a child in her arms. They at once proclaimed her a goddess. So the statue was taken in procession to the office of the manager where it was temporarily installed and worshipped. But soon people began to wonder. They could not recall having seen a statue of a goddess with a child in her arms. When the local catholic priest was called to look at it, he at once recognized it as a statue of Our Lady with the Child Jesus. It was gladly handed over to him. To day there is a shrine in honour of “Dhori Ma” also known as “Lady of the mines”. She is visited by tens of thousands: Christians, Hindus, and Muslims. All appreciate the Mother who takes care of the child and is entirely at its service. Pilgrims are correctly evangelized and, while they venerate Mary, no one considers her a goddess. The truth about Jesus can thus be made clear. Mary very effectively leads devotees to Jesus, the one true universal saviour of humanity. [Historical research has come to the conclusion that the Statue of Mary had been left at Dhori in 1632. In that year, on June 24, the Portuguese settlement at Hooghli (Bandel) was attacked by order of Emperor Shah Jahan. After a siege of 3 months the town surrendered. Some 4000 people - Portuguese and Indian- were taken prisoners and were marched along the Grand Trunk Road to Agra, 1400 Km. away, where the four priests among them were trampled to death by elephants. Among the prisoners some must have brought with them the Statue of Our Lady. For some unknown reason it was left behind at Dhori, where it was found back in 1956, three and a quarter centuries later.] At Dhori Mary today continues her work, not as goddess but as Co-redemptrix, Co-mediatrix and Advocate by the side of Jesus.

A presentation of “Mary Co-redemptrix” would be especially appreciated in dialogues with Muslims, for the simple reason that Mary is already well known to them from the Qur’an itself. The word used for her is “Maryam”. It occurs 34 times in the Holy Book of the Muslims. Only in 3 cases could it possibly refer to Miriam, the Sister of Moses and Aaron (Qur’an 19/29, 3/31, 66/12). In all the 31 other cases it clearly indicates the Mother of Jesus. It occurs in 12 Surahs, usually in the designation of Jesus as “Isa ibn Maryam”. This expression is extraordinary and hints at the virgin motherhood of Mary.

Muslims revere Mary as “the greatest of women”, sinless and ever virgin. They readily accept her as the Mother of Christ. She is a woman of

great dignity and her role and significance is acknowledged in the Qur'an, in the Hadith and in the piety of Muslim daily life.

Fr. Victor Courtois S.J., a mid-twentieth century missionary in India, noted for his dialogue with Muslims, wrote in his short book on "Mary in Islam" (p. 62): "Mary has exercised a strange fascination on certain souls. She has been the object of the meditation of ascetics, who found a new ideal of sanctity in her extraordinary surrender to God's holy will. She has inspired the poets and the artists of Islam whenever they sought a personification of whatever is bright and pure. She has been the comfort of many a mother in pain and the secret refuge of many a weeping heart. She is the patroness of numerous other Maryams who pride themselves in bearing her name. How welcome was the Statue of Fatima when it passed through Muslim lands from Algeria to Egypt and Persia and Pakistan! And who will speak of the furtive visits of praying souls, of suffering hearts, to the many shrines of Mary in every land?"

One can say, without hesitation, that Mary has been, is and remains a true role-model for both Muslims and Christians. She is of wonderful help in their inter-religious dialogue.

The correct presentation of "Mary Co-Redemptrix" provides a smooth path to the discovery of the Catholic truth and encourages all sincere persons to co-operate with the initiatives of the loving and attractive God whose mercy is from age to age.

With Mary let us say: "My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior."

Mary, Unique Cooperator in the Redemption: A Reflection on the Role of Mary in our Redemption

RICARDO J. CARDINAL VIDAL

The Gospels gave us three important indications of Mary's unique role in our redemption. In the Gospel of Luke, Mary accepted the role of being Mother of God with the words, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38). In the Gospel of John, Mary ushered in the public ministry of Jesus with her order to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2:5). In the same Gospel, Jesus entrusted his mother to the beloved disciple, and likewise, the beloved disciple to his mother. Each of these incidents can stand on their own to show Mary as unique cooperator in our redemption; all three enlighten each other as to just how unique that role is.

In the drama of salvation history, the will of man is always an essential part. Salvation is never an imposition on the part of God, it is always an invitation to accept his love or to reject it. While the gift of salvation is offered to each and every individual person, however, the accomplishment of God's plan depends in part on the will of a few individuals whose acceptance or non-acceptance will have implications on the objective realization of the same plan.

Such was the case of Abraham, who was chosen by God to be the progenitor of his chosen people. Such also was the case of Moses, who was chosen by God to liberate his people from slavery in Egypt. In every case, God's plan depended on the will of individuals whose freedom he respected in every way but whose vocation he has also determined from the very beginning.

The mystery of our redemption is therefore intertwined with the vocation of individuals, and there is no vocation more exalted and more pivotal than that of Mary. She was chosen to be Mother of God. It was through her that the Word became incarnate. Though it could be disputed that her fiat carries the fiat of all humanity, it is indisputable that her fiat made all other fiats possible.

Mary's assent to the plan of God has priority over that of all other Christians, not only chronologically, but also causally. As Saint Irenaeus says, "being obedient, she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the

whole human race." Mary's fiat is cause of our salvation because the vocation to which she responded positively is precisely the way our salvation is to be attained according to the ineffable wisdom of God. All vocations are destined for the salvation of man. We are called to live God's will for us and to accomplish his mission for our sake and for the sake of others. Yet, while some vocations have only a local value, Mary's vocation has cosmic and universal implications. Thus, the Church has always exalted her special predestination. Says *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council: The predestination of the Blessed Virgin as Mother of God was associated with the incarnation of the divine word..." (*Lumen Gentium*, 61).

Mary's vocation therefore stands at the threshold of all other vocations. It is through her vocation that all other vocations are made possible. It is through her response that we can hear God's call and respond to it.

Mary's role in our salvation, however, did not end with the incarnation. Vocation is not just a matter of saying yes or no to God's plan, it is also working so that God's plan may be fulfilled. Hence, vocation is also a mission. This missionary element in the role of Mary is best exemplified in the wedding at Cana, when Mary apparently hastened the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah. As the Gospel of John recounts, the miracle at Cana "was the first of Jesus' signs... He revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him" (Jn. 2:11).

In the *Magnificat*, Mary is the first human proclaimer of the Good News (cf. Lk. 4:18ff). In the miracle at Cana, Mary no longer speaks as a prophet, she actually points to her son as the fulfillment of the prophecy. Like all the prophets of old who might have called all Israel to listen and obey, Mary also called upon the servants to "do whatever he tells you."

Yet, in these same words, we again hear of Mary's docility to the will of God. Some may see in them a presumption of influence, yet, truly, Mary was actually open to Jesus' decision on the matter. She did not bring up the matter to the Lord already presuming what should be done. Instead, she directed the servants to await instructions from her Son, so that what actually happened was Jesus' decision alone.

In this instance, we see Mary's subservience to the Lord's own mission. Her vocation may have been indispensable to the plan of salvation, but it was only ancillary to the mission of Christ himself. It was her vocation to be

Mother of God, yet she is not God herself. It is her mission to reveal her Son to others, but she is only the proclaimer, not the Word herself. Her subservience, however, is the very condition of her unique cooperation, for it is precisely man's openness to God's will that the fullness of redemption is attained. In Mary, we see the place of man in the plan of salvation acted out exactly in accordance with God's will. The uniqueness of her vocation is made more special by the way she responded to it. Her vocation was to be the first disciple, and she lived that vocation to the full. Through her discipleship, many others became disciples. Discipleship is the fullness of our response to God's offer of salvation.

The relationship between Mary and Jesus is highlighted in the incident at the foot of the cross, when Jesus entrusted Mary to the beloved disciple. Mary is the mother of Jesus, but by entrusting her to the beloved disciple, she is made our mother as well. Jesus thus opens up her exclusive filial relationship with Mary to all of us who are his disciples, so that she is truly our mother and we are truly "her children, who obey God's commandments and have in themselves the witness of Jesus" (cf. Rev. 12:17).

Mary's relationship with Jesus therefore makes possible all other relationships we have of him. It is through our kinship with Mary, as woman and mother, that we are also kindred with Jesus, who was born of woman and also son of the same mother whom we call our own. It is through our kinship with Jesus that we are sons and daughters of God. It is through Mary's motherhood that we are kin of Jesus.

This kinship is by no means a biological one. Yet, to say that it is spiritual falls short of the full reality of that relationship. For it is a relationship forged by the will of Jesus hanging on the cross. It is therefore the wish of a dying man, the last testament that assigns inheritance to his heirs. At the foot of the cross, Mary is entrusted to us, and we are consecrated to her.

In every respect, Mary's role in our salvation is the work of grace. She was prepared for all generations free from the stain of sin. She was chosen to be Mother of God among all women. She hastened the revelation of Jesus as Messiah and Jesus confirmed her role with his miracle at Cana. She was made mother of us all by the will of her Son. Yet, in all these instances of God's predilection, "the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God" (*Lumen Gentium*, 60).

This makes her vocation all the more remarkable because it is a free act of God.

Lumen Gentium thus recognizes the unique role of Mary in our salvation: "This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace—from the consent which she gave in faith at the annunciation, and which she continued to give unhesitatingly at the foot of the cross—lasts without interruption until all the elect enter into the eternal fulfillment. When she was taken up into heaven, she did not lay aside this saving role but she continues by her intercession for all to gain for us the gifts of eternal salvation" (*Lumen Gentium*, 62).

In summary, Mary's role in our redemption is unique, first, because salvation is the universal vocation, and her particular vocation as Mother of God is the key to all other vocations. Second, Mary's role is unique because salvation is our response to the proclamation of Jesus as Messiah, and her response of faith makes her the first believer and the first proclaimer. Her discipleship opens the door for us to become disciples of her Son. Lastly, Mary's role is unique because of her special relationship with the Most Blessed Trinity, especially her relationship with the Second Person. When Jesus entrusted her to us as our mother, she did not cease to be his mother, rather, she becomes our way to Jesus just as through her, the Lord "humbled himself to share our humanity" (from the *Roman Missal*).

Blessed Virgin Mary: Unique Cooperator in the Redemption

VARKEY CARDINAL VITHAYATHIL, C.S.S.R.

Introduction

God's redemptive love of self-gift in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and humanity's response to this unconditional love is core of salvation history. In this redemptive schema, human persons at different historical stages have responded either creatively by their life and mission or destructively by their selfishness and pride. Jesus Christ, being God-Man is the perfect response to God's love-gift. Blessed Mary, being the Mother of God and Mother of humanity has, of course, played a unique role in salvation history. That is why, Karl Rahner rightly stated: "Christianity is the only religion that needs a Mother". To highlight her unique cooperation in redemptive history, the title 'Mary as Coredemptrix' has been used in Christian theology for many years. The title as such is highly controversial yet Mary's unique place in salvation history is central to any understanding of the role of humanity, and in particular that of the Church, especially, that of the Syro-Malabar Church. Such understanding would help us to continue Christ's redemptive act in today's world of suffering and exploitation. Our focus therefore is to further explore this mystery of Mary's cooperation in the Redemption, explaining its meaning and modality with a special reference to the life and mission of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Jesus in Salvation History

In abundance of love, the Triune God created human person in His image and likeness to share His love with him/her and through him/her to translate it to others including the cosmos. S/he, misusing God-given gift of freedom, rejected this unconditional love offered to him/her. God decided to be incarnated in Jesus Christ to redeem the whole humanity from sin and to restore the relationship between God and humanity. Jesus Christ, by his unique act of sacrifice on the Cross, fulfilled in resurrection, has become the unique redeemer of the world and thus the unique mediator between God and humanity. St. Paul thus tells us, 'there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all' (1 Tim 2:5-6).

Humanity in Salvation History

Redemption brought about by Christ has yet to become a reality in each individual member of the human race. Jesus Christ objectively accomplished our Redemption but our salvation is not effective in each human person until the grace of Redemption has been experienced. It means that the individual or subjective Redemption as the sovereign gift of Triune God has to be received by human persons. Schillebeeckx states that the state of 'being redeemed' always consists of human co-operation. Each human person, with regard to his own Redemption, may be called a kind of 'co-redeemer'. The individual shares in the Redemption according to the extent of his free consent to the objective gift of redeeming grace. In this sense, he is a 'co-operator' with Christ in the act of Redemption.¹⁰ St Thomas thus says: *Qui creavit te sine te*, which St Augustine reaffirmed saying: *non redemit te sine te*: 'Created without our intervention, we cannot be personally redeemed without our cooperation'. Thus each human person is personally invited to respond to this call of salvation for the realization of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Mary in Salvation History

As seen already, each Christian has been redeemed but s/he has yet to appropriate to herself/himself her/his personal Redemption by responding to God's saving grace. As member of human race, Mary also had to attain her personal Redemption by cooperating with the redeeming grace of Christ.¹¹ Apart from her personal Redemption, it is believed that Mary freely and actively cooperated with Jesus as historical person, in his historical mission, which started from incarnation to glorification.

In the Sacred Scripture there are no passages that directly speak of Mary's cooperation in Redemption. But there are three texts associated with her cooperation in the historical mission of Jesus' Redemption: The Annunciation scene in Luke 1: 26-38, Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2: 34-35, and the 'Woman' at the foot of the Cross in John 19: 25-27. These passages reveal that Mary was uniquely prepared and called by God to be the Mother of God and of Humanity by her faith, obedience and suffering.

¹⁰ See E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, London, 1964, pp.52-53.

¹¹ See *LG*. 53.

Much theological reflection on the unique participation of Mary in Redemption came up only later. In the context of Eve-Mary parallelism, Fathers of the Church indirectly attributed to Mary a positive role in Christ's saving action just as Eve had negative role in regard to the first Adam.¹² St Ephrem compares Eve and Mary to the world's two eyes. The left eye, Eve, darkened the world, but the right eye allowed the humanity to see the way to God. He states: "The world, you see, has two eyes fixed in it: Eve was its left eye, blind, while the right eye, bright, is Mary..... Through the eye that was darkened the whole world was darkened,.... But when it was illumined by the other eye, and the heavenly Light that resided in its midst humanity became reconciled once again..."¹³ For Irenaeus, Mary's role is not limited to her biological motherhood. Her cooperation is also moral and spiritual.¹⁴ However, only from the ninth century there was a gradual growth of understanding of the soteriological character of Mary's association with the Savior of humankind.

During the Middle Ages, Arnold of Chartres (1160) clearly speaks of her cooperation in Redemption: "[Christ and Mary] together accomplished the task of man's Redemption.... both offered up one and the same sacrifice to God: she in the blood of her heart.... He in the blood of the flesh.... so that together with Christ, she obtains the common effect of the salvation of the world."¹⁵ Ambrose Catarino (1553) strongly stated that our blessed Lord and his Mother take on themselves the sins of the world, having merited our Redemption through their joint suffering.¹⁶ It was in the seventeenth century, a golden age for Marian theology, that Mary's direct cooperation in the Redemption first came to be clearly articulated.

In the course of such theological reflection, the title 'Coredemptrix'¹⁷ has often been used to indicate Mary's role in association with her son Jesus

¹² See also LG, 56.

¹³ St. EPHREM, *De Ecclesia*, 5-7, in S. P. BROCK (trans.), *A Garland of Hymns >From the Early Church*, Virginia, 1989, p. 37.

¹⁴ See J. D. MILLER, *Marian Mediation: Is it True to say that Mary is Coredemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces and Advocate?* New Bedford, 2004, p. 28.

¹⁵ ARNOLD OF CHARTRES, *De laudibus B. Marine Virginis*; PL, 189, 1726-1727.

¹⁶ See J. B. CAROL, 'Our Lady's Coredemption', *Mariology*, vol. 2.ed. J. B. Carol, p.400, note 90.

¹⁷ The first recorded use of the title 'Coredemptrix' is dated to the fourteenth century, found in a liturgical book in St. Peter's, Salzburg. See *Oratione* of St Peter's in Salzburg, in Dreves-Blume, *Analecta hymnica medii aevi*, v. 46, n. 79, p. 126. The first use of the title in official Church documents is found in reply from the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1908 to a request from the Prior General of the Servite Order for the elevation of the

Christ in his redemptive work. The title may well suggest that she is redeemer coequal with Christ.¹⁸ Today, such a notion is theologically unacceptable, as it would detract from the unique and sufficient role of Christ the Redeemer and the role of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ The title may indicate her role of cooperating in, of participating in, the unique redemptive saving work of Christ. However, it is to be clearly understood that she is a 'coredemptrix' with Christ and never the equal of the Redeemer. Though the work of Redemption is entirely that of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, his Mother, as human being has 'a secondary and instrumental task actively contributing to the fulfillment of the principal task'.²⁰ *In the Liturgical Oration of the Eastern Church, Mary is thus called "The Second Heaven."*²¹

Mary: Unique Cooperator in Redemption

The Gospels very well tell us that more than any other human being, Mary by her life and mission played a unique and important role in the act of Redemption. *In the Liturgical oration of the Eastern Church, Mary's unique role, though secondary, is evident: "(We praise...) you... who are born from the Father eternally, and in time from the Second Heaven, the Ever Virgin, treasure of Grace, deposit of heavenly riches, fount of heavenly sanctity, mansion of the Holy Spirit."*²² In soteriological reflection, it is said that Christ's salvific work consists of two operations: objective and subjective Redemption. The actual objective Redemption is through his self-gift by the power of the Holy Spirit, culminating on the Cross and Resurrection; and subjective Redemption is the experience of this redemptive love by the individuals. As cooperator in

Feast of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady to a double of the second class for the whole Church. See *ASS* 1 (1908), 409.

¹⁸ The prefix 'co' coming from the Latin word '*cum*' ('with') means 'joint, mutual, common' as in 'co-education'

¹⁹ Motherhood is a relationship between persons. The person of Mary is related to the person of Jesus as mother - and Chalcedon (451) would specify that the "hypostasis" (person) of Jesus is divine.

²⁰ B. GHERARDINI, 'The Coredemption of Mary: Doctrine of the Church' in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross II*, Acts of the Second International Symposium on Marian Coredemption. England, 2001, p.39.

²¹ See P. J. PODIPARA, "The Mariology of the Church of the East", *Christian Orient* II:4 (1981) 166-183, p.178.

²² See "The Office for the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary in August." Quoted in P. J. PODIPARA, "The Mariology of the Church of the East", *Christian Orient* II:4 (1981) 165-182, p.178.

the historical Redemptive mission of Jesus, Mary perfectly cooperated in the act of Redemption both objectively and subjectively. *St. Ephrem using the symbol of Sun for Jesus and eye for Mary clearly expresses this unique cooperation. It is "through her it [Sun] has illumined the whole world, with its inhabitants, which had grown dark through Eve, the source of all evils."*²³ Vatican II states that Mary's 'cooperation' which is "unique and utterly singular"²⁴ has two facets: it is maternal and salvific. It extends to all the disciples of Christ and all people²⁵. This exceptional and extraordinary cooperation entitled her as the 'Unique Cooperator in Redemption'.

Objective Cooperation

God alone can raise a creature to the supernatural order, through a participation in the divine nature. Through a specific intervention of Triune God, Mary was immaculately conceived through 'maternal charism' and was chosen to be the Mother of God in view of realizing God's unique plan of salvation in history.²⁶ God wanted a specific cooperation of human being for this mission, which was exclusively realized through the life and mission of Mary.²⁷

God's specific preparation for Mary to be the Mother of God, even from the moment of conception, indicates that she was objectively destined to participate in the historical act of Redemption. She thus was 'favored' by God attaining 'full of grace' (Lk.1:28). *St. Ephrem thus beautifully states: "Blessed is she, in whose heart and mind You are: she is royal palace – because of You, O Royal Son, she is the sanctuary for You, the High Priest."*²⁸ Mary's cooperation possesses a specifically maternal character, which distinguishes it from the cooperation of other creatures who in various and always subordinate ways share in the Redemption of Christ. *The Oriental Church in the Night Office for the Feast of Christmas prays: "Blessed be the One who is born twice: eternally and in the*

²³ St. EPHREM, *De Ecclesia*, 3, in S. P. BROCK (trans.), *A Garland of Hymns From the Early Church*, Virginia, 1989, p. 37.

²⁴ LG. 61

²⁵ See LG. 53-58, 61, 63, 65, 69).

²⁶ See LG. 53.

²⁷ See LG. 55.

²⁸ St. EPHREM, *De Nativitate*, 5, in S. P. BROCK (trans.), *A Garland of Hymns From the Early Church*, Virginia, 1989, p. 39-40.

human manner: eternally before the worlds, and today (Christmas day) in time."²⁹ Her role is at the same time special and extraordinary and it flows from her divine motherhood. She is his generous companion in the historical work of Redemption.³⁰ Mary's cooperation thus shares, in its subordinate character, in the universality of the mediation of the redeemer, the one mediator.³¹

Subjective Cooperation

Overshadowed by the 'power of the Most High', Mary also subjectively cooperated with God in the historical act of redemption, which began by her unique response to the angel's message: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.' (Lk 1: 38). When Mary gave her assent at the Annunciation she became the handmaid and associate of the Redeemer.³² *St. Ephrem poetically speaks of her maternal cooperation: "In her virginity, Eve put on leaves of shame, but your mother has put on, in her virginity, a robe of glory that encompasses all men, while to Him who covers all she gives a body as a tiny garment."*³³ Mary then extended this subjective and personal cooperation in the act of Redemption by giving us the Redeemer, by accompanying him through the whole of his life, which was itself salvific, and by remaining faithful to the end, sharing in his Passion. The consent Mary gave to the angel at the Annunciation is consummated at the foot of the Cross.³⁴

Pope Pius XI, the first pope to use the title 'Coredemptrix' explicitly states: "We invoke her under the title of Coredemptrix. She gave us the Savior, she accompanied Him in the work of Redemption as far as the Cross itself, sharing with Him the sorrows of the agony and of the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of mankind."³⁵ Pope Leo XIII writes: "When Mary offered herself completely to God together with her son in the temple, she was already sharing with Him the painful atonement on behalf of human race... at the foot of the Cross, she willingly offered

²⁹ Quoted in P. J. PODIPARA, "The Mariology of the Church of the East", *Christian Orient* II:4 (1981) 165-182, p.176.

³⁰ See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris mater*, 38.

³¹ See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris mater*, 40.

³² See *LG*. 56.

³³ St. EPHREM, *De Nativitate*, 4, in S. P. BROCK (trans.), *A Garland of Hymns From the Early Church*, Virginia, 1989, p. 39.

³⁴ See *LG*. 56, 57 & 58.

³⁵ See D. BERTETTO, SDB (ed), *Discorsi di Pio XI*, 2: 1013; OL n. 326.

Him up to the divine justice, dying with Him in her heart, pierced by the sword of sorrow.”³⁶ Pope Benedict XV further explicates Mary’s cooperation in the Redemption. “To such extent did Mary suffer and almost die with her suffering and dying son; to such extent did she surrender her maternal rights over her Son for man’s salvation, and immolated Him – insofar as she could – in order to appease the justice of God, that we may rightly say she redeemed the human race together with Christ.”³⁷ Mary directly participated in the Passion, offering her son as a sacrifice, ‘insofar as she could’ for the sins of the world. This offering is to be understood as a surrender of her maternal rights. Pope Pius XII avoiding the use of the title ‘Coredemptrix’ stated that Mary is ‘inexorably united with her Son’. Mary, who was the physical mother of our Head, became the spiritual mother of His members also through a new title of suffering and glory.³⁸

Vatican Council II affirmed Mary’s cooperation in the Redemption while avoiding the use of the title ‘Coredemptrix’.³⁹ Mary’s collaboration, as a handmaid of the Lord, is a total commitment to the Lord in His historical work of Redemption. This collaboration was fruit of God’s grace by which she freely and actively cooperated in the work of the salvation of humanity through faith and obedience.⁴⁰ Pope John Paul II also clearly speaks of Mary’s participation in the act of Redemption as “intimately linked with her motherhood” (RM 38). He states that accepting and assisting at the sacrifice of her Son, Mary is the dawn of Redemption. Crucified spiritually with her crucified Son (cfr. Gal 2:20) she contemplated with heroic love the death of her God. In fact, at Calvary she united herself with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church. ⁴¹

Problematic of Mary’s Unique Cooperation

There is however a serious problem with regard to Mary’s unique cooperation in Christ’s Redemption. How to understand her unique

³⁶ POPE LEO XIII, *Jucunda semper*, (Encyclical), *AAS* 27 (1894), p.178.

³⁷ POPE BENEDICT XV, *Inter Sodalicia*, *AAS* 10 (1918), pp.181-182.

³⁸ See POPE PIUS XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, *AAS* 35 (1943), 247-248.

³⁹ See *LG* 53, 56, 61, 63

⁴⁰ See *LG* 56-58, 61.

⁴¹ See *Insegnamenti de Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII/1 (1985), pp.318-319. Pope John Paul II has used the term ‘Coredemptrix’ or its cognate forms: ‘coredeemer’ or ‘coredemption’ in the course of addresses to various groups. See A. B. CALKINS, ‘The Mystery of Mary Coredemptrix in the Papal Magisterium’ in *Mary Coredemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*. (ed.) MARK I. MIRAVALLE, Goleta, 2001, pp.41-50.

cooperation in the context of Christ's unique act of Redemption? The cause of merit cannot be the result of merit. Let us explain it further. In order to cooperate in the Redemption, Mary must first be redeemed which will render her cooperation acceptable to God. Now that Redemption of Mary is of course, the *effect* of Christ's redemptive work. Therefore, the latter must have been already completed *before* Mary received its effect. If so, how could she aid Christ in producing something, which was already produced?⁴²

An explanation to this apparent contradiction is that the Redemption as applied to Mary was complete as regards herself but as yet unaccomplished as regards humanity in general. There is only one Redemption but two modes of operation taking place at one and the same time. Christ redeems his mother with a preservative Redemption: Mary was eternally preserved from the stains of original sin. And then together with her, Christ redeems humankind with a liberative Redemption: liberation of humankind from its sins. There was a twofold intention on the part of the Redeemer. The first intention of Christ in his saving action was the Redemption of his mother. The merits of this first intention were applied to Mary at her conception to enable her to cooperate historically with God's salvific plan. Thus Christ first redeemed his mother, and then, with her active cooperation in Jesus' historical mission, the rest of humanity at Calvary. This cooperation, on her part, with God's redemptive action in the Incarnation, and her compassion with her son at Calvary, entitled her to be the 'Unique Cooperator in Redemption'.⁴³

Second argument against Mary's coredemption is this. Jesus Christ was able to redeem humanity because he possessed both a human and divine nature. It would not be possible for Mary to take an active part in the Redemption, as she was merely a human being. However, it is possible for an active, though subordinate, human participation in the theandric redemptive activity of Jesus Christ. Such participation does not require a divine and a human nature, as it is a cooperation and not an independent or parallel work. Thus it is possible for Mary to take an active, though subordinate part, in the Redemption. Of course, here we do not minimize the unique role of the Holy Spirit in the salvific work of God. Rather, the maternal life and mission of Mary is strongly presented within the

⁴² See J. B. CAROL, 'Our Lady's Coredemption', *Mariology*, vol. 2.ed. J. B. Carol, pp.417-419.

⁴³ See J. B. CAROL, 'Our Lady's Coredemption', *Mariology*, vol. 2.ed. J. B. Carol, p.418.

redemptive act of the Triune God because she is Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Redeemer and Temple of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴

The third argument is that Christ alone could merit our Redemption, because of the equality between his meritorious action and the reward. It was argued that nobody could add to the infinite merit of Christ's Redemption. If Mary's cooperation adds anything to Redemption, it is an enhancement of Christ's merit, which is impossible. If not, then it is superfluous and unnecessary. However, it is true that Mary can make no quantitative addition to the plenitude of God's perfection. Yet, there is a sense in which Mary did make a positive contribution to the Incarnation and to the Redemption. Vatican II states: "This, however, is so understood that it neither takes away anything from, nor adds anything to, the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator."⁴⁵ She gave her assent enabling the Word of God to take to himself a human nature. Though dependent on God's grace, it was her decision to cooperate with God. Her decision was something she did by obedience and faith, rather than something God did to her in which she was but a passive agent.⁴⁶ Thus the singular merit of Mary's cooperation as a purely human representative of humanity constitutes an additional reason why God might cancel our debt. Thus her unique cooperation in the redemptive mission of Jesus is accepted by the Father as an integral part of the universal Redemption.⁴⁷

Mary: Model for the Church and Humanity

Mary is the Mother of humankind in the order of grace.⁴⁸ In conceiving her son she conceived the whole Christ, she conceived the Mystical Body of Christ. At the foot of the Cross, she was commissioned to become the spiritual Mother of humanity in general and of all disciples in particular. Her new maternal responsibility of developing and nurturing the spiritual life of the Church can only be fulfilled by the actual experience of redemptive grace by her children. This she did in a wholly singular way by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in

⁴⁴ See *LG*. 53.

⁴⁵ See *LG* 62.

⁴⁶ See *LG* 56; *Mary at the Foot of the Cross II*, Acts of the Second International Symposium on Marian Coredeemption, England, April 2001, p.440.

⁴⁷ See J. B. CAROL, 'Our Lady's Coredeemption', *Mariology*, vol. 2.ed. J. B. Carol, p.420.

⁴⁸ See *LG*. 61.

restoring supernatural life to souls.⁴⁹ In this, Mary had a privileged but dependent cooperative role in the transmission of life. It is a mediating maternity and in the Pauline sense a coredemptive one.

Mary's spiritual motherhood is defined as a supernatural activity, received and subordinate, in the work of Redemption of another human being by which a created person receives and transmits to another person the divine life. Spiritual maternity presupposes divine paternity and human fraternity.⁵⁰ Such a notion of maternal mediation includes the mediation of the Church and its individual members. It is the willing cooperation of all the baptized with Christ in the salvation of humankind under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Mary, after participating in the redeeming sacrifice of the Son, now continues to fulfill from heaven her maternal function as the cooperator in the birth and development of divine life in the individual souls of redeemed persons.⁵¹ Today Mary continues to cooperate in the act of Redemption through her mediation of enabling humanity to experience Christ's redemptive grace.

The divine mystery of salvation is revealed to us and continues in the Church. Mary's role in salvation history is unique and it is primarily as Mother and associate of Christ but simultaneously she is the representative of humanity, and type of the Church. Mary as a wholly unique member of the Church shares with us her experience of redemptive grace of her Son. It is also possible that the Church and its members can associate themselves with Christ's redemptive work, cooperating with God's will for the salvation of the world. St. Paul makes this very clear when he exhorts us that 'we are God's fellow workers' (I Cor 3:9) 'in Christ' (Rom 16: 9) and 'co-workers for the Kingdom' (Col 4:11). He says that God invites all Christians to become co-workers with Christ for the sake of the Kingdom. This work involves a renunciation of self and often much suffering (Col 1: 24). Mary is our role model and a type of the Church and humanity because she by her maternal compassion shared in the suffering of the Redeemer. The Church as the sacramental presence of Salvation of Christ in the world, in a secondary and subordinate way, mediates Christ's redemptive grace to

⁴⁹ See *LG*, 61.

⁵⁰ See DE MARGERIE, 'Can the Church Define Dogmatically the Spiritual Motherhood of Mary? Objections and Answers', *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate. Theological Foundation Towards a Papal Definition?* ed. M. I. Miravalle, Santa Barbara, 1995, p.194.

⁵¹ See PAUL VI, *Signum magnum*, *AAS* 59 (1967), 468.

the members of the mystical Body through the sacraments and to all people of humanity through a life of love.

Today, we too are called to join our suffering to those of Christ on the Cross so that in a mysterious way our suffering may become redemptive. By offering all what we are and do, our work, our suffering and joy to God through Jesus for the salvation of the world, our lives take on a new meaning. Through our personal suffering, we make up that which is lacking in Christ's suffering (Col 1: 24). We bear witness to his perfect sacrifice making it ever present in a broken world. Our saints, martyrs, stigmatists and victim souls in their suffering identified themselves with Jesus crucified. In this sense, the Church as a whole and all members of the Body are coredeemers with Christ, always subordinate to him and dependent on the maternal mediation of grace by the Mother of the Church.⁵²

Mary and Syro-Malabar Church

The life and mission of Syro-Malabar Church clearly reveal the fact that for centuries, our Church has been actively and creatively cooperating in the redemptive act of Christ. One of the reasons for the ecclesial growth of our Church is her active devotion to Blessed Mary, the Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ. It is said that St. Thomas the Apostle had a special devotion to Blessed Mary and when he came to India in AD 52, he brought with him a painting of Blessed Mary drawn by St. Luke. It was lost with his martyrdom, but later found out from the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapoor.⁵³ It reveals that from the time of St. Thomas, there has been passionate devotion to Blessed Mary. This is very clear also from the Letter of Fr. Louis Pazheparambil, (later Bishop) written to Pope Leo XIII, requesting to get indigenous bishops: "Holy Father, we love our parents... We always remain faithful and loyal to the Popes. We strongly believe in Blessed Mary, Mother of God. Our main churches are dedicated to Blessed Mary. There is neither a family that does not recite rosary every day nor a girl in the family without a name after blessed Mary."⁵⁴ Our Church thus has always been experiencing Blessed Mary as the best model of Cooperation in the Redemption of Christ, our Mediator and our Advocate

⁵² See J. D. MILLER, *Marian Mediation: Is it True to say that Mary is Coredeemprix, Mediatrix of All Graces and Advocate?* New Bedford, 2004, pp. 42-43.

⁵³ See 'Blood on the Mount', p.27.

⁵⁴ See J. VELLIAN, *Marian Sabdbadbara* Encyclopaedic Dictionary on Blessed Virgin Mary, (Malayalam), Kottayam, 2004, p.126.

in our ecclesial as well as social life. In the Apostolic Constitution “Romani Pontifices” erecting a hierarchy for the Syro-Malabar Catholics, Pope Pius XI speaks of their “singular devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary”.

The Spirituality of Syro-Malabar Christians includes constant invocation to Mary for her mediation of Christ’s redemptive grace in our daily life. Our spirituality is always related to the spirituality of Blessed Mary. ‘Through Mary to Jesus’ is the core of our spirituality. This is very well obvious in our liturgical, devotional, ecclesial, missionary and social life.

Liturgical Life

Liturgical prayers are the official prayers of the Church, and as such they manifest the faith of the Church: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. In our Church, Marian devotion is integrated within the Liturgical celebration: in the Eucharist and the Prayer of the Church. In the prayers of the Holy Qurbana, there are prayers that speak of the relationship between Jesus and Mary and Mary’s significant role in the act of Redemption.⁵⁵ A homiletic hymn sung before the reading of the Gospel goes like this: “The only begotten, the Son of God came to the world, was born from the Virgin in a manner above nature and extra-ordinary.”⁵⁶ Blessed Mary is also invoked for the protection of humanity. We pray on the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary after Christmas: “(O) Christ who made us worthy to celebrate the commemoration of your Mother who carried You in her womb nine months and *brought you forth in virginity*, have mercy on us.”⁵⁷ Another prayer goes like this: “A cloud overshadowed the people (of Israel) and Mistress Mary (overshadows) the Christians; may her good remembrance procure for us goodness and mercy and consolation.”⁵⁸ An oration from the Vespers of ordinary Wednesdays throughout the year runs thus: “(O) our

⁵⁵ See the prayers and hymns of Wednesdays in the “Prayer of the Church’. See also J. VELLIAN, *Marian Sabdhadhara* Encyclopaedic Dictionary on Blessed Virgin Mary, (Malayalam), Kottayam, 2004.

⁵⁶ Quoted in P. J. PODIPARA, “The Mariology of the Church of the East”, *Christian Orient* II:4 (1981) 165-182, p.175.

⁵⁷ Quoted in P. J. PODIPARA, “The Mariology of the Church of the East”, *Christian Orient* II:4 (1981) 165-182, p.177.

⁵⁸ See Divine Office: Christmas: Oration at the end of the Night Office. Quoted in P. J. PODIPARA, “The Mariology of the Church of the East”, *Christian Orient* II:4 (1981) 165-182, p.182.

Lord and *Our God*, arm us with the powerful and unconquerable weapon (that is) *with the prayers of your blessed Mother*, and give us with her a part and participation in your heavenly chamber, Lord of all for ever. Amen.”⁵⁹ The prayers and the hymns in the liturgical texts are thus presented not as mere prayer of petitions or intercessions, but they also clearly reveal the unique maternal cooperation of Mary in the act of Redemption.

Devotional Life

We also intercede with Mary by different devotional practices especially by praying rosary, novenas, fasting in preparation for the great Feasts of Nativity and Assumption, celebrating her feasts, Marian retreats, wearing Marian medals and scapulars etc. Wednesdays are dedicated to Blessed Mary and the months of May and October are specially dedicated to her. On these occasions, many of our Christians make special prayers and do fasting too. The source and end of Marian devotion is Jesus himself and thus the best way to imitate Jesus Christ is by a total dedication to the Sacred Heart of Mary.

Traditionally, Syro-Malabar Christians’ vibrant devotion to Rosary is famous. The members of family used to gather together every morning and evening to recite the Rosary and to invoke Mary’s mediation, by meditating upon the mysteries of Christ’s Redemption and Mary’s unique participation in the same. In the month of October, there is an intensive 10 days Rosary devotion at every parish and religious institution. Now a days, many Syro-Malabar Christians wear rosary around their neck and many others keep the rosary with them while traveling. It is also noteworthy to mention that many Marian devotees recite rosary while traveling. In Kerala, it is really inspiring to see that a rosary is hung in front of every vehicle for the sake of protection from dangers. It is very special to Syro-Malabar Christians that on the occasion of the marriage, rosaries are also blessed and given to the couples so that Blessed Mary may protect the marriage and help the couples to lead a holy and committed family life.

Our Church is famous for its Carmelite Devotions, which she inherited from the foreign Carmelite missionaries. The Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (C.M.I.), the First indigenous Congregation of India and

⁵⁹ Quoted in P. J. PODIPARA, “The Mariology of the Church of the East”, *Christian Orient* II:4 (1981) 165-182, p.175.

Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (C.M.C.) promoted this Carmelite Devotion. Blessed Chavara Kuriakose Elias was a strong Marian devotee and the promoter of Carmelite devotion. Almost all Christians of Kerala wear scapular to be protected by Blessed Mary especially from the dangers of death. The Scapular devotion reached to the extent that it has been called as the ‘Sacrament of Mary’. On the occasion of 7th Centenary celebration of the Reception of the Scapular by Fr. Simon Stock on July 16, 1251, the bishops of Thirukochi issued a common pastoral letter in which we read: “Scapular is the sign of our moral unity with the Blessed Mary. This is the proof that Mary is the strongest mediator for us.”⁶⁰ On the occasion of the reception of the First Communion, the children are dedicated to Blessed Mary and the Scapular is officially given to them to wear.

Ecclesial Life

The ecclesial life and institutions reveal our special devotion to Mother Mary. In many of the Churches in Kerala, there exists ‘Kombriya’ (*Dbarsana Samoobam*) which has special devotion to Blessed Mary. The members are supposed to lead holy life after the model of our Mother Mary. Today, we also have Marian retreats, which help us to understand Mary’s role in salvation history and to enable us to realize our redemptive mission in and outside the Church. All Kerala Marian Congresses was conducted at Ernakulam from December 29th to 31st, in 1950, to properly understand the person and mission of Mary and also to promote Marian devotion. On that occasion, there was also ‘Scapular campaign’ which advocated wearing of scapulars. Recently, the warm welcome given to the statue of Blessed Mary from Fatima brought to Kerala really revealed our Marian devotion and further promoted Marian devotion. It is also a common custom in Syro-Malabar Church that in preparation for the Feast of Nativity, the young girls fast for 8 days invoking Blessed Mary to protect them from all the dangers of impurity.⁶¹

⁶⁰ See J. VELLIAN, *Marian Sabdbadhara* Encyclopaedic Dictionary on Blessed Virgin Mary, (Malayalam), Kottayam, 2004, pp.70-72.

⁶¹ For details, see G. KURUKOOR, *Kraisthava Sabdha Kosam* (An Analytical Historical and Comparative Study of Foreign Words in Christian Literature), Kerala, 2002, 179-180.

Many Churches,⁶² Convents and Institutions dedicated to Blessed Mary, Marian Pilgrim centers, Marian grottos, Rosary Village, Marian Tower also reveal the vibrant Marian devotion of our people. The thousands of pilgrims flock to the Marian shrines for obtaining her motherly protection and to get courage to lead an authentic Christian life. The icons in the Eastern Churches also reveal their Marian spirituality. In every icon, Mary is pictured with Jesus, which speaks of the Christological basis of Mariology and Marian spirituality. This reveals explicitly Christians' faith in Mary's unique role in the continuous redemptive act of Jesus Christ in today's shattered world.

Missionary Life

Our Church is really blessed with numerous vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life, which is precisely the fruit of her unique devotion to Blessed Mary. Our church is really lively because of the ministry of our young priests and religious. Blessed Mary is the inspiring model of service and protector of Priests and Religious. Mary's unique cooperation in Redemption through her maternal life and mission inspire many to commit their lives to continue her mission of cooperation in the act of redemption in today's world. The missionary enthusiasm to proclaim the salvation of God to the whole nation, shown by the visit of Mary to Elizabeth, has very much inspired many of our priests and religious to go to different parts of the world for missionary work ready even to lay down their lives for the Gospel.

Social Life

Drawing inspiration from Mary's *Magnificat*, our Church is committed to manifest God's preferential love for the poor and the downtrodden. Our Church is thus seriously engaged in various charitable as well as empowering activities in order to uplift the poor. Blessed Mary as the most perfect image of freedom and of liberation of humanity and of the universe, is the model of liberation of women who are in bondages. Her life and mission encourages many women movements to work for the liberation of women who are persecuted and humiliated by a male-dominant family and society. The Syro-Malabar Synod having taken up and discussed the theme

⁶² On the Church-bell of Kuruvilangad Church, in Kerala, '*Emme'dbalaha*' (Mother of God) is inscribed which also indicates our special devotion to Mary.

of 'family', now instructs all the members of the Church to seriously work for the betterment of families with the Gospel values and the example of Blessed Mary. Our Lady is presented as the best protector of purity amidst all types of sinful deviations among the youth. Blessed Virgin Mary who walked with Jesus till the foot of the Cross is also a great example for humanity who lives in the midst of suffering and tragedies. Mother of God being the perfect protector of our faith and morality, will help us to cooperate with the continuous redemptive work of Jesus Christ in today's world of sin and suffering.

Conclusion

In salvation history, Blessed Mary is said to be the first and the best-redeemed person.⁶³ Being the first and the best disciple of Jesus Christ, she is the one on the one hand, who has uniquely been redeemed by the preservative-redemptive act of Christ and on the other, who had been actively cooperating in the liberative-redemptive act. We can thus say that by the grace of God she gave her informed consent to be the Mother of the Redeemer, thus actively cooperating in the work of redemption and so becoming a unique cooperator in the Redemptive act of Christ. As Spiritual Mother in the order of grace, Mary 'participates' with the one Mediator in transmitting the Redemptive grace of Christ through her intercession and advocacy. Being 'full of grace' Mary as representative of humanity and the Church, thus made a total commitment of cooperation in the act of Redemption.

This is a doctrine of profound theological and pastoral significance. Apart from other Marian dogmas, this doctrine would be very helpful to understand the vocation and mission of the Church, clarifying the role of the Church and its members in the work of redemption. The salvation of humankind is entirely the initiative of God. Yet, He does not impose salvation on his creatures but requires our active cooperation, for which He gives us His redeeming presence.

We are invited to cooperate, by our own free decision, with God's act of our own redemption and the redemption of others by becoming genuine cooperators in the redemptive act of Christ. We are redeemed to the extent that we belong to the Church. Our redemption is mediated to us through

⁶³ See *LG*. 54.

the sacramental Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Mary as its representative and exemplary member is a model of redemptive suffering. By offering our sufferings, prayers and good works, we can also become real cooperators in Christ's Redemption.

From a Christological view-point, we understand that Mary, by her life and mission, uniquely cooperated in the act of Redemption and from an ecclesiological and anthropological view, she is presented as the Mother of the Church and humanity who intercedes for us in our daily life of struggles and sufferings. Though both the christological and ecclesio-anthropological perspectives of Mariology are necessary to correctly understand the unique life and mission of Mary in salvation history, the spirituality and theology of Syro-Malabar Church would reveal more the ecclesio-anthropological dimension of Mariology stressing on Mary as the Mother of the Church and of Humanity than the christological aspect, namely Mary as a unique cooperator in Redemption.

La Santísima Virgen María y el misterio de su peculiar cooperación en el plan de salvación

JORGE A. CARDENAL MEDINA ESTÉVEZ

Las palabras del Santo Padre al afirmar que "la participación de la Madre del Salvador en la redención de la humanidad constituye un hecho único e irrepetible", no deberían sorprender a nadie de entre quienes confiesan que Jesucristo es verdadero Dios y verdadero hombre, y que ha llevado a cabo la redención en virtud de actos realizados por medio de su naturaleza humana. Ahora bien, esta naturaleza humana ha sido asumida por la Persona divina del Hijo eterno, en las entrañas virginales de María, convertida por este hecho en Madre de Dios, porque concibió en su seno *Ja naturaleza* humana de Aquel que es Dios y, por ende, de la única Persona divina que es el sujeto de las acciones y pasiones de la naturaleza humana asumida por el Verbo de Dios. Esta relación entre el Verbo encarnado y María es única, y no puede ser comunicada; es totalmente diferente a la que existe, por ejemplo, entre Cristo, Pontífice de la Nueva Alianza y aquellos que ejercen el sacerdocio ministerial, como instrumentos suyos y en su nombre. Si se evocan los grados más altos de los caminos místicos, éstos tampoco pueden *alcanzar* el nivel sublime de la relación de filiación y maternidad existentes entre el Verbo encarnado y su Madre santísima.

El privilegio, también único, de la Inmaculada Concepción, don gratuito de la plenitud de la gracia dispensado a la Virgen María, se refiere a su elección como Madre de Dios, ya que el nacimiento de Jesucristo no es solamente un hecho de orden puramente material, sino que es un acontecimiento que pertenece al orden de la gracia, debido a que la razón profunda de la venida del Hijo de Dios no es otra que la de la salvación: "*y tú (José) le pondrás por nombre Jesús, porque El salvará a su pueblo de sus pecados*" (Mt 1,21). Por su Inmaculada Concepción, la Virgen es la primer salvada, ciertamente no como liberada del poder del Maligno, sino como preservada del pecado original y de todo pecado personal (DS 2800, 2801, 2803), y su plenitud de gracia es la consecuencia del primer privilegio de María, que es su maternidad divina.

Cuando la Presentación de Jesús al Templo de Jerusalén, pareciera que las palabras dirigidas por el anciano Simeón a la Virgen se refieren a la cooperación de María en el plan de la salvación: "*... Este (Jesús) está puesto para caída y elevación de muchos en Israel, y para ser señal de contradicción, —y a ti misma una espada te atravesará el alma! - A fin de que queden al descubierto las intenciones de muchos corazones*"

(Le 2,34 s). Palabras misteriosas en las que no se percibe, de inmediato, su profunda significación. No obstante, contienen un elemento significativo: el corazón traspasado de la Virgen, que se convierte en causa de revelación, diría de "discernimiento" de los pensamientos íntimos de muchos corazones. ¿Cuáles serían estos pensamientos íntimos? Me atrevo a ver en ellos la actitud de los hombres con respecto al plan de salvación o, si se prefiere expresar de otro modo esta reflexión, la acogida o el rechazo, más o menos amplios, del Evangelio, de la Buena Noticia, de la Cruz que será "signo de contradicción", porque los judíos verán en ella un escándalo y los paganos una locura (cf. 1 Cor 1,23), mientras que para nosotros, creyentes, es sabiduría de Dios (ibid 24). Si se entiende de esta manera el papel de la espada que traspasa el alma de la Virgen - y pienso que el alma equivale al corazón - se puede aceptar que los sufrimientos de la Virgen estuvieron asociados a los de Jesús, para que los hombres fueran capaces de alejarse de los pensamientos según la carne y aceptar la sabiduría del espíritu (cf. Gal 5,16-25). Así es como los dolores de María se convierten también, de una manera oculta y silenciosa, en causa efectiva o eficiente de la salvación, evidentemente subordinada y dependiente de la acción salvífica de Jesús, que es la fuente primera de la realización concreta del plan de salvación del Padre misericordioso. No es nada aventurado pensar que los

sufrimientos de la Virgen alcanzaron su culminación al pie de la cruz, y que su corazón, traspasado espiritualmente, estuvo asociado al corazón materialmente traspasado de su Hijo, para que los hombres pudieran acoger la sabiduría de la salvación, es decir, la convicción de que nos ha sido concedida como una gracia, sin mérito alguno de parte nuestra, sino al contrario, como don generoso del Padre, que

nos la da porque tenemos necesidad de ella mucho más de cuanto nos atreveríamos a pedir o desear. Las palabras de Simeón deben ser leídas a la luz de la cruz; nuestra fe católica nos permite considerar a María al pie de la cruz, no sólo como una madre llena de angustia y sufrimiento ante la ejecución de su hijo, sino como aquella que ha tomado parte, talvez sin darse explícitamente cuenta de toda la inmensa trascendencia

de cuanto estaba sucediendo, en el acontecimiento capital de la historia de la salvación. Las palabras de Evangelio de san Lucas, que nos dicen que "*María por su parte, guardaba todas estas cosas, y las meditaba en su corazón*" (Le 2,19; cf. 2,51), me parecen que no se refieren solamente a ciertos momentos precisos de su vida, sino más bien a la totalidad de su participación maternal en la obra de Jesús, su Hijo. Toda

la vida de Jesús es misterio de salvación, pero la culminación de su obra se encuentra en la Pascua, es decir, en su muerte en el Calvario y en su

Resurrección gloriosa. Ahora bien, la muerte de Jesús es presentada por la Sagrada Escritura como una ofrenda sacrificial. Esta característica aparece ya de una manera apenas velada en el cántico del Siervo de Isaías (Is 53,1-12). El misterioso término de "cordero", que san Juan Bautista aplica a Jesús, no se puede entender sino a la luz de las liturgias sacrificiales del Antiguo Testamento, que el Precursor, hijo de un sacerdote de la Antigua Alianza, no podía ignorar. Las palabras de Juan: "*He abí el Cordero de Dios que quita el pecado del mundo*" (Jn 1,29) adquieren pues su sentido profético a la luz de los antiguos sacrificios ofrecidos por el perdón de los pecados (cf. Lv 4,1-5, 13; 6,17-23).

Nuestra reflexión nos conduce, de este modo, a la evocación de la presencia de la Virgen María al pie de la cruz. La muerte de Jesús descrita en el Nuevo Testamento cómo un sacrificio, noción que estaba muy presente en la conciencia de los miembros del pueblo de Israel. En la lectura de la narración de la institución de la Eucaristía, tal como aparece en los escritos de san Pablo (1 Cor 11,23-27), y en los Evangelios sinópticos (cf Mat 26,26-29; Me 14, 22-24; Le 22,19-20), se percibe que el rito establecido por Jesús, y que se refiere a su muerte, el día siguiente, en el Calvario, posee las características de un sacrificio, en el sentido cultural de este término. Aún cuando el texto de la promesa de la Eucaristía contenía ya, de modo implícito, una referencia sacrificial en el hecho de la mención repetida del cuerpo y de la sangre de Jesús (cf Jn 6,52-56) - pues la sangre es un elemento característico de las liturgias sacrificiales -; es la carta a los Hebreos la que constituye el texto clave para la comprensión en clave sacrificial de la muerte de Jesús en la Cruz. Se trata de un escrito en el que la amplitud, los detalles y su contenido explícito no dejan lugar a ninguna duda (cf Heb 7-10). Es suficiente citar aquí una perícopa *capital*, que puede ser considerada como un resumen de esta epístola:

"No conteniendo, en efecto, la Ley más que una sombra de los bienes futuros, no la realidad de las cosas, no puede nunca, mediante unos mismos sacrificios que se ofrecen sin cesar año tras año, dar la perfección a los que se acercan. De otro modo ¿no habrían cesado de ofrecerlos, al no tener ya conciencia de pecado los que ofrecen ese culto, una vez purificados? Al contrario, con ellos se renueva cada año el recuerdo de los pecados, pues es imposible que sangre de toros y machos cabríos borre pecados. Por eso, al entrar en este mundo, dice: «No quisiste sacrificio ni oblación: pero me has formado un cuerpo. No te agradaron los holocaustos y sacrificios por el pecado. Entonces dije: ¡He aquí que vengo — pues de mí está escrito en el rollo del

libro - a hacer, oh Dios, tu voluntad». Dice primero: Sacrificios y holocaustos y oblaciones no los quisiste ni te agradaron - cosas todas ofrecidas conforme a la Ley entonces, añade: He aquí que vengo a hacer tu voluntad. Abroga lo primero para establecer lo segundo. Y en virtud de esta voluntad somos santificados, merced a la oblación de una vez par a siempre del cuerpo de Jesucristo" (Heb 10,1-10).

En los sacrificios de la Antigua Alianza, aparecen: el que presenta la víctima; luego, el sacerdote que ofrece el sacrificio; a continuación, la víctima para el sacrificio, y, por último, el altar sobre el que la víctima es ofrecida. En la muerte de Cristo en el Calvario, él mismo es el sacerdote y la víctima, y toda la tradición cristiana ha visto en la cruz el altar de ese sacrificio. ¿Pero quien es el que ofrece la víctima? Es claro que es el mismo Jesús, en cuanto verdadera Cabeza de la humanidad, y que en su naturaleza humana ofrece al Padre el homenaje de su adhesión total y de su sumisión perfecta y obediente (cf Fil 2,5-11) a su Voluntad, con el fin de reparar la insensata autonomía que Adán ambicionó en el paraíso (cf Gn 3,1-7). Si bien es Cristo mismo quien ofrece libremente su vida humana en sacrificio, tampoco se puede olvidar que él recibió esa humanidad de su Madre, la Virgen *María*, y que la humanidad de Cristo "pertenece" a María con un título que ninguna otra persona puede pretender poseer. Así, la Virgen María ofreció la víctima del sacrificio del calvario de una manera especialísima, y, con este título, ella fue quien ofreció objetivamente la víctima del sacrificio redentor. Aún más, siendo el mismo Jesús quien dio a la humanidad a la Virgen María como Madre, ella acepta, en calidad de Madre, hacer la ofrenda que permite a los hombres adorar a Dios en espíritu y en verdad (cf Jn 4,21-24), contribuyendo así a suscitar de nuevo en ellos una actitud auténtica de creaturas consagradas a la *alabanza* de la gloria de la gracia de Dios (cf Ef 1,6.12.14). ¿Fue la Virgen María conciente de este modo de participación en el sacrificio de su Hijo por su presencia de *Stabat Mater*, de Madre que estaba de pie junto a la cruz? La Sagrada Escritura no nos dice nada al respecto, y es bien posible que la plena conciencia de su papel fue madurando progresivamente, con la luz del Espíritu Santo, que habitaba, simultáneamente con suavidad y potencia en el corazón de aquella cuya respuesta al ángel - "*He aquí la esclava del Señor, hágase en mí según tu palabra*" (Lc 1,38) - no fue un "sí" circunscrito a un momento pasajero, sino una actitud permanente de la que brotó de modo natural la palabra dirigida a los servidores durante la fiesta de las bodas de Cana: "*haced lo que El os diga*" (Jn 2,6). Estas palabras corresponden al cumplimiento a la letra de la Oración con que Jesús nos enseñó a dirigirnos a su Padre: "*hágase tu voluntad así en la tierra como en el cielo*" (Mt 6, 10).

Se puede concluir esta reflexión citando el texto fundamental de san Pablo, que constituye, en cierta forma, un resumen de la vida cristiana: *"Os exhorto, pues hermanos, por la misericordia de Dios, a que ofrezcáis vuestros cuerpos como una víctima viva, santa, agradable a Dios: tal será vuestro culto espiritual Y no os acomodéis al mundo presente, antes bien, transformaos mediante la renovación de vuestra mente, de forma que podáis distinguir cuál es la voluntad de Dios: lo bueno, lo agradable, lo perfecto "* (Rm 12,1s). Si el primer versículo de esta cita es el retrato del corazón inmaculado de María, se puede ver en el segundo el fruto de la herida de su alma traspasada: *"a fin de que queden al descubierto las intenciones de muchos corazones"* (Le 2,35).

De este modo, María coopera en el sacrificio de la cruz presentando la víctima, y participa en él por la oblación dolorosa de sí misma - fuente derivada de la fuente primera y suficiente, que es Cristo - para la salvación de los hombres. No es posible imaginar una cooperación más estrecha y más fecunda en la obra de la Redención que la de la Santísima Virgen María, ya que su papel en el plan de salvación, pertenece por voluntad del Padre y por gracia del Espíritu Santo, a la economía realizada por el Verbo encarnado, a través del sacrificio del Calvario.

Fatima and Our Lady Co-redemptrix

ÉDOUARD CARDINAL GAGNON, PSS, OC

At the core of our Christian Faith lies a mystery which at once manifests the extraordinary generosity of Christ the Redeemer, and at the same time calls all of his disciples to a profound supernatural mission alongside their Redeemer. This mystery is referred to in the words of St. Paul to the Colossians, in which he calls all followers of the Crucified to “complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, for the sake of his body which is the Church” (Col. 1:24).

Jesus Christ is the only Redeemer because He alone is the divine and human Mediator between God and men (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5). He has, however, willed to bring into partnership in his work of redemption all those who have been redeemed by him, in order that the glory and mercy of his work may shine forth in the heavens and on earth in a greater and more wondrous manner. Thus, redeemed humanity can cooperate with the Redeemer in virtue of our mystical union with Jesus, a union so sublime that we, the People of God, form his very Body. We not only receive but should also participate in the distribution of the infinite graces merited by the Redeemer once for all at Calvary. In light of this partnership desired by the Savior for all his faithful, John Paul II rightly designates the People of God as “co-redemers.”¹

Our Lady is the perfect model for the Christian’s mission to participate in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. In virtue of her Immaculate Conception, she is prepared by the Eternal Father to cooperate without compromise, in union with the Redeemer, in buying back humanity from the bondage of the Evil One (cf. Gen. 3:15). In light of her divine maternity, she possesses the greatest conceivable union of body and spirit with Jesus, the Incarnate Savior. Her presence at Calvary, prophesied by Simeon (cf. Lk. 2:35), speaks through action of the Redeemer’s desire that his Mother share entirely in all of his sufferings of passion and death in order to ransom the lost children of the first Adam and Eve (cf. Jn. 19:25-27).

¹ Cf. John Paul II, Address to the sick at the Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God, April 5, 1981, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, April 13, 1981, p. 6; General Audience, Jan. 13, 1982, *Inseg.* V/1, 1982, 91; Address to candidates for the Priesthood, Montevideo, May 8, 1988, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, May 30, 1988, p. 4; cf. Pius XI, Papal Allocution at Vicenza, Nov. 30, 1933, Domenico Bertetto, S.D.B., ed., *Discorsi di Pio XI* 2:1013.

It is true that the Sorrowful Mother constitutes in her wondrously beautiful person the optimum witness to the essential Christian revelation that human suffering is intended by God to be supernaturally redemptive. Still, the quality and degree of the Immaculate Co-redemptrix's participation in the mystery of salvation extends incomparably beyond that of any other creature, human or angelic. Our Lady alone participated with her divine Son in the acquisition of the graces of Calvary due to her exclusive role as the New Eve. She fought the spiritual battle with Christ against the infernal adversary for the rest of humanity, indeed for the ransom of all creation, with an intensity and at the cost of suffering almost humanly unimaginable,² but which was supernaturally fruitful for the entire human race.

Thus, as the perfect companion with the Redeemer, she embodies the title and heavenly honor of Co-redemptrix with a magnitude and efficacy far beyond any other creaturely participation in redemption.

The Coredemptive Call of Fatima

The three young Portuguese visionaries made the coredemptive call of Our Lady of Fatima a firm Marian foundation for their own paths to Christian sanctity. From the outset of the 1916 angelic apparitions which prepared the way for Our Lady's visits the following year, the call of coredemption through the offering of daily sacrifices and sufferings comprises a pillar of the Fatima message and mission.

During the first 1916 apparition, the "Angel of Peace"³ instructs the children to offer prayers of reparation for those who do not believe, adore, trust or love God.⁴ This is soon followed in the next angelic apparition by the heavenly call to "Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High."⁵ When the young Lucia asks how they are to make sacrifices, the Guardian Angel of Portugal⁶ instructs: "Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners...above all, accept and bear with submission the suffering which the Lord will send

² John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, February, 11, 1984, 25.

³ *Memoirs of Sister Lucia*, Second Memoir, p. 62.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

you.”⁷ Reparation is indeed a mode of coredemption, whereby a member of Christ’s Body voluntarily offers an act of prayer or penance on behalf of others, which then effects the mysterious release of the redemptive graces of Jesus for the spiritual fruits of atonement to God for sin and for the spiritual conversion and salvation of other members of humanity.

Our Lady re-echoes the call of coredemption initiated by the Angel of Peace during her first apparition. On May 13, 1917, Our Lady of the Rosary invites the young seers to accept a life vocation of redemptive suffering and offering for the salvation of poor sinners: “Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the suffering He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for poor sinners?” Lucia responds, “Yes, we are willing.” Then Our Lady confirms: “Then you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort.”⁸ On July 13, she further directs the children: “Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say many times, especially when you make some sacrifice: O Jesus, it is for love of you, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”⁹

We also see the Fatima mission for Christian coredemption revealed in the invitation of the Child Jesus and his Mother on December 10, 1925, to offer the four revealed components of the First Saturday Communions of Reparation with the specific intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart, a maternal heart which mysteriously and mystically continues to suffer. The Christ Child testifies to the ongoing moment by moment piercing of the Immaculate Heart due to the sins and ingratitude of mankind: “Have compassion on the Heart of your most holy Mother, covered with thorns, with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to make an act of reparation to remove them.”¹⁰ The Immaculate Heart herself confirms: “Look, my daughter, at my Heart, surrounded by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce me at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude.”¹¹ The Fatima call to coredemption and reparation unveils the request to offer consolation directly to Mary’s most Immaculate Heart in atonement for the present pains inflicted on that maternal heart by the daily offenses of humanity. A mother’s heart shares in the suffering of her children in the order of love, and hence the Savior Son

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Memoirs*, Fourth Memoir, p. 158.

⁹ Ibid., p. 162.

¹⁰ *Memoirs*, Appendix I, p. 195.

¹¹ Ibid.

initiates the call for reparation and consolation to the Heart of our universal spiritual Mother.

Beyond the general Christian call to coredeemption beckoned by the Lady of Fatima, we also witness glimpses of Mary Co-redemptrix herself in the Fatima event. During the solar miracle of October 13, 1917, Our Lady appears as Our Lady of Sorrows.¹² In the monumental message of July 13, she follows her request for the daily Rosary as the providential remedy for world war with the words: "...because only she can help you."¹³ The task of distributing to our present world the graces of peace and redemption has been granted exclusively to the Mediatrix of all graces, and she is the Mediatrix of all graces in the ministry of dispensation because she was first the Co-redemptrix in the ministry of acquisition and reconquest with Christ, the Redeemer King.

Sr. Lucia's Commentary on Our Lady Co-redemptrix

In her final major writing entitled, "*Calls From the Message of Fatima*, Sr. Lucia leaves the world an extraordinary testimony and insight into the profundity of the title and role of Our Lady as the Co-redemptrix. Her repeated commentary on the Co-redemptrix title highlights the unquestionable presence of Marian Coredeemption in the Fatima revelation and mission. Her ongoing reflections upon Mary Co-redemptrix designate it as the principal Marian title that occupies her attention along with the title of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Let us examine just a few excerpts from her repeated explanations of the efficacious undertaking of the Co-redemptrix. In the thirteenth chapter dedicated to the imperative for devotion to the Immaculate Heart, Sr. Lucia identifies how the entire work of redemption begins with the Heart of Mary, and how her coredeemptive role brings to light the inseparable union between the Redeemer and the Co-redemptrix:

God began the work of our redemption in the Heart of Mary, given that it was through her "*fiat*" that the redemption began to come about: "And Mary said, '*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your*

¹² *Memoirs*, Fourth Memoir, p. 170.

¹³ *Memoirs*, Fourth Memoir, p. 161.

word.' (Lk 1:38). "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). Thus, in the closest union possible between two human beings, Christ began, with Mary, the work of our salvation. The Christ's heart-beats are those of the heart of Mary, the prayer of Christ is the prayer of Mary, the joys of Christ are the joys of Mary; it was from Mary that Christ received the Body and Blood that are to be poured out and offered for the salvation of the world. Hence, Mary, made one with Christ, is the Co-redemptrix of the human race. With Christ in her womb, with Jesus Christ in her arms, with Christ at Nazareth and in his public life; with Christ she climbed the hill of Calvary, she suffered and agonized with Him, receiving into her Immaculate Heart the last sufferings of Christ, his last words, his last agony and the last drops of his Blood, in order to offer them to the Father.¹⁴

In the context of our own mysterious call to participate in Redemption's application, the Fatima seer explains Our Lady's mission of co-suffering in relation to the Incarnation, the union of the Two Hearts, and God's providential disposition that Our Lady indeed become the Co-redemptrix of the human race:

The work of our redemption began at the moment when the Word descended from Heaven in order to assume a human body in the womb of Mary. From that moment, and for the next nine months, the blood of Christ was the blood of Mary, taken from her Immaculate Heart; the Heart of Christ was beating in unison with the Heart of Mary.

And we can think that the aspirations of the Heart of Mary were completely identified with the aspirations of the Heart of Christ. Mary's ideal had become the same as that of Christ Himself, and the love in the Heart of Mary was the love in the Heart of Christ for the Father and for all human beings; to begin with, the entire work of redemption passed through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, through the bond of her close intimate union with the divine Word.

¹⁴ Sr. Lucia, *"Calls" from the Message of Fatima*, Ch. 13, p. 137.

Since the Father entrusted his Son to Mary, enclosing Him for nine months within her chaste virginal womb—and "*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel' (which means, God with us)*" (Mt 1:22-23; Is 7:14)—and since Mary of her own free will opened herself entirely to whatever God willed to accomplish in her—"*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word*" (Lk 1:38) is what she said to the angel—in view of all this and by God's disposition, Mary became, with Christ, the Co-redemptrix of the human race.¹⁵

Conclusion

Sr. Lucia's inspired witness to the authenticity of Mary Co-redemptrix appropriately serves, in this hallowed Fatima Sanctuary, as a final "fiat" to what has constituted an ongoing litany of erudite scholarship, homiletic praise, and liturgical worship offered through the course of this extraordinary symposium in just and fitting reverence to our Mother, the Immaculate Co-redemptrix of the human race.

It is now time, my brother cardinals and bishops, to consider prayerfully bringing the labors of our Marian love, which have constituted the "soul" of this symposium, into some concrete form of practical resolution, in order to "give flesh" to our common love of the Co-redemptrix.

¹⁵*"Calls" from the Message of Fatima*, Ch. 13, p. 115. Note: Sr. Lucia also links the Virgin's role as Co-redemptrix from within a christo-typical mariological framework with her example of Christian holiness through the fulfillment of the duties of her state in life as wife and mother in a most fruitful ecclesio-typical mariological application: "Our Lady sanctified herself as a pure and immaculate virgin by corresponding to the graces which God granted to her in that state. She sanctified herself as a faithful and devoted wife by fulfilling all the duties of her state in life. She sanctified herself as a loving mother who dedicated herself to the Son whom God entrusted to her, fondling Him in her arms, bringing Him up and educating Him, and also helping Him and following Him in the performance of his mission. With Him she traveled the narrow way of life, the rugged road to Calvary; with Him she agonized, receiving in her heart the wounds of the nails, the piercing of the lance and the insults of the hostile crowd; finally, she sanctified herself as mother, mistress and guide of the Apostles, agreeing to remain on earth for as long as God wished, in order to accomplish the mission which He had entrusted to her as Co-redemptrix with Christ of all human beings" (*"Calls"*, Ch. 21, p. 195).

My brothers, I wish only to share my own heart with you in this formal closing of the presentation schedule of our symposium, and the initiation of our discussion towards a potential resolution.

I believe the time has now arrived in the life of the Church for the solemn definition of Our Lady's role as Co-redemptrix, along with her subsequent roles as Mediatrix of all graces and Advocate. I am well aware of the numerous objections offered against such an action at this time, the principal objection being its potential negative effect on the ecumenical mission of the Church. But I remember clearly the same objections that were posed against the papal definition of Our Lady's Assumption in 1949, objections which were historically proven to be inaccurate, and which were lost in the sea of grace which was released through the papal definition in 1950. It is important to point out that contrary to the ecumenical objection raised before the definition of the Assumption, its solemn papal definition led to the greatest historical period of ecumenical progress in the history of the Church, an historic ecumenical breakthrough that came through Our Lady's intercession.

I furthermore believe in Our Lady's words delivered at this precise location of Fatima that "only she can help you."¹⁶ Whether it be the ecumenical mission and the new evangelization, the battle against the culture of death and its evil seeds of abortion, euthanasia, and cloning; the crisis of family life; the threat against world peace, particularly in the Middle East; the fight against world hunger, poverty, and disease, especially in its tragic manifestation in Africa; and in all other global imperatives facing the Church and the world, I believe the remedy is the solemn proclamation of this Marian doctrine, which will formally recognize and request the full extent of her powerful mediation for all humanity.

I would therefore like to initiate a *votum* as an expression of hope, directed to the Holy Father and the Holy See, which would respectfully express the desire for the solemn proclamation of Our Lady Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate—a *votum* to which I would like to invite any and all brother cardinals and bishops present to join, if you feel so called by Our Lady, in a spirit of fraternal solidarity. I would be happy to provide a basic

¹⁶ *Memoirs*, Fourth Memoir, p. 161.

draft of the *votum*, which could then be modified and agreed upon during our general discussion of resolutions.

If possible, I would also recommend the personal presentation of any potential *votum* agreed upon here by a cardinal member or two here present, who could possibly convey the final *votum* directly and personally to the Holy Father.

My brothers and friends, I have expressed my heart honestly to you all, and I invite you all to an honest exchange of minds and hearts on this initiation of a *votum* and your own potential participation. Thank you, and may Our Lady of Fatima truly lead our discussion and resolution in her honor, and for the greatest glory of the Most Holy Trinity.

Il culto di Maria nella Chiesa Orientale

Tomáš Cardinale Špidlík, S.J.

*Beato colui che all'alba si leva verso di te e batte alla porta del tuo palazzo.
Beato è colui su cui permane la possanza del tuo amore e dice sempre le lodi della tua gloria.
Beato è colui che non mai rimuove dalla bocca la menzione del nome tuo né interrompe la sua lingua dal celebrare la tua maestà.*

Il brano è preso dalle *Beatitudini*, contenute nell'*Arpa di Maria*, composte in Etiopia nel sec. XV, da un certo Giorgio Armeno¹. Ci serve come esempio per illustrare la diffusione e la bellezza della devozione mariana in Oriente.

Il fatto non esige prove, ma piuttosto una spiegazione. Ci si è domandato spesso, perché la devozione mariana abbia preso in Oriente un tale slancio. L'insegnamento sulla Madonna, pensa V. Lossky², non può formare un tema dogmatico indipendente, una "mariologia", ma "resta inerente all'intero insegnamento cristiano come un leitmotiv antropologico" di tutta la teologia e spiritualità. Tutti i tratti caratteristici della spiritualità orientale, oramai generalmente riconosciuti, hanno il loro riflesso nel culto mariano. Cerchiamo le radici di questo atteggiamento.

L'aspetto antropologico della conoscenza di Dio

Dal fatto che Dio è nato come uomo, da una donna, segue la conseguenza che la perfetta rivelazione di Dio si deve cercare nell'uomo. I greci cercavano Dio nel cosmo, gli ebrei nella storia del loro popolo. Il pensiero dei Padri greci s'ispira volentieri alla parola scolpita sul tempio delfico: *Gnothi seauton*, conosci te stesso. Questa conoscenza di se stesso può essere considerata da diversi punti di vista. Già Filone di Alessandria insiste sul fatto che la conoscenza di sé deve essere morale e anagogica, cioè partire dalla conoscenza di sé alla conoscenza di Dio³. Dalla conoscenza dell'uomo, scrive Gregorio Nazianzeno, "la strada è diretta per raggiungere la bellezza del primo Modello"⁴. Da questo primo presupposto segue immediatamente

¹ Trad. it. di E. Cerulli, *La letteratura etiopica*, Firenze-Milano 1968, p. 114.

² *A l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu*, Parigi 1967, p. 195.

³ Cf. A. J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, II, Parigi 1949, pp. 575 sg.

⁴ *Carm.* I, II, 51, v. 7, PG 37, 911.

una conclusione. Il pensiero teologico dei Padri è fondato sulla rivelazione di Dio personale che creò l'uomo secondo la sua immagine e rassomiglianza. Dato però che ogni uomo segue una vocazione personale, irripetibile, anche l'immagine di Dio che si realizza in lui presenta delle varietà e dei gradi diversi. Sofferamiamoci sulla tendenza che è stata sviluppata dai Padri Cappadoci, i quali esercitarono un grande influsso sulla spiritualità orientale.

L'immagine di Dio nel pensiero dei Padri Cappadoci

In che consiste l'immagine o qual è nell'uomo il luogo dell'immagine divina? Su questo punto c'è una grande diversità di opinioni. Gli studiosi notano particolarmente due tendenze. Mentre i Padri alessandrini pensano che l'uomo è immagine di Dio nella sua mente capace di conoscere, per gli antiocheni lo è invece in virtù del dominio sull'universo intero. Ma non si devono dimenticare i Cappadoci, perché essi, in un certo senso, fanno sintesi delle due tendenze. Nelle sue considerazioni su questo tema, Basilio sceglie il giusto punto di partenza⁵. Per comprendere l'uomo, bisogna partire dal suo Creatore. Nelle *Omellerie sull'Hexameron* Basilio prova magistralmente come tutta la creazione proviene dalla parola di Dio: egli disse e fu fatto. La parola è stata pronunciata all'inizio, ma fin ora conserva la sua piena efficacia e la sua forza: le acque scorrono, le piante crescono, gli animali si moltiplicano in virtù di questa parola, e sono, per così dire, la parola di Dio "concretizzata". Vale questo anche per l'uomo? Senza dubbio, però con una differenza essenziale: come essere razionale, l'uomo deve accettare la parola creatrice consapevolmente e liberamente. Per mezzo di questo grande dono della libertà l'uomo è essenzialmente collaboratore di Dio nella grande opera della creazione e della salvezza del mondo. È un grandissimo privilegio e si verifica in diversi gradi negli uomini.

Questo insegnamento basiliano è approfondito da suo fratello Gregorio di Nissa, il quale dimostra che la nostra libertà non si può intendere diversamente che divino-umana, come forza attiva nella quale uomo si unisce con lo Spirito Santo e diventa in qualche modo co-creatore del mondo⁶. E l'amico intimo di Basilio, san Gregorio Nazianzeno, arriva alla conclusione che l'uomo, essendo immagine di Dio, è capace di dire

⁵ Cf. T. Špidlík, *La sophiologie de S. Basile*, OCA 162, Roma 1961, pp. 6 sg.

⁶ Cf. R. Leys, *L'image de Dieu chez saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Bruxelles 1951.

anche lui al mondo la sua parola che interverrà nel destino del mondo⁷. Quali conseguenze ne seguono per il mistero di Maria, lo ha mostrato abbondantemente la tradizione dell'Oriente cristiano.

L'energeia divina e la synergeia umana

L'aspetto più essenziale della spiritualità orientale è, secondo P. Evdokimov⁸, l'ontologismo della santità. La perfezione cristiana non si può ridurre a concetti morali o giuridici, ma è fondata sulla presenza dello Spirito Santo, operante per mezzo degli uomini. Secondo la nota definizione di san Ireneo l'uomo spirituale è composto da tre elementi costitutivi: "la carne, l'anima e lo Spirito"⁹. Questa presenza dello Spirito divino pone però un problema: come può lo Spirito Santo essere un elemento costitutivo della nostra persona? La teologia latina voleva interpretare l'espressione soltanto in modo approssimativo: è presente non personalmente, ma per mezzo della grazia. Al contrario l'insegnamento dei Padri greci è fermo: lo Spirito Santo viene da Dio ma non rimane esterno, entra nel nostro cuore così "come è la potenza di vedere nell'occhio sano", "come l'arte nell'artista", dice san Basilio¹⁰. Ma lo Spirito Santo è Dio e come si può dire che Dio è legato a qualche posto? Rispondiamo: Dio è presente là dove agisce. Agisce soprattutto negli uomini per mezzo dello Spirito di Cristo. La vita spirituale consiste quindi nel fatto che l'uomo e lo Spirito Santo formano un principio comune di operazione. Così definì san Giovanni Crisostomo l'uomo spirituale "dall'energia dello Spirito"¹¹.

Non vi è dubbio che l'esempio classico della vita spirituale, compresa in questa dimensione "ontologica", è il mistero della Maternità divina, il fondamentale dogma cristiano. Nel linguaggio palamitico l'intervento salvifico di Dio nel mondo, che procede dal Padre per mezzo del Figlio nello Spirito Santo, è indicato con il termine *energeia*. A ciò corrisponde da parte degli uomini la *synergeia*, cooperazione. Il risultato di questa cooperazione è divino-umano. Lo notiamo, in modo migliore, nell'incarnazione. Lo Spirito viene a Maria, essa mette a disposizione tutte le sue forze umane e nasce Dio-uomo.

⁷ Cf. T. Špidlík, *Grégoire de Nazianze. Introduction à l'étude de sa doctrine spirituelle*, OCA 189, Roma 1971, pp. 138 sg.

⁸ *La novità dello Spirito*, Milano 1979, p. 7.

⁹ *Adversus haereses* V, 9, 1-12, PG 7, 1144-45.

¹⁰ *Tractatus de Spiritu Sancto* 26, SC 17 (1947), p. 226.

¹¹ *Hom. 2,5, sull'oscurità dei profeti*, PG 56, 185 A.

Maria rappresenta tutto il genere umano

Nato in un ambiente ristretto della Palestina, il Figlio di Dio entra nell'umanità intera. Similmente la Vergine di Nazaret personifica tutto il genere umano. Lo esprime il canto natalizio (*kontakion*) della liturgia bizantina: “Che cosa ti offriremo, o Cristo, perché tu nasca sulla terra come un uomo? Ogni creatura, che è sua opera, ti porta, infatti, testimonianza della sua gratitudine: gli angeli il loro canto, i cieli le stelle, i magi i loro doni, i pastori la loro ammirazione, la terra la grotta, il luogo deserto la culla; ma noi uomini ti offriamo una Madre Vergine”.

Essa, quindi, è simbolo della Chiesa, perché anch'essa offre l'umanità all'incarnazione del Cristo mistico nella storia. Subito dopo il Concilio di Efeso, che definì il titolo di *Theotokos*, san Leone Magno comprese la grande conseguenza di questa definizione per la vita cristiana, facendo l'analogia fra la maternità di Maria e la maternità spirituale della Chiesa¹². Lo commenta P. Evdokimov: “La parola del Credo ‘nato dallo Spirito Santo e dalla Vergine’ significa per i Padri il mistero della seconda nascita di ogni fedele *ex fide et ex Spiritu Sancto*; la fede di ogni fedele ha la sua radice nell'atto della Vergine che ha il valore universale, nel suo *Fiat*. L'Annunciazione, chiamata ‘Festa della radice’ (san Giovanni Crisostomo), inaugura una nuova età; l'economia della salvezza risale alla radice mariologica e la mariologia appare come una parte organica della cristologia. Al *Fiat* del Creatore corrisponde il *Fiat* della creatura”¹³.

Inseparabile dalla cristologia, la mariologia ha una relazione stretta anche con il mistero trinitario. Guardando concretamente il piano salvifico di Dio, la maternità divina viene spontaneamente messa in relazione con la SS. Trinità. Scrive ancora Evdokimov: “Il Padre è circondato dal silenzio dell'apofasi, è questo volto nascosto del Padre che il Figlio e lo Spirito rivelano al mondo. Il Soggetto assoluto, il Padre, rivela nel suo Figlio il senso che diventa Via mediante lo Spirito. Ora la *Theotokos*, nella sua Maternità, traduce sul piano umano questo mistero trinitario...”. La paternità divina entra nel mondo per mezzo della maternità umana, ed è un fatto provvidenziale che ciò succede per mezzo di una donna. “Legata nella sua essenza stessa allo Spirito Santo consolatore vivificante, la donna è Eva-

¹² *Sermo* 26, 2, CCL 138, p. 126.

¹³ *L'Orthodoxie*, Neuchâtel- Paris 1959, p. 150.

Vita...La Theotokos partorisce il santo Bambino, dà la propria carne nella quale viene a posarsi il contenuto, la parola, la potenza, l'atto divino"¹⁴.

Maria è quindi cooperatrice nel piano salvifico di Dio. Ma se ci chiediamo dove concretamente esso si realizza, dobbiamo dire che il suo campo è immenso, ovunque: ciò che Dio crea vuol santificare e ogni uomo è chiamato a collaborarvi insieme con Maria.

La synergeia divino-umana secondo i pensatori russi recenti

La questione della *synergeia* umana con Dio trovò delle originali e nuove illuminazioni nel recente pensiero russo a partire da N. Berdiaev. Egli caratterizza la libertà umana come "creativa". Secondo lui, le discussioni che si fecero su questo problema erano per lo più falsamente impostate, come se la libertà possa esistere senza essere divino-umana e restare inclusa in se stessa. All'inizio Dio ha liberamente creato l'universo e l'uomo a sua somiglianza. Quindi l'uomo è libero solo in unione con Dio. Con il Padre la sua libertà è necessariamente "creativa". In unione con la libertà di Cristo, la sua creatività è salvifica e in unione con lo Spirito è spiritualizzante, santificante il mondo¹⁵.

Il discepolo fedele di Berdiaev, S. L. Frank, osserva come la libertà creativa divino-umana si realizza nel modo migliore nell'attività artistica, perciò fa una fine analisi della nascita di un'opera d'arte¹⁶. Riassumiamo brevemente il suo pensiero.

L'uomo non è un raccoglitore dei fatti, egli è essenzialmente un creatore. La realtà che incontra non lo soddisfa, è percepita come qualcosa di per sé insufficiente. Questa insufficienza dei "fatti" suscita dentro di noi il desiderio di creare e di trasformare il mondo. Dato che solo Dio è creatore, la vera creatività, quando appare, manifesta che "il principio dell'umanità nell'uomo è la sua Divino-umanità"¹⁷. Il migliore esempio lo troviamo nell'arte. Cerchiamo di elencare le singole fasi di questo processo.

¹⁴ *La femme et le salut du monde*, Tournai-Paris 1958, pp. 211 sg.

¹⁵ Cf. T. Špidlík, *L'idea russa*, Roma 1995, pp. 38 sg.

¹⁶ *La realtà dell'uomo. Metafisica dell'essere umano*, in *Il pensiero religioso russo. Da Tolstoj a Losky*, Milano 1977.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 265.

Guardando un'opera d'arte la gente dice che in essa l'autore ha espresso se stesso. Ciò però non corrisponde alla testimonianza degli artisti stessi. Essi sono consapevoli che erano presi da una "ispirazione". "Una certa voce transumana lo suggerisce all'artista, una certa forza (non il suo proprio intento) costringe l'artista a carezzarlo dentro di sé, plasmarlo ed esprimerlo".¹⁸ Quest'ispirazione, che si impone così fortemente, esige però anche una collaborazione attiva dell'artista. È lui che deve "esprimere" l'ispirazione, darle forma, creare. "Egli è l'espressione individuale-umana dello spirito transumano che agisce in lui".¹⁹

La partecipazione umana nella nascita dell'opera d'arte riesce talvolta facile, in altri casi l'artista fa sforzi lunghi e logoranti, fa numerose prove per esprimere ciò che gli è dato dall'alto. Ma la collaborazione deve esistere sempre, ci deve essere sempre una *synergieia*, una fusione delle due energie. Si pone allora la domanda: possiamo identificare l'ispirazione artistica con la grazia di Dio? Con "quella presenza ed azione di Dio stesso nell'uomo la quale costituisce l'essenza dell'esperienza mistico-religiosa"?²⁰

Bisogna di nuovo interrogare gli artisti, i pensatori, gli uomini geniali per vedere che cosa ne pensano. Alcuni possono non possedere affatto un'esperienza religiosa propriamente detta. Essi parlano di una forza superiore che li ispira, chiamandola "Musa" o "demone", ma non fanno riferimento a un'azione di Dio. Frank però trova queste espressioni inadeguate. Per lui l'ispirazione per creare, non può provenire che da Dio che è creatore e "crea i creatori..., conferisce alla propria creatura una partecipazione alla propria creatività creatrice".²¹

Come provarlo? Il fatto è che l'artista vorrebbe, con la sua opera, esprimere qualche cosa infinitamente bella, immortale, quindi divina. Ma interviene un altro elemento molto importante. Accettare una ispirazione, identificarsi con essa, suppone un discernimento degli spiriti. Nel caso nostro esso si presenta nella seguente forma. L'ispirazione, come abbiamo notato, si presenta come una forza che costringe ad essere eseguita. Giustamente Frank si chiede: È morale ubbidire ad una tale voce che non si comprende? Può un uomo essere costretto, rinunciare alla propria libertà? Certamente no. Allora come unire queste due cose opposte: la necessità

¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 272.

¹⁹ *Ivi*.

²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 273.

²¹ *Ivi*, p. 254.

dell'ispirazione e la libertà di chi la riceve? Frank ha una risposta. Solo Dio sa imporsi all'uomo in modo così antitetico: spingerlo e renderlo del tutto libero. Il suggerimento che ci priva della libertà è una ispirazione demoniaca. Perciò la vera arte o è divino-umana o è una specie di possessione demoniaca.²² L'autore cita, in questo contesto Dostoevskij che nota che nella creazione della bellezza "il diavolo lotta con Dio e il campo di battaglia è il cuore degli uomini".²³

Dopo le precedenti analisi, Frank applica le sue conclusioni alla vita cristiana in genere. Appare come un difensore della morale libera e creativa contro ogni specie di morto moralismo. Il succo del suo argomento si può riassumere così: la prima regola della morale cristiana è fare la volontà di Dio; siccome la volontà di Dio è una volontà creatrice, l'uomo che è compartecipe libero alla creazione divina, compie la volontà di Dio. La vita cristiana non può quindi esaurirsi nell'automatica esecuzione di "regole e prescrizioni generali".²⁴

Significa forse che l'artista diminuisce la validità delle leggi morali? Al contrario, egli le santifica. Infatti la volontà di Dio non tende unicamente a creare nuove forme dell'essere: "la volontà di Dio, presa nella sua pienezza, è non solo di creazione ma anche di divinizzazione della creatura, volontà di unire quest'ultima con Dio stesso".²⁵ La santità determina quindi anche i limiti della creatività umana: l'uomo deve creare ciò che riesce a santificare. È evidente perciò che non si possa ammettere una creatività e una bellezza "al di là del bene e del male". La creatività che non santificata degenera in un titanismo distruttore. L'ispirazione divina, come abbiamo detto, cede posto alla possessione demoniaca.

"Non c'è creazione genuina senza serietà e responsabilità morali; la creatività esige lo sforzo morale della veridicità, deve accoppiarsi all'umiltà, realizzarsi attraverso l'ascesi del servizio disinteressato. Il servizio delle muse non tollera vanità: il bello deve essere magnifico" (Puškin).²⁶

²² *Ivi*, p. 279.

²³ *Ivi*, nota.

²⁴ *Ivi*, p. 272.

²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 278.

²⁶ *Ivi*, p. 279.

Conclusioni mariologiche

Le riflessioni di Frank si fermano al campo della teologia spirituale. Ci è venuta l'idea di paragonarle con i testi mariologici di un suo contemporaneo connazionale, P. Evdokimov. Lo facciamo attraverso citazioni, per stimolare le riflessioni più abbondanti in linea con la direzione indicata.

Frank: “L'uomo è l'incontro di due mondi, iscritto negli ‘eventi’ del cosmo e nello stesso tempo aperto ad agire nel mondo divino”.²⁷

*Evdokimov*²⁸: “San Giovanni Crisostomo chiama la festa dell'Annunciazione la ‘festa della radice’, nel senso dell'assoluto principio che inaugura un nuovo eone. L'antropologia così risale alla ‘radice mariologica’... Tutto il peso del dogma mariologico sta nell'evento del partorire Dio”.²⁹

Frank: L'uomo è co-creatore con Dio Creatore.

Evdokimov: “Alla paternità del Padre divino corrisponde la maternità della Vergine nell'umano... Lo Spirito Santo non sostituisce il Padre, ma crea lo stato materno come potenza spirituale di partorire, aumentare l'essere”.³⁰

Frank: L'uomo è chiamato a ristabilire l'equilibrio rotto fra i due mondi, a purificare e divinizzare se stesso e il cosmo.

Evdokimov: “La Chiesa chiama la Madonna ‘purificazione del mondo’ e ‘rovetto ardente’. Si tratta di un carisma specificamente femminile della purezza per raddrizzare ogni curva d'iniquità la quale affligge e perverte l'ontologia umana”.³¹

²⁷ P. 265.

²⁸ *La femme et le salut du monde*, Tornai-Paris 1958,

²⁹ P. 257.

³⁰ P. 217.

³¹ P. 213.

Frank: Avendo di mira questo scopo, soltanto da Dio “l’uomo può attingere la linea direttiva e le energie della sua attività”.³²

Evdokimov: “Il racconto biblico della creazione mostra già lo Spirito Santo nella funzione di ‘covare’ l’abisso, dal quale deve sorgere il mondo (Gen 1,2)... Lo Spirito Santo scende sulla Vergine allora segue la nascita di Cristo”.³³

Frank: L’essenza dell’arte è sentire nell’anima l’ispirazione invisibile e incarnarla, renderla visibile.

Evdokimov: “La Theotokos partorisce ‘il santo bambino’, dona la sua carne nella quale viene a posarsi il contenuto, la parola, la forza, l’atto”.³⁴

Frank: Condizione indispensabile dell’attività creatrice umana è la ricerca della volontà di Dio.

Evdokimov: “È nel momento dell’Annunciazione che comincia per la Madonna il suo ministero della Donna, ma ‘archetipicamente’ esso risale e prende radice nella croce: La tua volontà sia fatta (Mt 26,39)”.³⁵

Frank: L’ispirazione divina suppone la libera e integrale cooperazione per incarnare la voce di Dio nel mondo visibile.

Evdokimov: “Senza il consenso della Purissima, senza il consenso della sua fede il progetto divino era irrealizzabile come senza l’intervento delle tre Persone divine stesse. Soltanto dopo averla istruita e persuasa Dio la assume come sua Madre e le presta la carne che essa presterà a lui. Ugualmente come lui voleva incarnarsi, così voleva che la sua Madre lo partorisse liberamente, dalla sua decisione”.³⁶

Frank: La voce dell’ispirazione divina si manifesta progressivamente come si incarna.

³² P. 265.

³³ P. 217.

³⁴ P. 211.

³⁵ P. 208.

³⁶ P. 207.

Evdokimov: “Lo Spirito santifica, modella, partorisce, e, alla fine della sua azione, appare nella forma dell’Incarnazione, e, quando arriverà al suo *pleroma*, lo Spirito attesta, compie e manifesta la gloria”.³⁷

Frank: Collaborando con l’ispirazione l’uomo sente “la propria compartecipazione al misterioso processo mistico della creazione”.³⁸

Evdokimov: “La lettura liturgica dei *Proverbi* 8,22-30 nella festa della Concezione della Vergine identifica la Madonna con il luogo della Sapienza di Dio e glorifica in essa il fine raggiunto della Creazione”.³⁹

Frank: Risultato dell’attività creativa umana: ciò che è santo è bello. “Il bello deve essere magnifico”.⁴⁰

Evdokimov: “La Bellezza salverà il mondo, non la bellezza qualunque, ma quella dello Spirito Santo e quella Donna vestita di Sole”.⁴¹
Soffermiamoci su quest’ultimo testo sulla bellezza di Maria.

La bellezza di Maria

Quando si parla dell’aspetto contemplativo della spiritualità, si rischia di falsare la prospettiva, concentrandosi su un solo aspetto del problema: l’uomo contempla Dio che è ideale della verità e della bellezza. Ma ve ne è anche un altro: l’uomo è anche creato per far risplendere Dio, affinché Dio sia contemplato in lui, a somiglianza del Figlio che è insieme Contemplatore e Rivelatore del Padre. In questo contesto l’uomo si deve dire bello e, quando parlano della Madonna, i poeti e gli iconografi fanno gara a presentarla come bellissima. Citiamo solo una testimonianza antica di un poeta siriano, Giacomo di Sarug (+ 521)⁴²:

*Amor mi muove che mi fa parlar di lei che è bella,
e l’altezza del discorso su di lei è maggior di me, come farò?*

³⁷ P. 218.

³⁸ P. 274.

³⁹ P. 213.

⁴⁰ P. 270.

⁴¹ P. 221.

⁴² C. Vonna, *Omellerie mariologiche di S. Giacomo di Sarug*, in *Lateranum* 19 (1953), n. 1-4, *Hom.* p. 118.

*Apertamente griderò che adatto per lei non fui né sono,
e con amore mi volgerò a raccontare il mistero di lei che è eccelsa.
Solo l'amore non cade quando parla, perché è amabile l'eccellenza sua
e a chi l'ascolta, ricchezza dona.*

La bellezza nel quadro della cultura universale

I luoghi, considerati sacrosanti, della scienza europea ricevettero il nome di università, termine che promette di offrire ai suoi membri una scienza universale, integrale, tutto il sapere raggiungibile dall'uomo intelligente così che si veda in unità. Ma ben presto nacquero divisioni sotto forma di «facoltà». Fra esse in primo luogo figurava quella di teologia come coronamento delle altre precedenti. Ma questo posto privilegiato divenne isolamento. Del resto le frazioni separative apparvero anche dentro le stesse facoltà sotto forma di multiformi specializzazioni.

L'uomo di oggi si è conciliato con questa evoluzione e stima tutti coloro che si sono «specializzati» in qualche materia anche a costo di un'ignoranza penosa dei problemi essenziali di vita. Al contrario il grande pensatore russo V. Soloviev ne fu urtato dolorosamente. Da giovane fu incantato dalla visione della Sofia, nella quale «tutto ciò che fu, ciò che è e tutto ciò che sarà un unico sguardo immobile lo abbraccia»⁴³. Lo studio della cultura europea lo convinse che vi dominano tre tipi di conoscenza: 1) sensibile, empirica; 2) razionale («aristotelica» per i Padri, «kantiana» per Soloviev); 3) spirituale, intuitiva, mistica. Purtroppo fra queste tre categorie della nostra cultura non vi è comunicazione.

Soloviev quindi considerava la sua vocazione di pensatore e di scrittore in questa prospettiva: ritrovare l'unità della nostra cultura e della conoscenza umana in genere. Non può essere una nuova scolastica, nel senso di una sintesi nella cornice razionale. Allora bisogna cercare l'unità scegliendo un'altra via e il pensatore scoprì questa verso la fine della sua vita in un crocevia fra le scienze e le arti. Il mondo di oggi non prende abbastanza seriamente il fatto che accanto all'osservazione scientifica del mondo esiste anche la contemplazione estetica. Ed è questa che deve avere una parte importante nel progetto di sintesi cristiana della cultura. Possiamo leggere la linea principale del pensiero solovievano in alcuni articoli: *La bellezza della*

⁴³ Poesia autobiografica in *Opere*, vol. XII, Bruxelles 1970, p. 84.

*natura*⁴⁴, *Il senso generale dell'arte*⁴⁵, *Il primo passo verso l'estetica positiva*⁴⁶.

Il concetto della bellezza

Il fatto è che il mondo esercita un'attrattiva su di noi, perché amiamo la sua bellezza. Ma non sempre. Perché tutto non ci sembra bello? Per porre il problema in modo del tutto concreto, Soloviev ricorre all'esempio del diamante. Tutti sono d'accordo che il diamante è bello. Ci rendiamo anche conto di quale sia la causa della sua bellezza. Chimicamente, il diamante è la stessa cosa del carbone. Ma la grande differenza consiste nel fatto che il carbone soffoca la luce, invece il diamante la fa risplendere⁴⁷. Riflettendo su questo principio la bellezza può essere definita come «trasformazione della materia per mezzo dell'incarnazione, in essa, di un altro principio, sopra materiale»⁴⁸

Lo stesso principio si può dire anche in altre parole: le scienze analitiche vedono una cosa accanto all'altra (cf. *idea clara et distincta a quavis alia* di Cartesio), la visione estetica vede uno nell'altro; uno non è distinto dall'altro, ma diviene simbolo dell'altro, le cose materiali rivelano le idee che vi si incarnano. Procedendo in questa via si può alla fine vedere in uno tutto e tutto in uno, il mondo diviene capace di rivelare la pienezza della sapienza divina.

È il privilegio degli artisti avere una tale visione e per mezzo dei simboli incarnarla, comunicarla agli altri. L'arte ha, quindi, una speciale vocazione culturale e religiosa, essa conduce alla vera teologia. Si può considerare profetica l'espressione di Dostoevskij: «La bellezza salverà il mondo»⁴⁹.

Da questo presupposto segue immediatamente una conclusione. La bellezza di una creatura corrisponde al grado della rassomiglianza con Dio, secondo la misura della *theopoiesis*, la divinizzazione, il chiarore dell'immagine. Il primo posto in queste considerazioni fu evidentemente riservato all'umanità di Cristo incarnato nella quale si vede la perfezione del

⁴⁴ *Opere*, vol. IV, ed. Bruxelles 1966, pp. 33-74.

⁴⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 75-90.

⁴⁶ *Ivi*, vol. VII, pp. 69-77.

⁴⁷ *La bellezza della natura*, p. 35.

⁴⁸ *Ivi*, p. 41.

⁴⁹ Romanzo *Idiot*, parte III, cap. V, Berlino 1920, p. 85.

Padre (cf Gv 14, 9). L'aspetto mariologico di quest'ideale sarebbe chiaramente espresso, secondo Demetrio di Rostov (1651-1709), nella lingua ecclesiastica slava. Questo vescovo, scrittore e santo russo, scrisse un opuscolo *Sull'immagine di Dio e sulla rassomiglianza con l'uomo*⁵⁰. In esso raccoglie di nuovo gli elementi principali di questo insegnamento patristico e aggiunge che in slavo si può ricorrere all'argomento della lingua. Un monaco stimato come santo, viene chiamato *prepodobnyj*, molto rassomigliante, mentre la Madre di Dio è la *Prepodobnejšaja*, la più rassomigliante. Si possono quindi stabilire tre gradi: il cristiano è simile a Dio (*podoben*), il monaco santo è più simile, e Maria è la più rassomigliante. Collabora quindi con Cristo anche in quanto è rivelatore.

Tale è lo scopo di tutte le creature. Incarnandosi, Cristo ha "ricapitolato" tutta la creazione, ristabilisce l'unità tra le sfere della realtà: il divino, il creato invisibile e il creato visibile, ma nell'universo, tutto è in via del progresso dinamico. Invece Maria si trova già nello stadio della perfezione ultima, essa è *eschaton*, rivelazione della gloria di Dio.

Maria come bellezza creaturale

Vediamo un'illustrazione eloquente sull'icona chiamata *Di Te si rallegra tutta la creazione*, che si trova nella galleria di Tretjakov a Mosca, opera di Dionisio del sec. XVI. Il titolo è dato da alcune parole prese dalla liturgia di san Basilio. In mezzo ad una aureola c'è il trono della *Theotokos* con il Bambino. I cori angelici formano l'altra aureola. La terra paradisiaca con alberi e fiori è nel terzo circolo. Questo è, per così dire, l'ambiente naturale della Chiesa, rappresentata sopra la *Theotokos* in forma di vasto edificio bianco con molte cupole. Sotto il trono c'è la Chiesa terrestre, i santi e le sante, i principi e le principesse, la gerarchia e il popolo.

Maria, quindi, appare come tipo e protettrice della Chiesa e inoltre come la perfezione finale, *eschaton*, di tutto il mondo creato. Leone Magno scrive: "Come Cristo nasce per mezzo dello Spirito dalle viscere della Madre intemerata, così anche il cristiano rinasce dall'utero della Santa Chiesa"⁵¹. Interpretando lo stesso parallelismo gli Orientali sono più contemplativi: Maria vede il Logos divino nella carne del suo Bimbo, la Chiesa lo contempla e lo fa vedere nella sua umanità, cioè in tutto il pleroma umano

⁵⁰ Cf. I. Kologrivof, *Saggio sulla santità in Russia*, Brescia 1955. pp. 230 sg.

⁵¹ *Sermo* 29, 1, PL 54, 227.

divinizzato. Essa è come un nuovo Paradiso, il cielo sulla terra, comunione fra Dio e gli uomini.

La storia biblica sul Paradiso evoca una altra analogia: sia Maria che la Chiesa è la “nuova Eva”. Ma in questa occasione P. Evdokimov vede spiritosamente in Eva, non tanto il simbolo della madre, quanto piuttosto quello della donna che seduce. Adamo ha seguito docilmente Eva nella suggestione al male, le suggestioni di Maria sono al bene, per mezzo delle sue ispirazioni e la sua preghiera. Sulle iconi dell’Ascensione si osserva Cristo salito nell’alto e di là benedicendo gli apostoli, mentre la Madonna rimane sulla terra in mezzo ad essi come simbolo del popolo di Dio, della Chiesa, come il punto dove converge il cielo e la terra. Con un gesto, quasi enigmatico, delle mani mostra l’atteggiamento di chi prega e insieme riceve. Questi due aspetti confluiscono nella santità umana e in Maria hanno raggiunto la loro perfezione.

Scrive V. Lossky: “Nella persona della Madre di Dio si può vedere il passaggio della più grande santità dell’Antico Testamento verso la santità della Chiesa. Ma siccome la Tutta Santa ha raggiunto il colmo della santità nella Chiesa, un altro passaggio s’impone: dal mondo in divenire verso l’eternità dell’Ottavo giorno, dalla Chiesa verso il Regno dei cieli. Questa ultima gloria della Madre di Dio, *l’eschaton*, realizzato in una persona creata prima della fine del mondo, deve collocarla dal momento presente già al di là della morte, della resurrezione, del giudizio...”⁵².

Le Litanie loretane invocano la Madonna come Sede della Sapienza. Per i recenti sociologi russi la Sapienza, *Sofia*, esprime l’immenso mistero del creato, visto come Dio vi entra secondo diversi gradi. Nell’opera principale di P. Florenskij *La colonna e il fondamento della verità*⁵³ troviamo una scala comparativa: dopo il Cristo, Sofia Divina incarnata, il primo posto spetta a Maria, perché in essa Cristo sta incarnandosi, essa è quindi immagine della Chiesa, delle anime singole nella Chiesa e attraverso di esse riceve il senso sociologico tutto il creato, un carattere “vergine”, un essere aperto allo Spirito Santo. Santificando le creature, in primo luogo la carne di Cristo, la Chiesa, l’umanità, Maria ha in questo processo di salvezza del mondo un posto speciale. Lei è quella con cui Dio ha progetti più elevati e nello stesso tempo corrisponde già pienamente a questa idea che Dio ebbe con lei.

⁵² *Panagia*, in *Messenger du patriarchat russe en Europe occidentale*, Paris 1950, n. 4, p. 59.

⁵³ *Stolp i utverzdenie istiny*, Mosca 1913, pp. 350 sg.

Florenskij parla inoltre dei santi che hanno una speciale devozione verso la sempre vergine Maria. Essi sono, quindi, *genus Mariae*⁵⁴.

La devozione mariana per l'unione delle Chiese.

“Madre sempre lodata, Madre del Sole della Verità, glorificata in Oriente e in Occidente, Madre del popolo cristiano, concedi a noi, figli tuoi, la pacificazione, dacci unione fraterna sotto la tua protezione; che si uniscano tutti nell'unico Corpo del tuo Figlio, Cristo nostro Dio e che con unica bocca cantiamo: Rallegrati tu la Gioia dell'Universo”.

Questa preghiera composta di recente a Mosca, imitando la strofa dell'*Acatistos*, continua la tradizione. A Velehrad in Moravia (centro di congressi unionistici all'inizio del secolo scorso) si venera l'immagine “Madre dell'Unità”, alla quale si rivolge la seguente preghiera: “Le porte della misericordia aprici Intemerata Vergine Maria, Madre della dolce dilezione e Madre dell'unione, e lava noi, che siamo puliti dalle colpe, colle acque purissime della tua misericordia. Come professiamo un solo Gesù, Cristo nostro Signore, fatto uno di noi non separandosi dalla natura paterna, così fa nascere anche noi spiritualmente per portare tutti all'unità di fede per essere uomini perfetti secondo la misura di Cristo...”.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

María “Corredentora” en San Alfonso María de Ligorio (Las Glorias de María).

OBISPO ANTONIO BASEOTTO, C.Ss.R.

Ante el Señor, presente en el Sacramento oramos con San Alfonso en la introducción a las “Glorias de María”:

“Amantísimo Redentor y Señor mío, Jesucristo, yo, miserable siervo vuestro, conocedor del placer que os proporciona quien procura glorificar a vuestra santísima Madre, a quien tanto amáis y que tanto deseáis ver amada y honrada por todos, pensé imprimir este mi libro que habla de sus glorias. Y no sé a quién dedicarlo mejor que a vos, que tan a pecho tomáis la gloria de tal Madre. A vos, pues, lo dedico y encomiendo. Que os agrade este insignificante obsequio del amor que a vos profeso y a vuestra querida Madre. Protegedlo, para que cuantos lo lean sientan sobre sí abundante lluvia de confianza y llamas de amor hacia esta Virgen Inmaculada, en que depositasteis la esperanza y el refugio de todos los redimidos. Y en pago de este mi pobre trabajo, dadme, os ruego, aquel amor a María que yo deseo, con esta mi obrita, ver encendido en todos cuantos la leyeren. A vos también me dirijo, dulcísima Señora y Madre mía, María; bien sabéis que en vos, después de Jesús, coloqué toda mi esperanza de eterna salvación, pues todo mi bien, mi conversión, mi vocación al dejar el mundo y cuantas gracias recibí de Dios, todo reconozco haberlo recibido por vuestra mediación.”

Así se expresa San Alfonso (1696-1787) en su libro “Las Glorias de María”.

El Santo abarca con luz propia el que fuera llamado “siglo de las Luces”. Desde su Nápoles natal (entonces de las principales ciudades de Europa) iluminó especialmente los temas de Teología Moral llevando sobre todo esperanza al “catolicismo torturado” de la cristiandad de aquella época.

Dotado de una inteligencia excepcional, a los 16 años era abogado en ambos derechos (eclesiástico y civil). Ejerció su profesión por 10 años sin perder un pleito.

Desengañado del mundo se despidió con un portazo de los tribunales.

Ordenado sacerdote dedicó sus primeros años en especial a los marginados de su ciudad natal.

Extendió su acción a los más abandonados en la campaña por medio de las “misiones populares”. A los 36 años funda la que sería luego Congregación Redentorista con ese carisma específico.

Y comienza con una tenacidad y contracción al trabajo admirables, su gran producción literaria. Se enumeran 112 obras desde un manual de matemáticas hasta los 3 volúmenes in folio de su “Theología Moralis”, pasando por numerosas obras ascéticas, catequísticas, de materiales predicables, etc.

Con ese mismo fin de “salvar las almas” compuso canciones que aún hoy cantan en Italia.

Incurrió por la pintura y arquitectura, etc.

Hizo el voto de no perder un minuto de tiempo (y a juzgar por los hechos, lo cumplió).

El Papa Pío IX en 1839 lo declara “doctor de la Iglesia” y Pío XII “Patrono de los moralistas y confesores”.

San Alfonso parte de las Sagradas Escrituras, se apoya en la tradición (los Santos Padres en especial) y la investigación de los teólogos contemporáneos.

Son incontables las citas que aparecen en cada página de las Glorias de María.

Dedica varios capítulos a María como Abogada (en la primera parte comente la “Salve”). María como mediadora aparece a lo largo de la obra.

Espigo de su libro con cuya introducción comentamos, algunos conceptos referidos a María como singular y primera cooperados en la redención.

Tras 16 años de investigación y estudio publicó su obra en el año 1750. No sin razón afirmaba el teólogo P. Bordagaray: *“Al igual que la “Suma” de Santo Tomás es el arsenal del teólogo, así “Las Glorias de María” son el arsenal del mariólogo, arsenal en que se concentran los argumentos, alabanzas, afectos y cuanto de glorioso para María se registra en las Sagradas Escrituras, Santos Padres, tradición y grandes amadores de María Santísima”*.

El más categórico de los panegíricos de “Las Glorias de María” lo compuso, sin darse cuenta de ello el propio autor : ...“*en su avanzada edad, impedido de la vista, tenía a su cuidado un hermano coadjutor que le consolaba con la lectura de libros ascéticos; entusiasmado una vez el viejecito Alfonso con la lectura que oía, interrumpió: “Diga, hermano, ¿qué libro es ese?; Cuán precioso es! ¿Quién lo ha escrito?; Qué suavidad y cuánto amor a Dios, a María y a las almas! Y ¿cómo se llama el autor?” El hermano acudió, cerrando el libro y leyendo la portada: “Las glorias de María”, por Alfonso María de Ligorio”. Al venerable anciano, al oírlo, encendiósele el rostro, ruborizado de las propias alabanzas...*”

I - Abogada(cap. VI)

II - Mediadora de todas las gracias (passim)

III - Según San Alfonso comenzó María su misión de Corredentora de manera explícita al presentar a su Hijo en el Templo “*María pasó por todo y, con una constancia que pasmó a los propios ángeles, pronunció la sentencia de muerte contra su Hijo, exclamando: Eterno Padre, que muera mi Hijo con esta muerte tan cruel y afrentosa; y, puesto que así lo disponéis, no se haga mi voluntad, sino la vuestra, con quien uno la mía sacrificando la vida de este Hijo mío; consiento en que pierda la vida por vuestra gloria y por la salvación del mundo. A la vez os sacrifico también mi corazón; traspásele la espada del dolor cuanto os pluguiere, pues me basta que vos, Dios mío, seáis por ello glorificado y complacido; no se haga mi voluntad, sino la vuestra.¡ Ob caridad sin medida, ob constancia sin ejemplo, ob victoria digna de la eterna admiración de cielos y tierra!” (Parte II. Discurso 6 de la Purificación de María)*

“... *de aquí que San Epifanio la llame Redentora de los cautivos, San Ildefonso Reparadora del mundo perdido, San Germán Remedio de nuestras calamidades, San Ambrosio Madre de todos los creyentes, San Agustín Madre de los vivos y San Andrés Cretense Madre de la vida. En efecto, dice Arnoldo de Chartes, en la muerte de Jesús unió de tal modo María su voluntad con la del Hijo, que entrambas coincidieron en la oblación de un mismo sacrificio, por manera que el Hijo y la Madre, como dice el santo abad, cooperaron a la vez a la humana redención, alcanzando la salvación de los hombres, Jesucristo satisfaciendo por nuestras culpas y Maria alcanzándonos que se nos aplicara tal satisfacción. Por eso asegura también Dionisio Cartujano que la Madre de Dios se puede llamar la Salvadora del mundo, ya que por la compasión que tuvo de los dolores del Hijo, cuya vida sacrificaba voluntariamente a la*

divina justicia, mereció que se comunicaran a los hombres los méritos del Redentor.” (Parte II Discurso 6 de la Purificación de María)

“Cuanto Jesús padecía en el cuerpo, dice San Jerónimo, padecíalo María en el corazón. El que entonces se hubiera ballado en el Calvario, añade San Juan Crisóstomo, habría visto dos altares en que se consumaron dos grandes sacrificios, uno en el cuerpo de Jesús y el otro en el corazón de María. Pero mejor diré con San Buenaventura que no había más que un solo altar, es decir, sola la cruz de Cristo, en la cual se sacrificaba también la Madre junto a la víctima del Cordero divino, De aquí que el Santo le pregunte: ¿Dónde estabais, Señora? ¿Por ventura junto a la cruz? Mejor diré que estabais en la misma cruz, para sacrificaros crucificada a la vez con vuestro Hijo.”

(Parte II , 5º Dolor, Reflexiones sobre los siete dolores)

Contemplando S. Buenaventura a María en el monte Calvario asistiendo a su Hijo moribundo, le pregunta: *“Decidme Señora, ¿dónde estabais entonces? ¿Solamente junto a la cruz? No; estabais en la misma cruz, crucificada juntamente con vuestro Hijo. Y Ricardo de San Lorenzo, sobre aquellas palabras que Isaías pone en boca del Redentor: El lagar he pisado yo solo, y de los pueblos nadie ha estado conmigo, añade: Razón tenéis, Señor, para decir que en la obra de la redención humana estáis solo para padecer y no tenéis hombre alguno que os compadezca, como es debido; pero tenéis una mujer, que es vuestra Madre, la cual sufrió en el corazón cuanto vos padecisteis en el cuerpo”.*

(Parte II Disc. 9 “de los dolores de María)

(Parte II Discurso 9 “de los dolores de María”: *Vuelto aquí San Buenaventura hacia la Santísima Virgen, le dice: “Señora, ¿por qué fuiste también vos a sacrificaros AL Calvario? ¿No bastaba para rescatarnos un Dios crucificado, sin que quisiera también ser crucificada su Madre? Cierto que bastaba con mucho la muerte de Jesús para la salvación del mundo y de mil mundos que hubiera, pero quiso nuestra amorosa Madre, por el amor que nos profesa, cooperar a la causa de nuestra salvación, ofreciendo los merecimientos que con sus dolores ganó en el Calvario. Por esto dice San Alberto Magno que, si debemos estar agradecidos a Jesucristo por el amor que nos demostró en la pasión, también debemos estarlo a María por el martirio que voluntariamente padeció por nuestra salvación”.* (Parte II Discurso 9 de los dolores de María)

Basten estos botones de muestra para tener una idea del pensamiento de este gran Doctor de la Iglesia sobre María como cooperadora del todo singular en la obra del Redentor.

Maria Corredentrice nella vita e negli scritti del beato G. B. Scalabrini (+1905)

VESCOVO VELASIO DE PAOLIS, C.S.

Il beato Giovanni Battista Scalabrini nacque a Fino Mornasco (Como) l'8 luglio 1839. Era il terzo di otto figli di una famiglia molto religiosa e pia. Viene ricordato dalla storia con vari appellativi: Apostolo del Catechismo (attribuitogli dal beato Pio IX), Principe della Carità, Padre dei Migranti. Soprattutto Scalabrini fu sacerdote e vescovo: dal 1876 fino all'ultimo giorno della sua vita, governò la diocesi di Piacenza e, proprio durante quel periodo, maturò la sua vocazione missionaria in favore dei migranti, e fondò le congregazioni dei Missionari e delle Missionarie di san Carlo Borromeo. Morì santamente, il 1 giugno 1905, Solennità dell'Ascensione del Signore.

Fu un pastore dotato di straordinaria fede e cultura, in un'era di grandi sconvolgimenti sociali – era il tempo del *non expedit* e della questione operaia –, il cui riflesso si sentiva anche all'interno della compagine ecclesiale. Fu precursore della riforma leonina degli studi ecclesiastici, sulla base della filosofia e teologia di san Tommaso d'Aquino.

«Particolarmente ricca la sua spiritualità. La sua devozione per la Madonna, per la Croce di Cristo, per l'Eucaristia e per i Santi hanno segnato il passo nella spiritualità della Chiesa del nostro secolo. Così come è avvenuto per le sue idee in campo politico e sociale»¹.

Il suo equilibrio tra posizioni transigenti e intransigenti fu il frutto, appunto, del suo radicamento nella Verità immutabile e trascendente la storia, da cui egli traeva l'ispirazione originaria per le sue scelte coraggiose e profetiche, a vantaggio della santificazione del Popolo di Dio.

Il 9 novembre 1997 Giovanni Paolo II, durante una solenne celebrazione in San Pietro, iscrisse Giovanni Battista Scalabrini nell'albo dei beati.

Dal decreto di introduzione della causa di beatificazione leggiamo:

¹ Barbara Fiorentini, *il beato giovanni battista scalabrini*, piacenza, ed. Berti 1997.

«Distribui con eccezionale abbondanza la parola di Dio; prese contatto, anche attraverso indagini sociologiche, con le necessità del suo popolo; andò in cerca delle pecorelle smarrite, anche con il pericolo della vita; visitava gli ammalati e carcerati; soccorreva alle necessità dei poveri per i quali si spogliò di tutto; promosse il culto della casa di Dio e dei Santi; diffuse in tutta la diocesi la pratica dell'adorazione perpetua dell'Eucaristia e la devozione mariana»².

«Tutti i giorni domandava alla Madonna, di cui era devotissimo: *fac me cruce inebriari!* Fedele seguace di Cristo Crocifisso, ardente adoratore di Gesù nell'Eucaristia, costante nella meditazione della parola di Dio, esemplare nell'esercizio dell'umiltà, della povertà, della castità, instancabile nell'orazione e nella cristiana mortificazione, già durante la vita fu da molti considerato un santo; e quando morì, il 1° giugno 1905, nell'episcopio di Piacenza, il popolo esclamò spontaneamente:

“E' morto un santo!”³.

Fu spesso pellegrino ai Santuari Mariani e scrisse numerose omelie sulla Beata Vergine, dense di dottrina e di soda devozione. Il mistero dell'Immacolata Concezione è stato quello che, nella costellazione della dogmatica mariana, ha attirato maggiormente l'attenzione del Vescovo piacentino. Soleva affermare, nei suoi discorsi e nelle sue lettere pastorali, che il 1800 era il secolo dell'Immacolata. Infatti, il dogma dell'8 dicembre 1854 costituisce, anche da un punto di vista cronologico, il cuore stesso del XIX secolo. Se da un punto di vista socio politico, nella seconda metà del 1800 il papato ha conosciuto il suo declino temporale, sul versante del prestigio morale e della vitalità spirituale missionaria, invece, proprio in quel periodo la Chiesa ha conosciuto un'era di splendida fecondità ed espansione. Il beato Scalabrini non mancava di elencare i consolantissimi frutti di quest'ubertosa stagione ecclesiale, che egli attribuiva alla speciale presenza dell'Immacolata nella Chiesa, frutto soprannaturale del dogma mariano infallibilmente definito dal beato Pio IX. Il vero trionfo della Chiesa consisteva, per il nostro Beato, «nel risveglio della fede e

² Pietro Palazzini (cardinale prefetto della congregazione per le cause dei santi), *decreto di introduzione della causa di beatificazione*, 11 maggio 1982.

³Pietro Palazzini, l. C.

nell'esercizio delle virtù, nella restaurazione di tutte le cose in Cristo»⁴. Quanto ai segni di codesto spirituale trionfo, eccone l'elenco sintetico, tracciato nello stesso panegirico sopra citato, tenuto nel 50° anniversario del dogma dell'Immacolata: conversioni illustri, tanti popoli ritornati nel seno della Chiesa, la rete immensa delle attività cattoliche, il moltiplicarsi delle congregazioni religiose e delle associazioni cattoliche, il rifiorire della pietà e della devozione popolare, il moltiplicarsi dei pellegrinaggi e dei prodigi (Lourdes), l'unità della Gerarchia cattolica attorno al Papa, la canonizzazione di molti Santi, la potenza morale del pontificato immensamente accresciuta, il misterioso movimento dei popoli verso Roma, la santità eroica di tanti cattolici, la propagazione della fede in mezzo a tante avversità.

Ci sia permessa, ora, una breve digressione per riportarci ai nostri tempi. Se gli effetti benefici del dogma del 1854 sono stati tali e tanti nella Chiesa del XIX secolo, nonostante le violente ed estese opposizioni all'esterno (Ortodossi e Protestanti) e all'interno (Domenicani), perché dubitare che un eventuale ed auspicato nuovo dogma mariano porti con sé analoghi benefici, alla Chiesa bisognosa di aiuti divini, mentre prende il largo nelle procellose acque di questo terzo millennio?

Ma ritorniamo al nostro Beato. Nel decreto sulle sue virtù eroiche, come nel documento precedente, leggiamo ancora il suo filiale ricorso a Maria, per ottenere da Lei un amore più ardente verso la croce di Cristo:

«Insegnò e propagò la fede soprattutto con l'esempio di una vita nella fede in Gesù Cristo. Uomo di preghiera, si obbligò con voto sotto pena di peccato grave alla meditazione quotidiana, celebrava i divini misteri e la sacra liturgia con commovente fervore, trascorreva lunghe ore, giorno e notte, prostrato in adorazione dell'Eucaristia, prodigandosi poi in un lavoro senza respiro. Operò così una perfetta integrazione tra contemplazione e azione. Esattissimo nell'adempimento di tutti i doveri, rifuggendo dal peccato come davanti a un serpente velenoso (Sir 21, 2), non solo praticò l'austera penitenza corporale, ma abbracciò con gaudio la stoltezza della

⁴ Beato Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, *panegirico dell'immacolata*, 1904 (ags 3017/2), in francesconi m. *Giovanni battista scalabrini*, città nuova, roma 1985, p. 381.

croce implorando continuamente dalla Madre celeste, di cui era teneramente devoto, fammi inebriare della croce!»⁵.

L'insistente ricorso a Maria, affinché gli ottenesse un ardente amore alla Croce di Cristo, dimostra quanto il mistero della corredenzione, ancor prima che tematizzato teologicamente, era vissuto con ardente slancio mistico dal santo Vescovo.

La fonte da cui il beato Scalabrini attinse la dottrina mariologica, di cui sono intrisi i suoi discorsi sulla Madonna, è stata innanzi tutto la Sacra Scrittura, letta attraverso il magistero della Chiesa e l'interpretazioni dei Padri, tra cui spiccano: san Giovanni Damasceno, sant'Ambrogio, sant'Agostino, san Girolamo, san Basilio, sant'Efrem, lo Pseudo Dionigi. Non mancano citazioni di Dottori della Chiesa ed Autori medievali, primi tra i quali sono san Tommaso e san Bernardo, poi sant'Anselmo, san Bonaventura, san Pier Damiani, sant'Ildefonso, Guerrico, Arnoldo, Guglielmo abate, Gerson, san Bernardino da Siena, san Lorenzo Giustiniani. Probabilmente, il contatto con il pensiero di questi Autori è avvenuto, per lo zelante Apostolo dei Migranti, attraverso la mediazione dei trattati mariologici di Passaglia e Perrone, nonché delle opere oratorie di Bossuet, Fénelon e Dupanloup.

Fra i temi mariologici più frequentemente trattati da Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, oltre all'Immacolata e all'Assunta, vi sono quelli della mediazione universale di Maria e «il suo posto nell'economia della redenzione e della grazia»⁶. Trattasi di punti dottrinali strettamente correlati, complementari e funzionali l'uno all'altro, tanto da doverli considerare come due anelli contigui di una stessa catena ideale. Si parla qui della *conexio dogmatum* che, nel caso del microcosmo mariologico – a sua volta vitalmente inserito nell'universo della dogmatica cattolica –, tiene unite tutte le verità mariane, facendole discendere dal principio primario della maternità divina, seguendo in ciò l'impostazione tomista della mariologia, condivisa dal magistero ordinario pontificio e dal nostro Beato. Egli sviluppò le tematiche mariologiche della mediazione e cooperazione alla redenzione in una serie di mirabili omelie, pronunziate nelle feste dell'Assunzione, le quali si

⁵ Palazzini Pietro (cardinale), decreto sulle virtù eroiche del venerabile g. B. Scalabrini, 16 marzo 1986.

⁶ Francesconi m. *Giovanni battista scalabrini*, città nuova, roma 1985, p. 383.

potrebbero configurare come un vero trattato scalabriniano di mariologia. Tali omelie, visto che non sono ancora pubblicate, potrebbero altresì costituire un prossimo progetto editoriale per la famiglia religiosa fondata dal Beato.

Il termine “Corredentrice” è un hapax nella letteratura scalabriniana finora pubblicata. Non si escludono altre citazioni del termine nelle migliaia di pagine che rimangono ancora da pubblicare. Il Beato usò il titolo nell’ultima delle 60 lettere pastorali che egli indirizzò alla sua diocesi. La lettera è incentrata sul tema della preghiera, e fu pubblicata il 16 febbraio 1905, tre mesi prima della santa morte del suo Autore: «Ne solamente sulla terra, ma anche in cielo la Chiesa cattolica prega. Io, dice un pio e dotto scrittore, non ho mai recitato, o sentito recitare le Litanie dei Santi, senz’ammirare della gran legge della preghiera le misteriose profondità, le altezze sublimi. Sulle ali della fede levandoci in alto e penetrando nel glorioso santuario del Signore noi volgiamo attorno lagrimose le pupille, e genuflessi diciamo: Santa Maria, pregate per noi: santi angeli ed arcangeli, pregate per noi: santi apostoli, pregate per noi: santi patriarchi e profeti, pregate per noi: santi martini, santi confessori, sante vergini, pregate per noi: Santi tutti del paradiso, pregate per noi. Nel cielo dunque si prega, e si prega da tutti. Pregano le vergini, pregano i confessori, pregano i martiri, gli apostoli, i profeti, i patriarchi, tutti i nostri fratelli che ci precedettero nella via della beata eternità. Non basta. Gli angeli, gli arcangeli, i troni, le dominazioni, i principati, le potestà, i cherubini, i serafini, tutti quanti gli angelici cori, pregano ancora. Che più? La Regina degli angeli e dei Santi, la corredentrice del genere umano, Maria Santissima prega essa pure. E voi, o mio Gesù, voi pure anche lassù pregate; pregate con la voce, con le cicatrici delle vostre piaghe, con lo spettacolo augusto della vostra umanità glorificata; voi state sempre vivo, alla destra del Padre, a fine di pregare continuamente per noi: *semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis*»⁷.

È utile notare, al fine della nostra relazione, il contesto d’intercessione celeste, in cui viene inserito il titolo di *Corredentrice*, quasi ad indicare che il ruolo di Maria, nell’economia dell’universale redenzione, non si è concluso con la sua offerta dolorosa ai piedi della Croce, né con la sua Assunzione al Cielo, ma continua incessante fino al «perpetuo coronamento di tutti gli

⁷ Beato g. B. Scalabrini, *la preghiera. Lettera pastorale alla diocesi di piacenza per la santa quaresima dell’anno 1905*, in *scalabrini una voce viva. Pagine scelte dagli scritti, congregazioni scalabriniane*, bergamo 1987, p. 56.

eletti» (LG VIII, n. 62), per usare una bella espressione del Concilio Vaticano II. Si vede qui, in modo perspicuo, la continuità, pur nella distinzione formale, tra mediazione e corredenzione o, per dirla con un linguaggio teologicamente più raffinato, tra fase la fase terrestre acquisitiva della grazia e quella celeste dispensativa, cui si accennava poc'anzi. Nel senso proprio, la Vergine in Cielo non corredime, perché la corredenzione implica la partecipazione dolorosa al patire di Cristo Redentore, e in Cielo né Cristo patisce, né Maria compatisce. Entrambi sono, corpo e anima, nella gloria beatifica di Dio, nei confronti della quale ogni forma di sofferenza è in aperta e stridente contraddizione. Si può e si deve, tuttavia, giustificare l'espressione del Beato perché in cielo Maria non potrebbe essere la dispensatrice di tutte le Grazie, se in terra non fosse stata, subordinata a Cristo, la corredentrica di tutti in nostri peccati. Maria per tutta l'eternità sarà sempre la nostra corredentrica, perché il valore del suo patire sulla terra ha varcato i cieli e si estende nell'infinito oggi di Dio. La Corredenzione è, in ultima analisi, il motivo della sua gloria eccelsa, che perfeziona, in qualche modo, quella della sua divina maternità: «Maria oggi è collocata in cielo alla destra, vicino al trono di Gesù, perché non si allontanò mai in terra dalla croce di Gesù»⁸.

Il riferimento alla corredenzione mariana, nel contesto dell'efficace intercessione dei Santi presso Dio, mette in rilievo la continuità esistente tra il ruolo svolto da Maria nella sua vita terrena – la corredenzione terrestre segnata dal dolore – e quella che Ella continua a svolgere nella Gloria, fino al coronamento del numero degli eletti – corredenzione celeste o intercessione segnata dalla visione beatifica di Dio -.

Uno studio sincronico della mariologia dello Scalabrini potrebbe rivelare interessanti reciproci influssi tra il Beato e l'ambiente mariologico del suo tempo. Gli inizi del '900 sono stati gli anni in cui è cominciata l'attività pubblicistica del giovane e brillante teologo servita Alessio Lépiciér (+ 1936), francese di origine, futuro cardinale di Santa Romana Chiesa e vero precursore del movimento corredenzionista, agli albori del XX secolo. La semplice supposizione di un influsso diretto di Lépiciér su Scalabrini, quanto al titolo di Corredentrica, a motivo della contemporaneità, è rafforzata dal fatto che il teologo servita condivideva con il presule piacentino un'autentica predilezione per il pensiero di san Tommaso, ed anche perché dal 1901, Lépiciér venne a risiedere a Roma, prima come

⁸ Beato g. B. Scalabrini, *omelia sull'assunzione*, 1889.

Procuratore Generale, poi come Ministro Generale del suo Ordine, i Servi di Maria⁹.

Un altro testo scalabriniano, significativo per la dottrina della corredenzione, è quello che riporta il discorso tenuto dal presule piacentino il 7 luglio 1889, in occasione dell'incoronazione di un'immagine di Maria: «Amore con amore si paga. E quale amore più tenero e più efficace di quello che ci porta Maria? Maria è nostra Madre. Questa parola, che nel corso di ormai 20 secoli bastò a suscitare tanti palpiti, a tergere tante lacrime, a lenire tanti dolori, deh! che sarebbe ove fosse pienamente compresa? Madre di Gesù perché lo concepì nel suo seno, Maria è madre nostra perché ci concepì nel suo cuore; Madre di Gesù per natura e madre nostra per adozione; madre del capo lo è di tutte le membra; madre del Redentore e madre altresì dei redenti; giacché non generò il Redentore alla vita del tempo, che per produrre gli uomini alla vita dell'eternità. Maria è nostra madre, e talmente nostra madre che per questo è appunto madre di Dio: *propter nos homines... incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine*. Maria è nostra madre, e perché *nessuno* mai avesse a dubitarne menomamente, ecco Gesù stesso assicurarcene di sua propria bocca, dall'alto della Croce e vicino a mandare l'ultimo sospiro, vale a dire nel momento più solenne della sua vita mortale: *Ecce mater tuas*»¹⁰.

Nel testo citato non compare il titolo di Corredentrice, ma la dottrina è implicita nel tema della maternità spirituale. Maria è nostra Madre perché ci ha concepiti nel Cuore, al momento del suo sì al mistero dell'incarnazione che doveva compiersi in Lei; ma il parto doloroso di questa Madre avvenne nell'ora della passione, quando il Figlio, dopo averla riconosciuta unita al suo sacrificio redentore, la diede come Madre spirituale a tutta l'umanità rappresentata, in quel frangente, dall'apostolo Giovanni. Per questo Ella, anche in cielo, «ci ama come figli del suo dolore»¹¹.

⁹ Cfr tentori a., *mary coredeptrress in the writings of cardinal alexis henry lépicier, o.s.m., in mary at the foot of the cross – ii* (acts of the second international symposium on marian coredeptrtion, ratcliffe college, leicester, 1-7 aprile 2001), academy of immaculatae, new bedford (ma-usa) 2002, pp. 361-379.

¹⁰ Beato g. B. Scalabrini, *discorso per l'incoronazione della madonna della consolazione di bedonia il 7.7.1889*, in *scalabrini una voce viva*, o. C., p. 82.

¹¹ Beato g. B. Scalabrini, *omelia sull'assunzione*, 1993.

F. Gregori ha deposto al processo di beatificazione che il Beato Presule rinnovava ogni mattina la consacrazione alla Madonna, «la stessa recitata da san Giovanni Berchmans, che egli aveva trascritta di suo pugno, firmandola: *Jonannes B. Ep. peccator*»¹². Come il Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II, di venerata memoria, sin da quando fu eletto vescovo di Cracovia consacrò se stesso alla Madre di Dio, così anche il nostro Beato fu un vescovo *totus tuus*, totalmente consacrato a *Maria Regina et Magistra Apostolorum*, per servire più perfettamente, fino al totale sacrificio di sé, Cristo e la sua Chiesa.

La corredenzione nel quadro sintetico della spiritualità mariana del beato Giovanni Battista Scalabrini

Dopo aver illustrato l'insegnamento del beato Scalabrini sul mistero di Maria Corredentrice, e l'incidenza di questa dottrina nel suo vissuto quotidiano, si propone una rapida silloge degli elementi che costituiscono la spiritualità mariana del Presule piacentino, entro la quale deve esser intesa anche la sua adesione vitale al mistero della corredenzione della Vergine Maria.

1. Il beato Scalabrini fu molto devoto della Madonna ed espresse la sua devozione in pratiche quotidiane ordinarie ed anche in forme straordinarie.
2. Le principali pratiche quotidiane di pietà mariana sono:
 - a) consacrazione alla Madonna
 - b) recita dell'Angelus al mattino, mezzogiorno e sera
 - c) recita del Santo Rosario, in Ottobre, in Cattedrale
3. Le pratiche di pietà straordinarie sono i tridui e le novene, le incoronazioni e i pellegrinaggi diocesani ed extradiocesani. Tra questi ultimi vanno ricordati quelli a Caravaggio (anche per valorizzare i luoghi di culto dei vescovi 'vicini'), e quelli a Loreto. Nel 1895 vi portò ben 740 fedeli in un solo pellegrinaggio, rimasto famoso per il calore della devozione.

¹² Francesconi M. *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini*, Città Nuova, Roma 1985, p. 394; cfr *Processo c. p.*, f. 561.

Delle incoronazioni, ricordiamo quella avvenuta nel 1902 della Madonna del Castello (delle Grazie) di Rívergaro, e il pellegrinaggio intradiocesano al medesimo Santuario il 7 Maggio 1905, a 25 giorni dalla sua morte, dove fece il suo canto del cigno con un discorso commovente. Anche in quella corona volle incastonare gli ultimi preziosi di sua madre!

Più celebre resta, tuttavia, l'incoronazione della Madonna di San Marco (della Consolazione) di Bedonia (1896) che mosse 20.000 persone, e che stornò una tempesta che aveva imbiancato il Pelpi.

Le due corone alla "arcicarissima Madonna" le volle tutte di "pietre preziose vere", perché, disse, "voglio fare alla Madre, a cui devo tutto, un regalo non affatto indegno di lei"!

4. Queste forme di devozione erano, tuttavia, non un evento esteriore e folcloristico, ma un evento dello Spirito: precedute da "esercizi spirituali", corsi di predicazione, e frequentazione di sacramenti. Si ricorda che nella celebrazione del giubileo dell'Immacolata (1904) nella sola Piacenza si fecero in quel. giorno 30,000 comunioni!

5. I titoli con cui amava venerare la Vergine sono soprattutto quelli di Madre di Dio, Immacolata e Assunta.

Per il terzo non si dimentichi che l'Assunta è la titolare della sua Cattedrale e che l' Immacolata venne proclamata quando egli aveva 15 anni, e fu un evento memorabile, tanto che celebrandone il giubileo 25 anni dopo (1879) sentirà ancora il bisogno di ricordare quella emozione. Quel privilegio, poi, è il fondo oro per la maternità divina di Maria.

L'Immacolata (dice in quella Pastorale del primo Giubileo) è "l'interesse di tutti", perché è preservata dal peccato originale e colmata di grazia per essere la degna Madre del Salvatore promesso a tutti i figli di Eva.

Ancora. Tutto il V.T. è attesa del Messia, ed è anche attesa di sua Madre, perché accanto al Messia c'è sempre sua Madre, come lo dimostra lo studio della Bibbia e la patristica. Arrivato a quest'ultimo argomento, il beato Scalabrini ci dà anche una suggestiva interpretazione mariana del suo stemma, con la Scala di Giacobbe interpretata da diversi Padri della Chiesa come simbolo di Maria, che fa scendere in terra il Salvatore!

6. Un pensiero sul Rosario.

Scalabrini afferma che è la preghiera più perfetta, perché sintesi di orazione vocale e mentale, e perché il tessuto dei "misteri" è "il compendio della religione cristiana", e le parole sono le più belle inventate dallo Spirito Santo.

Inoltre, precedendo la *Marialis cultus*, afferma che il Rosario è una preghiera "cristologica", perché vediamo che Maria è sempre "al fianco di Gesù", e che il Rosario è "il memoriale delle più stupende meraviglie del Signore".

Egli dice, inoltre, che è una preghiera da recitarsi in famiglia, e che così la recita del Rosario diventa "una scuola di sapienza cristiana"!

7. La consacrazione a Maria fatta al mattino è una specie di "affidamento", ma tutto particolare: infatti, è quasi un atto sponsale con la vergine. Dice infatti la formula scritta di suo pugno: "io G.B.S. prendo te come mia Signora, Patrona e Avvocata. . . Io sono tuo servo: e tu difendimi e proteggimi adesso e nell'ora della mia morte".

La devozione mariana non potrebbe arrivare più in alto!

8. Il pensiero più originale e di notevole peso teologico sulla devozione alla Madonna ci pare sia quello espresso nella pastorale del Giubileo dell'Immacolata, del 1879, là dove dice che ciò che è di tutti i tempi, di tutti i luoghi, e di tutte le persone "indica potenti bisogni dell'umanità" e inoltre "impronta di un decisivo carattere i popoli che li esprimono" (146). Il culto dell'Immacolata, universale e perenne, è così "una morale, sociale e sempre rinascente necessità" (ib.).

Conclusione

Nell'omelia per la beatificazione, Giovanni Paolo II così si esprime: «L'universale vocazione alla santità fu costantemente sentita e vissuta in prima persona da Giovanni Battista Scalabrini. Amava ripetere spesso: "Potessi santificarmi e santificare tutte le anime affidatemi!". Anelare alla santità e proporla a quanti incontrava fu sempre la prima sua preoccupazione».

Imitiamo, dunque, la devozione mariana illuminata e concreta del beato Giovanni Battista Scalabrini. La nostra vita sia un prolungamento del mistero che celebriamo, per applicare a beneficio della Santa Chiesa, grazie ai sacrifici del nostro ministero sacerdotale, i tesori di grazia acquistatici dagli infiniti meriti del Redentore e della sua Madre Corredentrice.

Non si dimentichi l'epitome classica, caratterizzata dal suo 'timbro particolare', della devozione mariana, come viene espressa nella Pastorale sulla Devozione al Santissimo Sacramento:

Sancta Maria, Mater Dei et Virgo, ego Io. Baptista te hodie in Dominam, Patronam, et Advcatam eligo, firmiterque statuo ac propono me nūquam te derelicturum.

Obsecro te igitur, suscipe (me) in servum perpetuum, adsis mihi in omnibus actionibus meis, nec me deseras in hora mortis meae. Amen.

Santa Maria Vergine e Madre di Dio, lo Giovanni Battista ti prendo oggi come mia Signora, Patrona e Avvocata, coi fermo e deliberato proposito

di non abbandonarti mai, Perciò, ti prego

di tenermi per sempre come tuo servo, di assistermi in tutte le mie azioni,

e di non abbandonarmi nell'ora della mia morte. Amen.

Lettera al Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II

ARCIVESCOVO GIUSEPPE GERMANO BERNARDINI, O.F.M. CAP.

Izmir, 04 Ottobre, 2004

Festa di S. Francesco d'Assisi, Diacono e Fondatore dell'Ordine Serafico

Sua Santità Papa Giovanni Paolo II

Supremo Pastore della Chiesa Universale

Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano

00120 Città del Vaticano

Santissimo Padre,

E' un grande privilegio e gioia per me far parte della Famiglia "*Vox Populi Maria Mediatrice*" e oggi mi unisco a molti altri Fratelli vescovi sparsi per il mondo, sacerdoti, diaconi, Religiosi e Laici, per chiederle, Santissimo Padre, la definizione dell'ultimo Dogma Mariano che riconosce pienamente e totalmente la pienezza delle Divine Prerogative della Madre di Dio, a Lei concesse dalla Santissima Trinità. E' giunto il tempo per la Chiesa di proclamare che la Santissima Madre di Dio è nostra **Corredentrice, Mediatrice di Tutte le Grazie e Avvocata**. La definizione di questo Dogma glorificherà veramente Dio stesso per quanto Egli ha fatto nella più perfetta Creatura da Lui creata, Maria Santissima. Tutti gli uomini conosceranno e loderanno la Madre che ci è stata data ai piedi della Croce. Inoltre, questo Dogma arrecherà la pace a cui il mondo anela in questo particolare periodo della dolorosa Storia della Chiesa e dell'umanità.

Attraverso i secoli i figli di S. Francesco d'Assisi hanno sviluppato un'accurata Teologia Mariana, una Teologia che io direi cominciata dallo stesso Beato Francesco con la sua "*Salutazione della Beata Vergine Maria*" (Opere non Datate) e in altri Documenti scritti e di altra natura: *Testi Legislativi, Lettere, Le Ammonizioni, Cantici, Frammenti, Le Lodi di Dio*, ecc. Con stupenda poesia e parole semplici e chiare, il Beato Francesco canta e spiega le glorie della Madre di Dio. Inoltre, con profonda dottrina e acutezza teologica, è vigorosamente affermato il ruolo unico della Madre di Dio nell'Opera della nostra Salvezza.

Come nessun altro Francesco e i suoi figli hanno fondato e sviluppato con sana dottrina e profonda correttezza teologica quello che è definito "*l'Autore filone Mariano*", di cui sono considerati massimi maestri S. Antonio

di Padova, S. Bonaventura, ambedue Dottori della Chiesa, il Beato Giovanni Duns Scoto e, nell'ultimo secolo, S. Massimiliano M. Kolbe e i suoi Scritti sulla Madre di Dio e i Suoi Privilegi. Io stesso figlio di S. Francesco d'Assisi, canto con lui e con i miei celesti Confratelli nell'Ordine Serafico le lodi della Donna, Maria Santissima, Madre di Dio e mia.

La Scuola Teologica Francescana è incentrata e basata sulla Santissima Umanità di Nostro Signore e Salvatore Gesù Cristo in quanto fu il *"mezzo"* e l'*"agente"* necessario per l'Opera di Salvezza da compiersi e di quella natura umana – *di cui si rivestì Dio stesso*- la Tutta Santa è la Madre. I Maestri Francescani hanno sempre scritto è insegnato con lo sguardo rivolto al Cristo di Dio Incarnato e alla Sua Madre Immacolata.

Pertanto, è proprio *a causa di* e *nel* Mistero della Maternità Divina della Santissima Theotokos che noi riconosciamo tutte le Sue Divine Prerogative perché è la base di tutti i Suoi Privilegi: la Sua intima Associazione al Suo Figlio e Signore, il Suo totale e unico *essere giusta per Dio solo*. Lei è l'Immacolata Concezione eternamente amata e scelta per essere la Madre del Perfetto Compagno, Collaboratrice e Socia del Cristo-Dio poiché era anche l'eterno Piano di Dio che desiderava unire due persone nell'Opera di Salvezza: un uomo, il Divino Messia, Salvatore e Redentore e una donna. Sua Madre – perfettamente e inseparabilmente unita a Lui, così riconosciamo la Madre di Dio quale *"Alma Socia Christi"*.

Santissimo Padre, per me, personalmente parlando, in qualità di Arcivescovo di Izmir, l'antica Smirne del Libro dell'Apocalisse, è un'amorosa necessità, un filiale dovere e responsabilità chiedere che la Chiesa dichiararsi – *al più presto possibile* – l'ultimo Dogma Mariano. Fu ad Efeso, appartenete alla mia Arcidiocesi, che i Padri Conciliari nell'anno 431 dichiararono l'umile Vergine di Nazaret quale *"Theotokos"* o *"Genitrice di Dio"*. La Chiesa non potrebbe tributare un onore maggiore alla Madre di Dio che riconoscendola come l'Unica che può intercedere presso il Padre *attraverso, con e nel* Figlio, in modo subordinato.

E' da Efeso, l'antica città strettamente connessa con la Madre di Dio, che la mia umile richiesta giunge fra la Sue mani, Santissimo Padre... Perché la Madre del Signore trascorse i suoi ultimi anni terreni, morì e, secondo un'antica tradizione che data sin dal I secolo AD, la Sua Assunzione ebbe luogo ad Efeso, la mia Arcidiocesi. Perché il Concilio che proclamò Maria Santissima Madre di Dio ebbe luogo ad Efeso; oggi è

proprio dalla stessa città che la richiesta per la definizione dell'ultimo Dogma Mariano è presentata a Sua Santità! Io prego con tutto il cuore Sua Santità di ascoltare la mia umile e calorosa richiesta, insieme alla voce di molti altri Vescovi sparsi per il mondo che chiedono a Sua Santità di procedere nella definizione dell'ultimo Dogma Mariano, così da poter noi tutti gioire nel vedere la nostra Madre finalmente e totalmente glorificata dalla Chiesa del v Figlio quale nostra **Corredentrica, Mediatrix di tutte le Grazie e Avvocata** e così l'abbondanza delle promesse e Benedizioni di Cristo Nostro Signore saranno nostre. Dio voleva avere una Madre e Lui La ama come soltanto Dio sa amare la Creatura più perfetta da Lui creata per Se solo.

“Ti saluto, o Signora, Santa Regina, Maria, Santa Madre di Dio, che sei Vergine fatta Chiesa ed eletta dal Santissimo padre Celeste Che Ti ha consacrata insieme con il Suo Santissimo Figlio Diletto e con lo Spirito Santo Paraclito, in Cui fu ed

*E' ogni pienezza di Grazia ed ogni Bene.
Ave Suo Palazzo, Ave Suo Tabernacolo!
Ave Sua Dimora, Ave Suo Vestimento, Ave Sua
Ancella, Ave Sua Madre”*

(S. Francesco d'Assisi, dalla *“Salutazione della Beata Vergine Maria”*)

Ringraziando Sua Santità per la gentilissima attenzione posta alla mia umile richiesta, le assicura le mie preghiere per il Suo ministero e salute.

Molto devotamente Suo in Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo e nella Theotokos, Nostra Signora di Efeso

+Giuseppe Germano Bernardini O.F.M. Cap
Arcivescovo di Smirne – Metropolita dell'Asia Minore