

Ecce Mater Tua

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Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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Essays

Mercy and Beyond: Pope Francis' Marian "Program of Life"

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Jesus said, "Follow me."¹ A commentary on the account of the conversion of St. Matthew, the tax collector, inspired the motto of Pope Francis: *Miserando atque eligendo*. These words are taken from a passage from the Venerable Bede, the historian:

Jesus therefore sees the tax collector, and since he sees by having mercy and by choosing, he says to him, "follow me," suggesting mercy is rooted in clarity or spiritual sight. Recalling the original Latin of Bede's commentary, Francis says that he likes to translate *miserando* with a gerund that doesn't exist: "*mercifying*." So *mercifying* and *choosing* describes the vision of Jesus, who gives the gift of mercy and chooses, and takes unto himself.²

Pope Francis recalls a similar moment in his own life when he experienced the tenderness of God's mercy following a confession he made at the age of 17. Being touched by the mercy of God, he answered the call to religious life and made this motto a "program of life."³ This is the same program encouraged by his predecessors, a program that calls for the rediscovery of mercy: God's perfect, compassionate, generous, kind and forgiving love, whether one feels worthy of it or not. This rediscovery was launched by the private revelations of St. Faustina Kowłaska; made accessible by Pope Saint John Paul II, who at the beginning of his papacy said, "I consider this message of Divine Mercy my special task"⁴; reconfirmed by Pope Benedict XVI; and celebrated by Pope Francis.

In this paper, I intend to show how Francis' vision of mercy stands in continuity with his predecessors as I highlight three key features of his "program of life." The first feature is an approach that I have considered naming "therapeutic juris-

¹ See the conversion accounts of St. Matthew: Mt. 9:9-13; Mk. 2:13-17; Lk. 5:27-32.

² Homily 21 (CCL 122, 149-151). Quoted in Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy: A Conversation with Andrea Tornielli* (New York: Random House, 2016), 12.

³ Pope Francis, "*Misericordiae Vultus*: Bull of Indiction for Holy Year of Mercy," *Origins*, Vol. 44, n. 46, 745-754, paragraph 13.

⁴ Pope John Paul II, Address at the Shrine of Merciful Love, November 22, 1981. www.thedivinemercy.org/message/johnpaul/quotes.php. Accessed January 19, 2018.

prudence”—an expression coined by two American law professors, David Wexler and Bruce Winnick, in the 1980s.⁵ Therapeutic jurisprudence is “the study of the law’s healing potential.”⁶ The second key feature is an approach that rediscovers or affirms the Marian dimension of what it means to be Church, an extension or fruit of using therapeutic jurisprudence as a model for encountering mercy in today’s world. Finally, I offer a response to Francis’ recommendation in his exhortation “On Love in the Family,” *Amoris Laetitia*, that human formation “should be interdisciplinary.”⁷ This interdisciplinary approach to human formation complements and supports, rather than supplants, our tradition’s understanding of human nature and human behaviour, making us more merciful in our approach to pastoral care—or as John Paul II desired, making us “experts in humanity.”⁸

These three features stand out for me as key to implementing Francis’ program of life, a program that begins with an understanding of salvation as the fruit of mercy. This implies the possibility of experiencing divine restoration after an encounter with mercy or justice informed by mercy. This understanding seeks to reconcile the tension between mercy and justice.⁹ Hence the expression “therapeutic jurisprudence.” This approach sees justice inspired by mercy as the best approach to individual and communal restoration.

The Oxford and Merriam-Webster dictionaries define “therapeutic” as the healing of disease, and jurisprudence as skill in law or administration of the law. This new multidisciplinary field of study offers a holistic approach to handling legal

⁵ See David B. Wexler and Bruce J. Winnick, “Therapeutic Jurisprudence,” in *Principles of Addiction Medicine*, 4th ed. Available at SSRN: ssrn.com/abstract=1101507. Accessed January 23, 2018.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (On Love in the Family), 2016, n. 203. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

⁸ Pope John Paul II, Address on the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1987. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

⁹ On November 24, 2008 Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, Archbishop of Genoa and President of the Council of the Bishops’ Conferences of Europe, gave a lecture in Genoa, Italy on the relationship between justice and mercy. He spoke of the tension between them when he said, “The question of the relationship between justice and mercy is an ancient one that has marked the development of Western civilization from the outset. Every time that the mind has attempted to put order between tendentially adverse opposites, such as personal freedom and social order, sin and punishment, recovery and redemption the relationship between justice and mercy has arisen regularly.” Drawing upon the wisdom of Pope Saint John Paul II and St. Thomas Aquinas he concludes, “If it wishes to take its full course mercy must first produce justice. For this reason, mercy neither opposes nor creates alibis for justice but rather contains justice as its principal expression and essential moment. Mercy, therefore, inspires and commands justice, giving it life and light so that it is better able to surpass its own rigid and formal definitions.” See Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, “Giving Freely Without Boundaries,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, January 14, 2009, 13.

cases, taking into account the behavioural sciences and the desire to heal victims and perpetrators of crime. In other words, it is an approach that sees mercy and justice leading to healing and restoration of all those hurt by crime. It is justice informed by mercy.

This means that following and accepting a moral code or the law, freely and with love, coupled with understanding the logic of the code, leads to spiritual health or salvation. It happens, however, that some people will miss the mark due to pride, fear, ignorance or some other vulnerability. Like the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32), they may not trust God's plan for their lives and instead choose another path due to ignorance, pride or impatience. Some of these choices create wounds in need of healing, leading to the need for a therapeutic approach to recovery and restoration. The healing of wounds is at the heart of Francis' papacy and teaching on mercy. It is precisely our vulnerability that makes us human, in need of mercy.

In his Bull of Indiction declaring the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis writes, "We need constantly to contemplate this mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity and peace. Our salvation depends on it."¹⁰ He spoke of this truth in *Evangelii Gaudium* when he affirmed, "The salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy."¹¹ This means our divine health (*salus*)—the possibility of divine restoration and deliverance—depends on mercy. Why? It is because the opposite of mercy is emotional, spiritual and sometimes physical exile. If our spiritual health, our salvation, depends on mercy, the opposite, emotional exile, leads to spiritual illness. It appears that Francis sees sin more as illness than as failure. If the fruit of mercy consists of joy, serenity and peace, the fruit of exile is despair, shame, self-loathing and isolation. Mercy is the end of exile.

In order to become merciful agents, we must take the time to study and understand the vulnerable in our community. This understanding evokes empathy and leads to action. Vulnerability is derived from the Latin verb *vulnerare*, meaning "to wound." Knowledge of our own vulnerabilities keeps us humble and merciful, attending to the vulnerabilities of others who may have been wounded in profound ways. Without this self-knowledge and a basic understanding of the human condition and the many assaults on the dignity of the person, one may be tempted to judge the hearts of others, not knowing the various factors that may have prevented these people from knowing authentic freedom. It may be by the grace of God that we were not wounded in utero by drugs or environmental toxins, not aban-

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 2.

¹¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World), 2013, n. 112. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

doned at birth, not traumatized by war, natural disaster or neglect, not born into a family with addictive tendencies.

In 1980, John Paul II, in his encyclical on mercy, *Dives in Misericordia* (God, who is Rich in Mercy" [Eph. 2:4]), addressed these difficulties when he wrote, "at this difficult, critical phase of the history of the Church and world"¹² there is nothing that people need more than divine mercy. He went on to say, "the Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy—the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and Redeemer."¹³ Similarly, Pope Francis, in his Bull for the Year of Mercy, speaks of these painful situations in the world today and challenges us to open "our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes modern society itself creates."¹⁴

This is his vision, as an extension of the Church's evangelizing mission, creating a culture of accompaniment and healing, a culture that makes the Church's teaching on mercy accessible, where people feel welcome to approach and receive God's mercy. They approach like the woman who anoints Jesus (Lk. 7:37-50), like the man with the withered hand (Mt. 12:9-14), like Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:5) who climbs a tree to see Jesus, and like the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn. 4:1-42). Francis reminds us that we are called to heal the wounds of these little ones, in "whom Christ himself is present."¹⁵ We can do this when mercy informs our sense of justice. This balance is achieved when therapeutic jurisprudence is exercised, when the desire to heal and rehabilitate accompanies the fulfillment of the law. Pope Francis gives an example of this approach in a conversation with Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli, included in his book *The Name of God Is Mercy*.

At one point, Francis mentions the account of the adulterous woman in John's Gospel. In his analysis, he reminds Tornielli, "the law stated that she must be punished."¹⁶ Francis goes on to say, "Jesus forgives. But here there is something more than forgiveness. Because ... Jesus goes beyond the law that demanded stoning."¹⁷ In other words, Jesus knew the woman's heart: he could see her, including her weaknesses; and he forgave her and called her to new life, to change her ways (a spiritual work of mercy), no doubt challenging and disturbing those who desired that she be punished. Jesus' approach to this woman and others inspired Francis' "program of life."

¹² Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, 1980, n. 15. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

¹³ *Ibid.*, n. 2.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, Bull of Indiction for Holy Year of Mercy, n. 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy*, xv.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Similarly, this is the Christian program highlighted by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, in which he declares, “the programme of Jesus—is a ‘heart which sees.’ This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.”¹⁸ Jesus reveals that mercy calls for correction and conversion, not punishment and vengeance, prompting us to question any system of thought that includes harm in its understanding or definition of mercy. Jesus demonstrates a therapeutic approach to conversion, healing the disease of sin, offering the restoration of life or salvation. This means all need for forgiveness implies the need for healing. This truth is clearly demonstrated in the healing of the paralytic (Mk. 2:1-12).

Although the need for healing does not imply the need for forgiveness, as was the case with the healing of the blind man (Jn. 9:1-12), the paralytic needed to hear more than the words “Your faith has made you well.” He needed to hear, “Your sins are forgiven.” Although the healing of the paralytic is a sign that Jesus has the authority to forgive sins, the forgiveness inspired the healing of the paralysis, showing that forgiveness precedes healing, leading to truth and an internalization of the logic of God’s plan for his divine laws. Repentance and conversion are the fruits of divine justice, but as was the case with the paralytic, some type of encounter with mercy is needed first.

Using Jesus as his example, Pope Francis challenges us to go beyond our understanding of justice and inform it with God’s mercy. “With mercy and forgiveness,” he says, “God goes beyond justice, he subsumes it and exceeds it in a higher event in which we experience love, which is at the root of true justice ... If God limited himself to only justice, he would cease to be God and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected. But mere justice is not enough.”¹⁹

This means mercy offers healing, the therapeutic aspect of care, while justice offers the correction, the juridical aspect of care. Francis reminds us, like Pope Benedict, that God’s mercy does not compromise God’s authority. Similarly, the bishops gathered at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 declared, “God is not changed by showing mercy.”²⁰ God does not lose anything. We, on the other hand, have everything to gain. Mercy does not suggest weakness. This potential outcome inspired John Paul II to say, “Outside the mercy of God there is no other source of

¹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (On Christian Love), 2005, n. 31b. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

¹⁹ Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy*, 78.

²⁰ Council of Chalcedon, “Letter of Pope Leo to Flavian,” in Norman J. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 1 (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 80.

hope for human beings.”²¹ Mercy heals and encourages new beginnings, inspiring hope for others. This means there is no substitute for divine mercy, not even justice on its own.

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiris, an Orthodox theologian, in his reflection on Eastern patristic thought on sin and mercy, offers an interesting interpretation of the Greek word *diakosuni*, translated as “justice.” He writes, “[the] Greek word *diakosuni* is a translation of the Hebrew word *tsedaka*. The word means ‘the divine energy which accomplishes man’s salvation.’”²² It is parallel and almost synonymous with the word *hesed*, which means “mercy, compassion, love” and to the word *emeth*, which means “fidelity, truth. This is entirely different from the juridical understanding of justice.”²³ This means divine justice is concerned with mercy and healing. Divine justice is housed in what Kalomiris calls a “hospital of souls.” Compare this view to Francis’ model of the Church as a “field hospital,”²⁴—an expression he has used in interviews and in official papal teaching.

Early on in his papacy he said:

I see clearly that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds And you have to start from the ground up.²⁵

In the same interview, he went on to warn against two extremes: a legalistic approach that does not understand the human condition, and a lax approach that does not understand or recognize the complexity of sin—that dismisses the reality of sin. In other words, he is promoting an approach of therapeutic jurisprudence: an understanding of human behaviour and the need for healing due to the consequences of sin.

In a recent address to the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, Francis emphasized the need for healing, the need for theologians and pastors to “smell of the people and of the street” and to “pour oil and wine” on peo-

²¹ Pope John Paul II, Homily, Dedication of the Shrine of Divine Mercy, August 17, 2002, n. 1. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

²² Alexandre Kalomiris, *The River of Fire* (St. Nectarios Press, 1980), 31.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy*, 52.

²⁵ “Pope Francis: The Interview,” *America*, September 30, 2013. www.americamagazine.org/pope-francis-interview. Accessed January 23, 2018.

ple's wounds.²⁶ This closeness to people's needs and wounds gives people hope. They experience the grace of Jesus Christ: a grace, he says, that "can rescue them, give them new courage and heal them." He concluded by saying, "let us sustain the rescue of the creative plan at all costs." Francis sheds new light on the healing dimension of salvation, which is an experience that can begin in this life. It is more than "rescue from the eternal fire" (Mt. 25:41). When Jesus saved people, he made them well (Mk. 5:34). All people, by virtue of their baptism, are called to participate in this rescue plan, assisting the ministerial priesthood in their care of souls. This rescue plan, or program of life, then, must engage the Marian dimension of what it means to be Church: those baptized Christians who attend to the healing needs of the vulnerable in the community.

The Church Is Marian (The Marian Is the Therapeutic)

Just as the model of therapeutic jurisprudence reconciles the tension between mercy and justice, showing how love and truth are never in opposition, the Marian dimension of the Church complements and completes the Petrine dimension. Not only do these dimensions reflect the collaboration between the priesthood of the baptized and the ministerial priesthood, they reflect the lived reality of being male and female, created in the image and likeness of God. Complementarity between the sexes has been affirmed over and over again in official Church teaching, most especially in the catechesis of John Paul II, namely, the Theology of the Body.

Recently, Pope Francis highlighted this truth when he said, "The difference between man and woman is not for opposition, or subordination, but for communion and creation, always in the image and likeness of God."²⁷ Several scientists and medical experts, such as Louann Brizendine, Miriam Grossman and Daniel Amen, have used their research to support this teaching on complementarity.²⁸ The fields of anatomy, histology, neurology and physiology all support these differences in men and women, celebrating our strengths and contributions made to a variety of sectors. Pope John Paul II celebrated the achievements of women in his 1988 Ap-

²⁶ Pope Francis, Address to the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, October 28, 2016. zenit.org/articles/popes-address-to-john-paul-ii-institute-for-studies-on-marriage-and-family. Accessed January 23, 2018.

²⁷ Pope Francis, General Audience, April 15, 2015. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

²⁸ See Louann Brizendine, *The Female Brain* (New York: Morgan Road Books, 2006), and Miriam Grossman, *You're Teaching My Child What?* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2009). See also the research of Daniel Amen. Dr. Daniel Amen's research involves the study in changes in neurobiology and endocrinology with infatuation and sexual intimacy.

ostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (The Dignity and Vocation of Women), in which he said:

The Church gives thanks for all the manifestations of the feminine ‘genius’ which have appeared in the course of history, in the midst of all peoples and Nations; she gives thanks for all the charisms which the Holy Spirit distributes to women in the history of the people of God, for all the victories which she owes to their faith, hope and charity. She gives thanks for all the fruits of feminine holiness.²⁹

This feminine “genius” refers to the special sensitivity shown by women in a variety of settings: women’s ability to read character and vulnerability and the gift of their gut instinct, the second brain. In a recent general audience, Pope Francis said that we “have not yet understood in depth what things the feminine genius can give us ... It is a path that must be crossed with more creativity and more boldness.”³⁰

The Marian dimension of the Church includes this feminine “genius.” Leadership in the Church, as we know, is not limited to the ministerial priesthood or the Petrine dimension. This leadership and attention to human need is present in the Scriptures. Recall the account of the wedding at Cana (Jn. 2:1-12); it is Mary who notices that the wine has run out! And we cannot forget the woman who anoints Jesus—an account that is found in all four gospels. Luke’s account shows how Jesus highlights the woman’s attention to his need:

Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.” (Lk. 7:44-46)

This woman’s sins were forgiven because she showed great love (v. 47). “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy” (Mt. 5:7).

Brizendine, Grossman and Amen use their research to show how the female brain is wired to respond to vulnerability and need in the community. Mary and the woman who anoints Jesus demonstrated the feminine genius in action, the Marian

²⁹ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (The Dignity and Vocation of Women), 1988, n. 31. www.vatican.va.

³⁰ Pope Francis, General Audience, April 15, 2015.

dimension of the Church, showing mercy and identifying need, and inspiring both men and women. We are called to be like Mary, Pope Francis says, “who cared for Jesus, [and] now cares with maternal affection and pain for the wounded of the world.”³¹ This Marian genius was celebrated by Pope Benedict, who underscored the “maternal mission of Mary.”³² In an interview with Vittorio Messori, Benedict challenged Christians to see Mary as “figure, image and model of the Church,” shielding against “a [solely] masculinized model.”³³ He laments the thought of a theology or ecclesiology that no longer has a place for Mary. She is, he says, “an example to which every Christian—man and woman—can and should look.” This is why, in the words of John Paul II, inspired by the ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,³⁴ “the Marian dimension of the Church precedes the Petrine.”³⁵

The ecclesiological notion that the Marian dimension precedes the Petrine is evident in the private revelations of two women who went on to inspire papal teaching on mercy and ecclesiology. St. Faustina Kowłaska (1905–38), “the great apostle of divine mercy in our time,” inspired the rediscovery of mercy in the teaching of John Paul II³⁶ and Adrienne Von Speyr (1902–67), a Swiss Catholic physician/mystic inspired the work and thought of von Balthasar, John Paul II and Pope Benedict.³⁷ The “feminine genius” of these female mystics influenced papal teaching on mercy and insight into the Marian dimension. Their insights preceded official Church teaching on these very important subjects. These private revelations affirm the specific vocation of women in the Church, pointing to the feminine or

³¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (On Care for Our Common Home), 2015, n. 24. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

³² Pope Benedict, General Audience, February 17, 2007. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

³³ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “Don’t Forget Mary,” 1984. www.crossroadsinitiative.com/media/articles/dont-forget-mary-cardinal-ratzinger-pope-benedict-xvi. Accessed January 23, 2018.

³⁴ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Women Priests? A Marian Church in a Fatherless and Motherless Culture,” *Communio* 22. 1, 1995: 164-170.

³⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, n. 27.

³⁶ See Pope John Paul II, Homily, ‘The Canonization of Sr. Mary Faustina Kowłaska, April 30, 2000. www.vatican.va. The homily closed with the following words: “And you, Faustina, a gift of God to our time, a gift from the land of Poland to the whole Church, obtain for us an awareness of the depth of divine mercy; help us to have a living experience of it and to bear witness to it among our brothers and sisters. May your message of light and hope spread throughout the world, spurring sinners to conversion, calming rivalries and hatred and opening individuals and nations to the practice of brotherhood. Today, fixing our gaze with you on the face of the risen Christ, let us make our own your prayer of trusting abandonment and say with firm hope: *Christ Jesus, I trust in you! Jezzu, ufam tobie!*”

³⁷ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981).

Marian dimension of the Church. Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Saint John Paul II encouraged such reflections during their respective papacies.³⁸

Pope Francis has sustained this tradition in continuity with his predecessors, as he stresses the Marian dimension in many practical ways. It is this Marian dimension that will sustain his vision of therapeutic jurisprudence. On November 1, 2016, in an in-flight interview, he was asked a question on women's ordination. Not only did he repeat the Church's position on the non-admission of women to the ministerial priesthood, but also he seized the opportunity to emphasize the gifts of women and the Marian dimension of the Church. He said, "There is no Church without the feminine dimension," and that Mary precedes all others. He celebrates the maternal dimension of the Church in several documents, declaring Mary to be "more important than the bishops."³⁹ More recently, in *Amoris Laetitia*, he describes a mother who, moved by mercy, approaches and searches for her children. He writes that the Church is a "Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, "always does what she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud on the street."⁴⁰ Here jurisprudence (following the Church's legal teaching) meets the therapeutic approach by encountering the wounded and joins in the struggle, an approach to be considered by both men and women. The same mother who corrects her children is the one who nurtures them back to health, emphasizing the need for the Marian dimension to influence the Petrine dimension.

Earlier in the same exhortation, he stresses that the world would be "dehumanized"⁴¹ without a maternal approach to suffering, then calls us to witness to God's tenderness:

In such difficult situations of need, the Church must be particularly concerned to offer understanding, comfort and acceptance, rather than imposing straightaway a set of rules that only lead people to feel judged and abandoned by the very Mother called to show them God's mercy. Rather than offering the healing power of grace and the light of the Gospel message, some would

³⁸ See John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 46. See also Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's Introduction to John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* where he affirms Mary's mediation as the "female dimension in salvation history," underscoring female participation and influence in the Church. See John Paul II, *Mary: God's Yes to Man* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1987), 32.

³⁹ See Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 45, 104.

⁴⁰ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 308.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, n. 174.

“indoctrinate” that message, turning into “dead stones to be hurled at others.”⁴²

To emphasize this point, he keeps coming back to the account of the adulterous woman and the woman of Samaria.⁴³ He highlights Jesus’ tenderness as he approaches and encounters these women, calling them to new life and offering them the gift of divine health. Here the encounter with mercy leads to the truth and fulfillment, showing how Jesus, the way that is love incarnate, leads to truth and new life (Jn. 14:6).

John Honner, in an article on Pope Francis’ vision for a Marian Church, believes Francis offers a practical response to the “abstract principles” of the Marian and Petrine dimensions of the Church.⁴⁴ Francis challenges us to give examples of the lived reality of these two principles, by encouraging women in leadership, giving them decision-making roles,⁴⁵ embracing a “Marian style” (pastoral care) of evangelizing,⁴⁶ and most especially highlighting the maternal dimension of the Church. This means love and tenderness can conquer hearts. Francis puts it this way: “Contemplating Mary, we realize that she who praised God for ‘bringing down the mighty from their thrones’ and ‘sending the rich away empty’ (Lk. 1:52-53) is also the one who brings homely warmth to our pursuit of justice.”⁴⁷ Mary’s example provides the foundation for how to reconcile mercy and justice: in other words, therapeutic jurisprudence. Just as one can be maternal and Marian without compromising the truth, one can be just and truthful without compromising the call to be merciful. Have we achieved this balance when it comes to truth and mercy?

Perhaps there continues to be tension in interpreting and analyzing Francis’ papacy because, although we write about it and talk about it, we haven’t figured out how to reconcile the two dimensions of the Church: the Marian and the Petrine. They do not stand in opposition; rather, as John Paul II once noted, the “link is profound and complementary.”⁴⁸ The Petrine is at the service of the Marian, made clear at the foot of the cross (Jn. 19:26-27) and in Mary’s words: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn. 2:5). In the account of the wedding at Cana, Mary identifies the need in the community (the feminine genius), brings it to her Son’s attention, and directs

⁴² Ibid., n. 49.

⁴³ Ibid., nn. 27, 38, 64.

⁴⁴ See John Honner, “The Marian Church of Pope Francis,” 2013. maristyouthinternational.wordpress.com/2013/09/12/the-marian-church-of-pope-francis-john-honner. Accessed January 23, 2018.

⁴⁵ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 104.

⁴⁶ Ibid., n. 228.

⁴⁷ Ibid., n. 288.

⁴⁸ Pope John Paul II, “Christmas Greetings to Members of the Roman Curia and Prelature,” December 22, 1987, n. 3. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

the attendants to follow Jesus' instructions, trusting in his judgment. Her care and concern inform the decision-making process. Mary directs the Petrine dimension, demonstrating that we become another Mary before we become another Christ. Doing God's will informs the juridical aspect of the Church. Similarly, Pope Benedict once said that the "Petrine aspect ... is included in [the] Marian aspect. In Mary, the Immaculate, we find the essence of the Church without distortion."⁴⁹ This means the Petrine dimension is fruitful when it complements the Marian dimension, when it is like Mary. Although this seems logical, integrating this teaching into day-to-day governance and ministry is challenging.

What does it mean to be Marian in the world today? In addition to doing God's will, as was the case with Mary's *fiat* and being a disciple of Christ, Francis believes it involves showing the Church's "maternal side, her motherly face to a humanity that is wounded. She does not wait for the wounded to knock on her doors, she looks for them on the streets, she gathers them in, she embraces them, she takes care of them, she makes them feel loved."⁵⁰ A Marian Church is like the woman in the parable of the lost coin (Lk 15: 8-11). She searches, finds and rejoices in the lost being found and saved. Accompanied by the lamp of truth, her love for her people moves her to search for the lost.

This love, observes Francis, is "the primary reason for evangelizing."⁵¹ The New Evangelization strives to find those lost in the house—the conversion of the baptized. Hearts need to be touched by God's mercy so they can experience the transformation that leads to divine health. A wise person once said, "If we can get to people's hearts, their minds and bodies will follow." This captures what Francis calls "the Logic of Pastoral Mercy."⁵² Mercy sees with the heart. Ignorance of factors that influence human behaviour, however, obscures our spiritual sight and may keep us from showing mercy to others, from seeing them the way God sees them, understanding their prenatal⁵³, postnatal, genetic and cultural experiences.

⁴⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, "Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary," December 8, 2005. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018. Benedict XVI writes, "In her, God has impressed his own image, the image of the One who follows the lost sheep even up into the mountains and among the briars and thorn bushes of the sins of this world, letting himself be spiked by the crown of thorns of these sins in order to take the sheep on his shoulders and bring it home."

⁵⁰ Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy*, 6.

⁵¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 264.

⁵² Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 308.

⁵³ Prenatal influences such as the exposure to environmental toxins in utero and sperm exposed to toxins can harm the developing fetus. See Jeanette M. Soby, *Prenatal Exposure to Drugs/Alcohol: Characteristics and Educational Implications of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Cocaine polydrug Effects* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Ltd., 2006) and Christi Tolo Pasaro, Ruth E. Little, David A. Savits, John Noss and the ALSPAC Study Team, "Effects of Paternal

Pope Francis must be aware of these influences, inspiring him to recommend an interdisciplinary approach to human formation,⁵⁴ to this program of life. This time is for him a “*kairos* of mercy,” an opportune time,⁵⁵ a time for “experts in humanity” to be agents of God’s mercy in the field hospital. The Marian Church, with the priesthood of the baptized, can staff the field hospital with a variety of gifts and training from different disciplines and professions. According to John Paul II, they must see themselves as the Church, bringing their expertise and training to a world “at this difficult, critical phase of the history of the Church and world.”⁵⁶

Mercy Informed by Knowledge

In 1985, Pope St. John Paul II said, “We need heralds of the Gospel who are experts in humanity, who know the depths of the human heart, who can share the joys and hopes, the agonies and distress of people today, but at the same time contemplatives who have fallen in love with God.”⁵⁷ In other words, experts in humanity are people who know the human condition and know and communicate God’s love and mercy. It is interesting that John Paul II put out the call for “experts in humanity”—not experts in religious education—implying that we must go beyond our limited understanding of human behaviour and engage other disciplines. The program of human formation, when rooted in mercy, is character development and self-knowledge, directed by God’s love and our ability to reason.

Experts in humanity know how to balance justice and mercy because they have taken into account the many factors that limit or prevent the human person from flourishing. They have followed Jesus’ command to be merciful: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy” (Mt. 5:7). Unfortunately, however, they know that the reverse order of this beatitude is not always true: “Blessed are those who have received mercy, for they will be merciful.” Jesus, an expert in humanity, makes this point in the parable of the unmerciful or unforgiving servant (Mt. 18:21-34). This parable shows how mercy should lead to restoration and conversion and when it doesn’t, restitution and justice are needed to bring about order and restoration. The servant who receives mercy does not extend it to others. He has forgotten what it feels like to be desperate, focusing instead on self-preservation and vengeance. This desire to advance oneself and to seek vengeance is met with divine justice. When an encounter with mercy does not change someone for the better, a

Alcohol Consumption Before Conception and Infant Birth Weight,” *Teratology*, Vol. 57 (1998), 294-301.

⁵⁴ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 203.

⁵⁵ Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy*, 6.

⁵⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, n. 15.

⁵⁷ Pope John Paul II, Address, October 11, 1985.

correction is in order. Justice brings the correction and healing intended by mercy. God desires conversion and will use mercy and justice to inspire this transformation. Francis' motto celebrates the change or conversion that should come when one receives mercy. The hope is that those who receive mercy will be merciful.

Mercy challenges us to be patient, generous, kind, self-giving and courageous, and to empathize with those we may be tempted to consider unworthy of God's forgiving and compassionate love. In order to be capable of mercy, Francis says, we need God's assistance, because on our own we risk being impatient and judgmental. God's grace informs our understanding and our ability to reason, making us more merciful.

Francis knows that accusations and judgment of people's hearts are obstacles to God's mercy (Lk. 18:9-4). Jesus, as Pope Benedict XVI says, "sees with the heart" and invites us to do the same. Take a closer look at the logo for the Year of Mercy: Jesus, the Good Shepherd, carries a wounded man, perhaps one who is lost, abandoned, addicted or imprisoned. Jesus and the man share one eye: Jesus restores the man's spiritual sight so that he can see himself as God sees him, with dignity and love. Jesus knows this man, his history and his pain. The man sees Jesus, his love and truth; and Jesus sees the many with our eyes so we can be partakers in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). The almond shape of the eye represents the human and the divine. Without the restoration of spiritual sight, we risk being harsh, focused instead on self-preservation, operating through a fear-based vision of humanity that does not offer hope. This reminds me of Martin Luther King's reflection on the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37), found in his 1968 speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop."⁵⁸ In the time of Jesus, King said, the road to Jericho was a dangerous road, "conducive for ambushing." He believed that the Levite, like the priest, did not stop to help the wounded man because he was worried about himself, possibly thinking, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" In other words, his fear of being ambushed kept him from clothing the naked and tending to the wounded. King believed that Jesus' parable showed how the Good Samaritan reversed the question by asking, "If I do *not* stop to help this man, what will happen to *him*?" The Samaritan demonstrates how, at times, fear and the desire for self-preservation keep us from doing the right thing.

This parable and Jesus' own words on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:34) should challenge us to examine those factors that may limit a person's ability to reason and know the full consequences of actions, making them less free to respond to God's will. Jesus would

⁵⁸ See Martin Luther King, Jr., "I've Been to the Mountain Top" in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 279.

have been aware of the dynamics of group and individual evil: how fear, despair and pride can seduce people into doing the most despicable of things, possibly keeping them from extending and receiving mercy. Sharing in Jesus' insight into the human condition informs our sense of mercy. Some of the factors we should take the time to examine include our family of origin and cultural influences, the culture of fear and intimidation that seduces people into choosing death, and prenatal and postnatal influences and inherited traits.

Francis is open to this conversation. He shows some awareness of these factors affecting families,⁵⁹ and recommends the development of more family ministry programs to accompany families. These programs would facilitate their healing, as a family is "the nearest hospital,"⁶⁰ and "shepherd" people in mercy.⁶¹ A major influence on culture and family is the "fear factor."

Some people have been raised in an "honour/shame" system of living that places more emphasis on protecting family honour than being there for a family member who is hurting due to a bad decision or moment of weakness: the end goal is to hide, deny and shun as a way to deal with these situations. You can see how this approach encourages people to hide their vulnerabilities from God and others. Jesus, when he healed the man with the withered hand, asked him, "Stretch out your hand" (Mt. 12:9-14). He encouraged the vulnerable to approach, to come out of hiding, and to receive mercy and healing.

The North American community and culture is not exempt from this fear-based thinking. Let's consider the many forced adoptions that took place in Canada between 1945 and 1973. In her research on forced adoptions in Canada, Kathryn Blaze Carlson discovered that 350,000 unmarried Canadian mothers were persuaded, coerced or forced to place their babies for adoption. She concludes that such traumatic separations often sprang from fear of public shame. This fear of shame and judgment has inspired other choices, regretted by many.⁶² For several years I worked as a Project Rachel counsellor in the Diocese of Hamilton, Ontario. Project Rachel is a ministry of healing and reconciliation for men and women who have suffered due to the pain of abortion. Of those I counselled, fear of public shame was at the top of the list when it came to the many factors that influenced a young woman's choice to terminate a pregnancy, followed by fear for her future. Again we can see how fear of exile can influence a person's behaviour. Some of this fear-

⁵⁹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 309.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 321.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, n. 322.

⁶² For more on this topic, see Josephine Lombardi, *Experts in Humanity: A Journey of Self-Discovery and Healing* (Toronto: Novalis, 2016), 62–63.

based thinking begins in their family and culture of origin, challenging us to examine those thoughts and actions that are not life giving.

This fear-based thinking has contributed to a culture of despair and death, revealing that fear is not a fruit of the Holy Spirit; it is the opposite of love. Being irrational, it is the opposite of love in action. Rooted in pride and self-preservation, fear, judgment and accusation can keep us from doing and saying the right thing, forgetting that fear and despair will lead us to do the very things we condemn.

Francis recalls a touching encounter with a woman who was abandoned by her husband, left to raise their young children on her own, taking temporary jobs here and there, struggling to provide. Sadly, in a desperate state, she started to prostitute herself to provide for her family. Francis, as her parish priest at the time, remembers a moment when his words affirmed her dignity as a person. It was Christmas, and she brought her children with her to church to thank the parish staff for the assistance they had given her. He tells it this way:

They called me and I went to greet her. She came to thank me. I thought it was for the package of food from Caritas that we had sent to her. “Did you receive it?” I asked. “Yes, yes, thank you for that, too. But I came here today to thank you because you never stopped calling me Senora.” Experiences like this teach you how important it is to welcome people delicately and not wound their dignity. For her, the fact that the parish priest continued to call her Senora, even though he probably knew how she led her life during the months when she could not work, was as important as—or perhaps even more important than—the concrete help we gave her.⁶³

An expert in humanity would understand the desperation that leads to such choices, and would communicate God’s mercy and accompany people so they can choose life-giving actions. Recall the woman at the well: an encounter with Christ’s mercy transformed her, satisfying her thirst and giving her new life. How can we better serve those who are wounded, those who may not have received proper human formation in the home? Francis believes we can do better when it comes to marriage preparation.⁶⁴

In looking at the formation offered for couples preparing for marriage and men preparing for holy orders, the two sacraments of service, we find a huge discrepancy in the time and resources allotted. The formation process for the two sacraments varies drastically. Some engaged couples receive only a weekend ses-

⁶³ Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy*, 61.

⁶⁴ See Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, nn. 205–208.

sion, whereas candidates for holy orders receive anywhere from five to ten years of formation in four areas: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Many people will be married at some point, but do not receive proper or adequate formation in the internal curriculum,⁶⁵ areas of parenting, conflict management, human sexuality, and other life skills such as forgiveness, managing anger, and the role of faith, which recent developments in neuroscience are showing is so beneficial to our physiology and brain health. This lack of preparation encourages the transmission of non-life-giving habits, learned in one's family of origin, to future generations.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis touches on these issues and calls for more attention to the preparation of married couples, noting the many social, emotional, economic, cultural and psychological factors that may hurt and damage marriages, and reminding young couples that the Church will accompany them in good times and in bad. Moreover, he urges us to be mindful of the unique needs of widowed, separated and divorced Catholics, and those in what he calls "reconstituted families."

How do we accompany and encourage individuals who are grieving the loss of a relationship, those who have been abandoned, those who have been abused, those who desired to reconcile, but found themselves alone and rejected? How do we facilitate an encounter with Christ's mercy and healing love? Does our Prayer of the Faithful reflect this reality? Fortunately, many dioceses offer support programs and resources for people in these situations, but we can do better when it comes to promoting awareness of the lived reality of family life and preparation for marriage, encouraging couples to consider Retrouvaille or Marriage Encounter as opportunities for healing. How can the Petrine dimension and Marian dimension embrace one another in an integrated approach to human formation?

We need an equivalent of Serra International, which promotes vocations to religious life. Here's an idea: What about creating and promoting "Monica International," named after St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine? St. Monica prayed for the conversion of her son, St. Augustine and is an excellent example of the need for feminine influence in the life of the Church. Just as vocations to religious life and the ministerial priesthood require prayer and encouragement, single people and others called to marriage and parenting are in need of discernment, prayers and support. As a community of believers, Monicans, both male and female, would make it their mission to pray for all families, working with dioceses and offices for family life to prepare and promote courses and resources to assist young people who are discerning marriage, visiting high school classes; facilitating "Come and See" weekends with families willing to adopt young discerners; hosting discernment

⁶⁵ See Lombardi, *Experts in Humanity*, 7.

seminars, including testimonies from married couples who have seen it all; sharing their own vocation stories; giving spiritual support; and working with Monica chaplains who offer regular masses for the preparation and protection of marriage. We are all called to holiness, regardless of our state of life. Unfortunately, some limit their understanding of the call to holiness to a particular state of life or to the chosen few. How can we inspire the desire for holiness in marriage and family life?

How can we seize the opportunity to be preventative, forming people for marriage and parenting and assisting couples who are facilitators of marriage preparation? Francis recommends expanded marriage preparation courses. The existing courses could be extended to include some of the research on family-of-origin issues, unhealthy habits associated with conflict management, and how unresolved past hurts can harm a relationship. We should include some of the fascinating research of Sarah Hill, Daniel Del Priore and Bruce Ellis on fathers and daughters—how a daughter’s exposure to a loving, nurturing father can slow down her reproductive journey and prevent at-risk sexual behaviour.⁶⁶ Educating people, starting from the adolescent years, on the various factors that may keep them from knowing God’s plan for them and their flourishing is a must. For example, research on the developing adolescent brain shows how teens’ neurobiology may keep them from reasoning properly and assessing consequences.

Neuroscientist Jay Giedd and other researchers who have studied the risks associated with the developing adolescent brain have reported that accidents are the number one cause of adolescent mortality, followed by suicide and homicide.⁶⁷ Car insurance brokers are aware of this research on the teenage brain and use it to set insurance rates for young drivers—rates are higher for young men because it takes longer for their brains to develop, making them vulnerable to risky behaviour. The science of sex is another topic in need of exploration and sharing. The research of Daniel Amen, a psychiatrist and brain disorder specialist, shows how bonding hormones are released during sexual intimacy, how our brain chemistry changes when we are infatuated and falling in love, how this can diminish our ability to reason, and how outside of marriage this can lead to bonding to the wrong person for an indefinite period of time, putting people at risk for pain, disappointment and regret.⁶⁸ The good news is that we can use this research to defend the Church’s teaching on sexuality and marriage. This education must also include awareness of good prenatal health for mothers and fathers, especially for those discerning and desiring the vocation of marriage.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 101–102. See also, Paul Raeburn, “Where’s Dad?” *Scientific American Mind* (May/June 2014): 45–51.

⁶⁷ Lombardi, *Experts in Humanity*, 85.

⁶⁸ See Daniel Amen, *The Brain in Love* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007).

Research shows that maternal and paternal prenatal health care, or lack thereof, can affect their child's physiological and psychological development. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to address all defects or disabilities that are outside our control and understanding, we can examine a few factors that can be controlled. Studies on prenatal development and health show that the exposure of a fetus to environmental toxins (including alcohol, some prescription medications, street drugs and pesticides) can cause neurological damage, slow down or prevent the formation of conscience, and cause learning disabilities or physical defects.⁶⁹

People used to think it was only the mother's prenatal habits that influenced the health of her unborn child. Today, research shows that sperm health, like the mother's prenatal health, contributes to the overall well-being of a fetus. Studies done over the past 20 years have shown the link between exposure to toxins and defective sperm. A project coordinated by researchers at the University of South Florida in 1997 includes peer-reviewed medical journal articles showing the connection between men who have experienced environmental and chemical exposure and increased learning disabilities and other intellectual and functional deficits, and hyperactivity in children.⁷⁰

This research shows that fetal health depends a great deal on the health of the mother, the father and the environment, encouraging educators and parents to acknowledge the "formative influence of these prenatal and perinatal experiences on later moral development."⁷¹ This information should be passed on to adolescents who may be tempted to use toxic substances and should be included in marriage preparation courses, especially in the unit on parenting. This special care and attention must continue postnatally.

British psychologist John Bowlby was one of the first to study what is known as attachment theory. He believed that early bonds between children and their caregivers "have a tremendous impact and continue throughout life."⁷² This early nurturance and care leads to attachment and trust of caregivers. Children who do not form early attachments may develop behavioural problems and difficulty in relationships. Studying the formation of conscience from the toddler stage to early school age, Grazyna Kochanska and Kathleen T. Murray discovered that positive, warm, consistent interactions between mother and child could lead to positive interactions with others as the child develops, meaning that the first three years of life

⁶⁹ Lombardi, *Experts in Humanity*, 73–79.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 78–79.

⁷¹ Milicent Adams Dosh, "Prenatal and Perinatal Foundations of Moral Development," *Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health* 13 (1999), 213–214.

⁷² See Kendra Cherry, "What Is Attachment Theory?", 2017. www.verywell.com/what-is-attachment-theory-2795337. Accessed January 23, 2018.

are key to moral development.⁷³ This research needs to be passed on to those employed by educational and religious institutions and all those who are entrusted with the care of the very young and vulnerable, so that they are aware that there are young people dealing with prenatal and perinatal trauma.

This means that the human person is more fragile and complex than may have been previously thought or expected. It is not a given that all people can reason freely or form a conscience. Harsh parenting can lead to poor self-regulation, changing a child's physiology and weakening his or her immunity.⁷⁴

Some people might be set up to be less free to respond to God's will due to intergenerational trauma. This means genetic inheritance is an important factor to consider when it comes to knowing oneself and others. Dr. Gabor Maté is a Canadian physician who specializes in neurology, psychiatry and psychology, as well as the treatment of addiction. He and others have studied the interaction between the emotional environment and a person's physiology. This research reveals that "Genes are turned on or off by the environment. For this reason, the greatest influences on human development, health and behavior are those of the nurturing environment."⁷⁵ The field of epigenetics examines this process of change in gene function.

These changes in physiology can be passed on to future generations, inspiring a wealth of research on family trees and inherited tendencies. Researchers are finding that our ancestors transmit more than just genes and traits. Scientists refer to the transmission of tendencies as "epigenetic inheritance."

With the presence of violence throughout the world due to civil strife and war, we have communities overwhelmed with trauma. Whether it is understanding residential school trauma among Indigenous people in Canada⁷⁶ or the plight of migrants and refugees who have fled war, economic strife and disaster, those engaged in the pastoral care of these individuals must receive some training in the area of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or stress injury. A study of PTSD symptoms in second-generation survivors reveals signs of this condition in their behaviour and in their blood, affecting their cortisol levels.⁷⁷ Those engaged in the corporal works of mercy for the homeless and the refugee should be aware of the emotional

⁷³ See Lombardi, *Experts in Humanity*, 82.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 82–83.

⁷⁵ Gabor Maté, *When the Body Says No: Exploring the Stress-Disease Connection* (Toronto: Wiley, 2011), 229.

⁷⁶ See www.ahf.ca/downloads/healing-trauma-web-eng.pdf.

⁷⁷ See R. Yehouda, S. L. Halligan and M. Blerer, "Cortisol Levels in Adult Offspring Holocaust Survivors," *Journal of Psychoneuroendocrinology*, Vol. 27, no. 1–2 (Jan–Feb 2002): 171–180.

and spiritual pain some of these people carry with them, passing it on to future generations through no fault of their own.

In Canada, the military is reeling due to new statistics that show the armed forces have lost more personnel to suicide than were killed in combat in Afghanistan.⁷⁸ This means that many men and women are suffering due to the experience of combat and are in need of healing and redemption. The type of healing they require cannot be limited to pharmaceutical therapy alone. These men and women have been emotionally and spiritually wounded; they are in need of healing and redemption.

As we can see, there are so many factors we should consider when it comes to understanding human behaviour. Knowledge and love pave the way for merciful behaviour and add some clarity to the complexity of human existence. Instructing individuals is a spiritual work of mercy. This knowledge reveals the fragility of human existence, inspiring Pope Francis to say, “Why them and not me?” during the Jubilee Mass for Prisoners on November 6, 2016. He understands that under the same circumstances, we, too, could be in prison, awaiting God’s mercy and pondering the factors that may have contributed to our actions, knowing the penal system measures repentance in years, not in conversion and remorse, waiting to encounter God’s grace and mercy so we can be made well.

In the book of the Prophet Hosea, God says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (4:6). God desires our divine health, our salvation, and has inspired a variety of disciplines to inform our understanding of the human condition. Moreover, God’s love continues to parent us, to heal us as we strive to be like him.

Conclusion: “Merciful Like the Father”

Jesus taught, “Be merciful just as your Father is merciful” (Lk. 6:36). A culture of mercy accompanies those who need to approach, not isolating them. It touches them with a love that heals and inspires conversion. Mercy means understanding correction as healing, experiencing an encounter that gives spiritual sight. Sadly, for some, shame will keep them from approaching God, having convinced themselves they have lost God’s love due to some past mistake, possibly due to fear, making them feel unworthy of God’s mercy, a mercy that Pope Francis has called our “spiritual medicine.”⁷⁹ Imaging God as a merciful *Abba* heals these wounds, some of which are due to deficits in the parent–child relationship. This reveals a God

⁷⁸ See National Defense and the Canadian Armed Forces, *Suicide and Suicide Prevention in the Canadian Armed Forces* 2016, www.forces.gc.ca. Accessed April 7, 2015.

⁷⁹ Pope Francis, *After the Angelus*, November 17, 2013. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

who searches, runs to meet us, accompanies and loves us, reminding us that “nothing can separate us from the love of God” (Rm. 8:39).

Of this truth Pope Benedict once proclaimed, “Mercy is in reality the core of the Gospel message; it is the name of God himself.”⁸⁰ It is thoughts of unworthiness, however, that keep us from knowing God’s mercy, that keep people from approaching God, from coming out of exile.

Pope Francis’ vision for the Church includes the plan to “mercify” the world, to heal our image of God, a plan that has a therapeutic or Marian dimension that accompanies the juridical or Petrine dimension. This rediscovery of mercy is rooted in a rediscovery or recovery of the Marian dimension, an approach that reads vulnerability in people, assesses and addresses human need, informs the multidisciplinary study of human behaviour, and shows how and why people respond to the juridical dimension the way they do. The Marian tells the Petrine why people act the way they do, diagnoses them and leads them to Jesus for healing so they can embrace the logic of the juridical dimension, knowing its truth will keep them spiritually healthy and safe. The Marian dimension is just as integral to the rescue plan, the “program of life,” as the Petrine dimension. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, models the balance between the two dimensions, revealing this balance in his approach to the vulnerable: they encounter his love first; embrace his truth second. Love leads to the truth just as the “Marian precedes the Petrine.” Rooted in Jesus’ desire to heal us and fulfill the law, the program reminds us that Jesus heals his people through us, his body, in mercy and truth, the Marian and the Petrine. Jesus inspires our gifts and disciplines so we can co-staff the field hospital, restoring God’s people to divine health. This appears to be the vision of Pope Francis: his “program of life.” The ocean of God’s mercy is wide.

⁸⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Regina Caeli* Address, March 30, 2008. www.vatican.va. Accessed January 23, 2018.

Mater Dei Ergo Gratia Plena: **On the Predestination of Mary to Divine Maternity as the Reason for Her Radical Plenitude of Grace**

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Introduction

Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, has the distinct honor among all men to have been approached by an angel of God and called *gratia plena*, “full of grace.” As such, the Church has regarded her as God’s most holy and beloved (mere) creature, the crown jewel of God’s created order. In the following brief article, I hope to outline the necessity of a Thomistic doctrine of Marian predestination for the *scientia* of Mariology and to place special emphasis upon Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP as a particular Thomistic theologian who shows us the way toward the proper understanding of that doctrine.

The Fullness of Mary’s Grace

The very word used by Gabriel at the Annunciation, according to Luke, is *κεχαριτωμένη*, a perfect passive participle which grammatically implies an action that is perfected in the classical sense, that is, a bestowal of grace which is complete and not something admitting of further continuation or greater accomplishment. In Mary, from the first instant of her creation, we see a fullness of grace which surpasses the grace bestowed by God upon all other creatures, be they angels or saints. Seventeenth-century French bishop and theologian Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet goes so far as to say that in Mary we see God bestowing “a love going far beyond nature even to the last reaches of grace.”¹ Indeed, in Pope Pius IX’s apostolic constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* (wherein the Immaculate Conception of Mary is pronounced *ex cathedra*) it is stated that “Above all creatures did God so love her that truly in her was the Father well pleased with singular delight.”² The reason for Mary’s supremacy in grace, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, is found in her unique nearness to Jesus Christ. He says:

¹ Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Sermon on the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin*, §1. Emphasis is mine.

² Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, December 8, 1854.

I answer that, in every genus, the nearer a thing is to the principle, the greater the part which it has in the effect of that principle, whence Dionysius says that angels, being nearer to God, have a greater share than men, in the effects of the Divine goodness. Now Christ is the principle of grace, authoritatively as to His Godhead, instrumentally as to His humanity: whence (Jn. 1:17) it is written: "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." But the Blessed Virgin Mary was nearest to Christ in His humanity: because He received His human nature from her. Therefore, it was due to her to receive a greater fulness of grace than others.³

In other words, the divine maternity of Mary places her in such close proximity to the Lord that He Himself is incarnated through her. Christ is the very principle of the grace bestowed upon all creatures.⁴ As such, the one through whom He comes, the one who participates in His very incarnation and mission coming into existence, is nearest the principle of grace and thus experiences its effects most powerfully. That which is closest to the fire is heated most. Indeed, Edouard Hugon, OP, has expressed this well.

The divine maternity is by its nature higher than adoptive sonship. This latter produces only a spiritual and mystic relationship, whereas the maternity of the Blessed Virgin establishes a relationship of nature, a relationship of consanguinity with Jesus Christ and one of affinity with the entire Trinity. Besides, adoptive sonship does not impose, as it were, such obligations on God: for the divine maternity imposed on Jesus those obligations of justice which ordinary children contract naturally in regard to their parents, and it confers on Mary that dominion and power over Him which are the natural right accompanying the dignity of motherhood.⁵

³ ST III, q. 27, a. 5: "Respondeo dicendum quod, quanto aliquid magis appropinquat principio in quolibet genere, tanto magis participat effectum illius principii, unde dicit Dionysius, IV cap. Cael. Hier., quod Angeli, qui sunt Deo propinquiore, magis participant de bonitatibus divinis quam homines. Christus autem est principium gratiae, secundum divinitatem quidem auctoritative, secundum humanitatem vero instrumentaliter, unde et Ioan. I dicitur, gratia et veritas per Iesum Christum facta est. Beata autem virgo Maria propinquissima Christo fuit secundum humanitatem, quia ex ea accepit humanam naturam. Et ideo prae ceteris maiorem debuit a Christo plenitudinem gratiae obtinere."

⁴ ST III, q. 24, a. 4; ST III, q. 49, a. 1.

⁵ Edouard Hugon, OP, *Marie, Plénie de Grâce*, 5th edition (1926), 63. Translation is that of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP.

Mary shares with the principle of grace an intimacy which surpasses the relationship between Christ and all other creatures. As such, it is fitting that she surpasses all other creatures in grace. The main source of this intimacy is born out of their natural relationship, that of mother and son. However, given the mystery of the hypostatic union wherein Christ's human and divine natures are intimately united, Mary can rightly be called the Theotokos, the mother not just of Jesus Christ as man, but the mother of the one Person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, she can rightly be called the Mother of God. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange says:

By her divine maternity Mary is related really to the Word made flesh. The relation so set up has the uncreated Person of the Incarnate Word as its term, for Mary is the Mother of Jesus, who is God. It is not precisely the humanity of Jesus which is the term of the relation, but rather Jesus Himself in Person: it is He and not His humanity that is Son of Mary. Hence Mary, reaching, as Cajetan says, even to the frontiers of the Divinity, belongs terminally to the hypostatic order, to the order of the personal union of the Humanity of Jesus to the Uncreated Word.⁶

We can see that the divine maternity of Mary is the cause of her being full of grace (and not the other way around).

The Predestination of Mary to Divine Motherhood

Ineffabilis Deus asserts that, “from the very beginning, and before time began, the eternal Father chose and prepared for his only-begotten Son a Mother in whom the Son of God would become incarnate and from whom, in the blessed fullness of time, he would be born into this world.”⁷ Moreover, *Lumen Gentium* affirms that Mary was, “predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God...”⁸ The predestination of Mary to divine motherhood is but itself one aspect of the larger providential plan of the Incarnation and the salvation of humanity, which is the source and *ratio* of Mary's own predestination to divine motherhood (and ultimately, pleni-

⁶ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour*, trans. Bernard J. Kelly, CSSp (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2012), 15.

⁷ *Ineffabilis Deus*. See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §488: “God sent forth his Son,” but to prepare a body for him, he wanted the free co-operation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, “a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.”

⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, §61.

tude in grace). God's plan for creation and man's relation to Him is centered around the gratuitous gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. As *Ineffabilis Deus* states:

God Ineffable...having foreseen from all eternity the lamentable wretchedness of the entire human race which would result from the sin of Adam, decreed, by a plan hidden from the centuries, to complete the first work of his goodness by a mystery yet more wondrously sublime through the Incarnation of the Word. This he decreed in order that man who, contrary to the plan of Divine Mercy had been led into sin by the cunning malice of Satan, should not perish; and in order that what had been lost in the first Adam would be gloriously restored in the Second Adam.⁹

It is evident that God willed Mary to be a necessary piece of this divine plan. It is in and through this ark that the Savior would come to redeem mankind. Garrigou-Lagrange states:

The eternal predestination of Jesus included not only the Incarnation itself as object but also *all the circumstances of time and place in which it would be realized*, and especially the one expressed by the Nicene Creed in the words: "Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine." By the same eternal decree, therefore, Jesus was predestined to be Son of the Most High and Mary to be Mother of God."¹⁰

This is the role for which God first predestines Mary. As we shall see, all of her plenitude of grace and holiness, gifts from God, are bestowed *because of* that title which is most proper and formal to her, Theotokos. Indeed, Mary possesses many titles of great dignity: Queen of Heaven, Mother of the Church, Seat of Wisdom, etc., however, none of these titles surpasses in dignity that title which allows her to reach "even to the frontiers of the Divinity" by a relation to the very Person of the Son. Indeed, all Marian titles are intelligible only insofar as Mary is first the Theotokos. As such, Garrigou-Lagrange rightly states, "the divine maternity is therefore, as is commonly taught, the foundation, source, and root of all Mary's graces privileges, both those that preceded it as preparation, and those that accompanied it or followed from it as consequence."¹¹

⁹ *Ineffabilis Deus*.

¹⁰ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Savior*, 6–7.

¹¹ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Savior*, 24.

A Short Note on the Nature of Predestination

It is beyond the scope of this short work to delve into the details and controversies surrounding the tradition of predestination within Christianity. However, given the ease with which the doctrine may be misunderstood and also its fundamental importance in the doctrine of Mary's plenitude of grace, a few words ought to be stated.

Generally speaking, the relation between divine causality and human freedom admits of two basic approaches: incompatibilism and compatibilism. These two theories diverge precisely in their definition of human freedom, resulting in the former rendering divine causality of human acts incompatible with human freedom and the latter seeing divine causality and human freedom as entirely compatible. For the incompatibilist the human will is seen, as Steven Long puts, as a "no fly zone" for divine causality.¹² Free choices, it is said, require a lack of external influence, even from God. Were God to directly move a creature to a particular act, it would be impossible that such an act could be freely executed by the creature. Historically, within Catholicism this view has been associated most prominently with Luis de Molina, SJ, and his adherents.¹³

St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine (as well as, I would argue the majority of the Catholic tradition) hold to the compatibilist doctrine. While it may sometimes be true that an external influence which moves one to a particular act would mitigate human liberty, God is able to work upon the will in a way which effects and preserves human liberty rather than doing violence to it. Unlike a fellow creature, God is the very creator, architect, and sustainer of the human will. As such, He can move the creature not just to particular act X, but He can move that the creature freely co-will particular act X with God. God can work interiorly on the will to preserve free choice and cooperation with God's motion on the will. This is why St. Thomas states:

For an act to be violent it is not enough that its principle be extrinsic, but we must add "without the concurrence of him that suffers violence." This does not happen when the will is moved by an exterior principle: for it is the will that wills, though moved by another. But this movement would be violent, if it were coun-

¹² Steven A. Long, "St. Thomas Aquinas, Divine Causality, and the Mystery of Predestination," in *Thomism and Predestination: Principles and Disputations*, ed. Steven A. Long, Roger W. Nutt, and Thomas Joseph White, OP (Ave Maria FL: Sapientia Press, 2016), 75 – 76.

¹³ See Luis de Molina, SJ, *On Divine Foreknowledge: (Part IV of the Concordia)*, trans by Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988) and Thomas P. Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

ter to the movement of the will: which in the present case is impossible, since then the will would will and not will the same thing.¹⁴

How is this possible? In short, God can move a contingent thing contingently. In other words, God may preserve the contingent character of the human action. The human will is inclined toward Goodness Itself *by necessity*. If the human will were to “be offered an object which is good universally and from every point of view, the will tends to it of necessity, if it wills anything at all, since it cannot will the opposite”¹⁵ says St. Thomas precisely because the very nature of the will is to tend toward that which is good.¹⁶ Thus, when God moves the creature to perform particular action X via grace, this movement does not remove the potency for the creature to do otherwise precisely because action X is a particular good and not *universaliter bonum*. The free creature retains the real potency to reject the movement, and therefore God does not move the creature by necessity. If the creature is not moved by necessity then it retains true freedom of choice. It could will or not will.

The Divine will extends not only to the doing of something by the thing which He moves, but also to its being done in a way which is fitting to the nature of that thing. And therefore it would be more repugnant to the Divine motion, for the will to be moved of necessity, which is not fitting to its nature; than for it to be moved freely, which is becoming to its nature.¹⁷

However, God’s providential plan is always executed infallibly, not because God moves the creature necessarily (against its freedom of choice) but because God is simple and omnipotent. Therefore, whatever God wills will certainly come about, otherwise we would be required to state that God is frustrated by the wills of creatures and that He does not really have control over the world and what hap-

¹⁴ ST I-II, q. 9, a. 4, ad 2: “Ad secundum dicendum quod hoc non sufficit ad rationem violenti, quod principium sit extra, sed oportet addere quod nil conferat vim patiens. Quod non contingit, dum voluntas ab exteriori movetur, nam ipsa est quae vult, ab alio tamen mota. Esset autem motus iste violentus, si esset contrarius motui voluntatis. Quod in proposito esse non potest, quia sic idem vellet et non vellet.”

See also ScG, Book III, ch. 88.

¹⁵ ST I-II, q. 10, a. 2: “Unde si proponatur aliquod obiectum voluntati quod sit universaliter bonum et secundum omnem considerationem, ex necessitate voluntas in illud tendet, si aliquid velit, non enim poterit velle oppositum.”

¹⁶ ST I-II, q. 8, a. 1.

¹⁷ ST I-II, q. 10, a. 4, ad 1: “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod voluntas divina non solum se extendit ut aliquid fiat per rem quam movet, sed ut etiam eo modo fiat quo congruit naturae ipsius. Et ideo magis repugnaret divinae motioni, si voluntas ex necessitate moveretur, quod suae naturae non competit; quam si moveretur libere, prout competit suae naturae.”

pens in it.¹⁸ It would be the world which dictated to God what would happen, and not the other way around. Such a notion would destroy the basic conception of classical theism itself. As such, St. Thomas says that, “If God moves the will to

¹⁸ Of course, here we must make a brief note regarding the divine will. On the one hand, we know that God *in a certain way* wills many goods to creatures which do not actually result, for instance, the good of salvation is willed for all men though it would appear that not all men are saved. On the other hand, we know that what God wills *simpliciter* must follow, given the simplicity and omnipotence of the one willing. In order to make sense of this, we ought to employ the distinction of the antecedent and consequent will, a distinction used by St. Thomas (and drawn from St. John Damascene). ST I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1: “To understand this we must consider that everything, in so far as it is good, is willed by God. A thing taken in its primary sense, and absolutely considered, may be good or evil, and yet when some additional circumstances are taken into account, by a consequent consideration may be changed into the contrary. Thus that a man should live is good; and that a man should be killed is evil, absolutely considered. But if in a particular case we add that a man is a murderer or dangerous to society, to kill him is a good; that he live is an evil. Hence it may be said of a just judge, that antecedently he wills all men to live; but consequently wills the murderer to be hanged. In the same way God antecedently wills all men to be saved, but consequently wills some to be damned, as His justice exacts. Nor do we will simply, what we will antecedently, but rather we will it in a qualified manner; for the will is directed to things as they are in themselves, and in themselves they exist under particular qualifications. Hence we will a thing simply inasmuch as we will it when all particular circumstances are considered; and this is what is meant by willing consequentially. Thus it may be said that a just judge wills simply the hanging of a murderer, but in a qualified manner he would will him to live, to wit, inasmuch as he is a man. Such a qualified will may be called a willingness rather than an absolute will. Thus it is clear that whatever God simply wills takes place; although what He wills antecedently may not take place.”

“Ad cuius intellectum, considerandum est quod unumquodque, secundum quod bonum est, sic est volitum a Deo. Aliquid autem potest esse in prima sui consideratione, secundum quod absolute consideratur, bonum vel malum, quod tamen, prout cum aliquo adiuncto consideratur, quae est consequens consideratio eius, e contrario se habet. Sicut hominem vivere est bonum, et hominem occidi est malum, secundum absolutam considerationem, sed si addatur circa aliquem hominem, quod sit homicida, vel vivens in periculum multitudinis, sic bonum est eum occidi, et malum est eum vivere. Unde potest dici quod iudex iustus antecederet vult omnem hominem vivere; sed consequenter vult homicidam suspendi. Similiter Deus antecederet vult omnem hominem salvari; sed consequenter vult quosdam damnari, secundum exigentiam suae iustitiae. Neque tamen id quod antecederet volumus, simpliciter volumus, sed secundum quid. Quia voluntas comparatur ad res, secundum quod in seipsis sunt, in seipsis autem sunt in particulari, unde simpliciter volumus aliquid, secundum quod volumus illud consideratis omnibus circumstantiis particularibus, quod est consequenter velle. Unde potest dici quod iudex iustus simpliciter vult homicidam suspendi, sed secundum quid vellet eum vivere, scilicet in quantum est homo. Unde magis potest dici velleitas, quam absoluta voluntas. Et sic patet quod quidquid Deus simpliciter vult, fit; licet illud quod antecederet vult, non fiat.”

See also Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa*, trans. Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. (Ex Fontibus Press, 2015), Ch. 19 and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*, trans. Patrick Cummins, O.S.B. (Ex Fontibus Press, 2009), 341 – 342.

anything, it is incompatible with this supposition, that the will be not moved thereto. But it is not impossible simply. Consequently it does not follow that the will is moved by God necessarily.”¹⁹ As such, creaturely freedom is not mitigated by divine causality but truly caused by it. When we are moved by grace to some holy action, we are made to be more and not less free.

This applies to the predestination of Mary to divine motherhood. This is how the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* can state both that “from all eternity God chose [Mary] for the mother of his Son” and that “he wanted [her] free co-operation.”²⁰ The infallible nature of divine providence and the execution of God’s plan in the world are entirely compatible with the liberty which he desires for his free creatures.

If this were not the case then we would have to posit one of two absurd consequences: either 1) Mary is inhuman or 2) God’s primordial plan of Incarnation and salvation was fallible, rendering its completion to be effectively a stroke of good luck. If man is by nature a rational and thus free creature, and if divine causality obliterated human freedom, then Mary, who was so eminently moved by God to good works and holiness, upheld from all defect and sin, would be not only not human, but she would be less than human precisely because she was perpetually moved by God to the utmost of holiness. Or, Mary would retain her holiness and the merit of her good actions, but only at the expense of the infallibility of the divine plan. We would be forced to maintain that the central moment of the entire created order hung precariously on the words of a small, scared girl in Nazareth two millennia ago. God waited with passive anticipation to see whether He would be able to execute His own divine will which was subject to being frustrated and overcome by Mary. Moreover, when she responded well to God’s grace, that she responded well could be attributed to her *apart from God and grace* (the grace being given by God, but that it be accepted and would have been due to Mary alone). The very consideration of these two options should suffice to show to the Christian their absurdity and thus the necessity of the compatibility between God’s causality and Mary’s free choice in her actions.

Indeed, God is not only the primary cause of our predestination to glory, God is the primary source of every last drop of good which emanates from our will. All good actions come from God as first cause. Indeed, St. Thomas tells us that “God

¹⁹ ST I-II, q. 10, a. 4, ad 3: “Ad tertium dicendum quod, si Deus movet voluntatem ad aliquid, impossibile est huic positioni quod voluntas ad illud non moveatur. Non tamen est impossibile simpliciter. Unde non sequitur quod voluntas a Deo ex necessitate moveatur.”

²⁰ CCC, §488.

is the cause of every action and He operates in every agent.”²¹ Moreover, St. Thomas also states that, “Of course, acts of choice and movements of the will are governed immediately by God,”²² and that “God alone directly works on the choice of man...”²³

Since all good comes primarily from He who is Goodness itself, the sole source of goodness, St. Thomas famously states that predestination is *ante praevisa merita*, which means that predestination is the cause of our goodness, not the effect. St. Thomas says, “Thus, it is impossible that the whole of the effect of predestination in general should have any cause as coming from us; because whatsoever is in man disposing him towards salvation, is all included under the effect of predestination; even the preparation for grace.”²⁴ In other words, if God is truly the source of all good, then it is impossible for us to be first good without God, such that God might foresee who will act well in life and predestine them accordingly. God does not foresee who will be good and who will be wicked, doling out grace to fit categories of holiness which escape and pre-exist His influence. Instead, predestination and the grace of God are first, causing whatever good habits and works we accomplish. It is impossible that one could be foreseen as good if one is not made to be good via the gift of grace. This is why St. Paul reminds us, “Who confers distinction upon you? What do you possess that you have not received? But if you have received it, why are you boasting as if you did not receive it?” (1 Cor 4:7). Our Lord has spoken similarly: “Without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Indeed, this is why St. Augustine has written:

[God] promised not from the power of our will but from His own predestination. For He promised what He Himself would do, not what men would do. Because, although men do those good things which pertain to God’s worship, He Himself makes them to do what He has commanded; it is not they that cause Him to do what He has promised. Otherwise the fulfilment of God’s promises would not be in the power of God, but in that

²¹ ScG, III, Chapter 89, §7: “...Deus est causa omnis actionis, et operatur in omni agente. Est igitur causa motuum voluntatis.”

²² ScG III, Chap. 91, §2: “Nam electiones et voluntatum motus *immediate* a Deo disponuntur.” Emphasis is mine.

²³ ScG, III, Chap. 92, §2: “...Deus solus directe ad electionem hominis operetur...”

²⁴ ST I, q. 23, a. 5: “Et sic impossibile est quod totus praedestinationis effectus in communi habeat aliquam causam ex parte nostra. Quia quidquid est in homine ordinans ipsum in salutem, comprehenditur totum sub effectu praedestinationis, etiam ipsa praeparatio ad gratiam...”

of men; and thus what was promised by God to Abraham would be given to Abraham by men themselves.²⁵

Let us recall that none of this excludes our human free will. It is the wondrous nature of grace and divine motion to good actions that it makes us to act freely and not as robots. Such is the glory of the saints, that they cooperate with God's grace and are themselves co-causes with God of their good actions (God as the primary cause and man as the secondary cause). Thus, the wise Christian finds the golden mean between two extremes: spiritual pride in one's good actions, on the one hand, and rejection of the importance of good works, on the other. In the middle lies the recognition of the need for faith to inform every possible movement of our will *and* a recognition and reverence for the fact that the perfecting of our will is something which can only be done by God. We are, indeed, radically contingent upon God for all that we have, and thus we implore Him to, "Turn away your face from my sins; blot out all my iniquities. A clean heart create for me, God; renew within me a steadfast spirit," (Ps 51: 11 – 12).

If God is the primary cause of even our smallest inclinations toward the good then how much more must this be true of Mary's fiat, that blessed choice of abandonment whereby God's entire plan of Incarnation and salvation was made possible? Indeed, in this moment we see God's free choice of Mary to bear the Son of Man. God is not forced to choose Mary, but chooses her out of gratuitous love. He has not passively responded to her foreseen holiness, but has chosen her to become holy through His divine love. Moreover, Mary responds to this calling with complete freedom as well, choosing to abandon herself, however terrifying the implications, to God's providential plan. Garrigou says well: "Hence her liberty, following the example of that of Jesus, was a faithful and most pure image of God's liberty, which is at once sovereign and incapable of sin."²⁶ Truly Mary's fiat stands out as a model for the moral and spiritual life, a picture of the great love story between God and man.

The Fittingness of Mary's Plenitude of Grace

It is the call for Mary to become the Mother of God which is the source of the greatness of her dignity and grace. As Garrigou-Lagrange has put it, "...the divine maternity, considered in isolation from Mary's other dignities, is the end and reason of her fullness of grace, and is therefore higher than it."²⁷ Given that she would become not just the Queen of the Church or the Queen of Heaven, but that she

²⁵ Saint Augustine, *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, Chap. 19.

²⁶ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 52.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

should have a *real relation* to the Second Person of the Trinity itself, that she should become the very Mother of God, it is, of course, fitting that God would decorate, ornament, and perfume her with an abundance of graces, graces which transcend those of any other creature, including the angels. She is closest to the principle of being and goodness, and thus she is showered with being and goodness, as the one who sits closest to the fire is warmed most. Garrigou-Lagrange says:

If, finally, she was predestined from all eternity to the highest degree of glory after Jesus, the reason is that she was predestined first of all to be His most worthy mother, and to retain that title during eternity after having enjoyed it in time. The saints who contemplate in Heaven the sublime degree of glory, so far surpassing that of the angels, in which Mary is enthroned, know that the reason why she was predestined to it is that she might be and might remain for eternity the most worthy Mother of God: *Mater Creatoris, Mater Salvatoris, Virgo Dei Genetrix*.²⁸

Garrigou-Lagrange even contemplates how deep the reverence of the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation must have been. Though he was indeed an angel of God, enjoying the very vision of God known only to the blessed in heaven, even he must recognize the eminence of Mary's grace. "And it is of this grace, germ and promise of glory, that the angel spoke when he said to Mary: 'Hail, full of grace.' Gazing at Mary's soul, he saw that, though he himself was in possession of the beatific vision, Mary's grace and charity far surpassed his for she possessed them in the degree required to become at that instant the Mother of God."²⁹ Continuing his musings on the thoughts of Gabriel, Garrigou-Lagrange says, "You are more intimate with God than I. He is about to become your Son, whereas I am but His servant."³⁰

The Many and Pre-Eminent Graces of Mary: The Immaculate Conception and Sanctifying Grace

Chief among the graces bestowed upon Mary as flowing from her divine maternity is the Immaculate Conception whereby Mary's nature was preserved from every defect attributable to sin and the fallen nature of the rest of mankind. All men are born into a state of divorce from God which demands that the healing salve of grace be applied by the hands of the Savior, Physician for the soul. And

²⁸ Ibid., 19.

²⁹ Ibid., 29.

³⁰ Ibid., 56.

yet, Mary is unique in her having been conceived, from the very first moment of her existence, in friendship with God.³¹ As such, we may state that Mary was conceived already in habitual or sanctifying grace.³²

From this truth flows a number of implications for Mary's natural virtue and perfection. The results of original sin are manifold: a removal of original justice and thus the loss of immortality, the clouding of the intellect, and the perversion of the subordinated relation between the intellect and our emotions/passions. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, we can address many of these defects under the title of *concupiscence* which now makes it easy to fall into error and sin. "As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called 'concupiscence')." ³³ But since Mary was not subject to this fall, she was not subject to its moral effects. As Garrigou-Lagrange says, "Since she had been preserved from original sin and its baneful effects, concupiscence and darkness of understanding, her body did not weigh down her mind but rather served it." ³⁴ In short, Mary is an exemplar for what a non-divine humanity looks like (apart from death, as we shall see) as preserved in the state of human nature which God had antecedently intended for man. In Mary, we see a mind always unclouded in apprehension and judgment, emotions which are always inclined toward the good and brought under the governance of reason, and a pure, simple love for that which is good and beautiful.

However, sanctifying grace is not merely the return to a healed nature and the state of original justice found in Eden. It is not simply a return to our natural end of happiness in limited communication and understanding of God. No, God responds to our sin with the gift of gratuitous elevation to participation in His divine life, where we are made perfect such that we can partake not just in communication

³¹ And yet, this should not be taken to mean that Mary is in no need of Christ *as Savior*. The Savior may save in two ways: 1) to prevent harm from being done to the creature to which it is subject by nature, and 2) to heal that harm which it has permitted to be done. While it is true that Mary was in no need of healing, her very fullness of grace is marked by salvation from the threat of human defect and sin, from which she has indeed been saved. As such, Garrigou-Lagrange says, "Hence it was most becoming that the perfect Redeemer should, by His merits, preserve His Mother from original sin and all actual sin," (*The Mother of the Saviour*, 43).

³² See Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 33: "It follows therefore that Mary was not preserved free from every stain of original sin otherwise than by receiving sanctifying grace into her soul from the first instant of her conception. Thus she was conceived in that state of justice and holiness which is the effect of the divine friendship as opposed to the divine malediction, and in consequence she was withdrawn from the slavery of the devil and subjection to the law of concupiscence."

³³ CCC, §418.

³⁴ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 30.

with God (as Adam and Eve enjoyed in the Garden) but entrance into the divine life of God itself, a direct intimacy with God *in His Essence*, an end which is completely transcendent from man's natural end.³⁵ This gratuitous calling toward a *supernatural* end requires supernatural gifts, especially those of faith, hope, and love, the theological virtues. St. Thomas tells us that, "That which is above man's nature is distinct from that which is according to his nature. But the theological virtues are above man's nature,"³⁶ and thus "man needed to receive in addition something supernatural to direct him to a supernatural end."³⁷ And as Mary received the highest plenitude of grace among all mere creatures, she possessed the highest degree of faith, hope, and love, graces elevating her above the natural order into the supernatural. Garrigou-Lagrange says, "Thus Mary enjoyed a special assistance of Divine Providence. This assistance – more effective than even that which belonged to the state of innocence – preserved all her faculties from faults, and kept her soul in a state of the most complete generosity."³⁸

Moreover, this sanctifying grace would include the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and all other infused virtues.³⁹ Since, "all seven [gifts] exist in every soul in the state of grace in a degree proportionate to its charity,"⁴⁰ and Mary, as we have already stated, possesses in a most efficacious way the theological virtues, we may conclude that Mary also possesses the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a superabundant way.

The Many and Pre-Eminent Graces of Mary: Her Growth in Holiness

However, unlike Jesus Christ, Mary's perfection increased and multiplied throughout her life. Garrigou-Lagrange says, "Of Our Blessed Lord alone can it be said that He never grew in grace or charity, for He alone received the complete fullness of them both at His conception in consequence of the hypostatic union," to which Mary is closest related but in which she does not directly participate as a

³⁵ See Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004) and Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

³⁶ ST I-II, q. 62, a. 2: "Sed contra, id quod est supra naturam hominis, distinguitur ab eo quod est secundum naturam hominis. Sed virtutes theologice sunt super naturam hominis..."

³⁷ ST I-II, q. 62, a. 3: "...aliquid homini supernaturaliter adderetur, ad ordinandum ipsum in finem supernaturalem."

³⁸ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 52.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

mere creature.⁴¹ In this, Mary is like us, always reaching out toward a fuller apprehension, appreciation, and assimilation of the divine nature in ourselves. And even in this, she acts as a model and exemplar insofar as she grew in holiness without the hindrances of a clouded intellect, raging passions, and other distractions which beguile fallen man. Garrigou-Lagrance says, “Mary’s progress was the most continuous of all. It encountered no obstacle, was not halted nor delayed by attachment to self or to the things of this world. It was the most rapid of all, because the rate at which it commenced was determined by Mary’s fullness of grace and therefore surpassed that of all the saints.”⁴²

The Many and Pre-Eminent Graces of Mary: Her Perpetual Virginity

As Mary’s fullness of grace follows from her divine maternity, so too is her perpetual virginity fitting given her divine maternity (which, as we have said, is a part of the predestination of the Incarnation). It is beyond the scope of this present work to consider all of the reasons why St. Thomas affirms the fittingness of the virginal birth of Christ, especially since these wade into the question of St. Thomas’ treatment of the Immaculate Conception which is complex and admits of some disagreement among the Thomistic commentators.⁴³ Needless to say, one of the reasons given by St. Thomas for the fittingness of Mary’s virginity is that it would be most proper for Christ to have no earthly, biological father, and that his only father be the First Person of the Trinity.⁴⁴ Moreover, Christ’s virginal birth might “appear as an exemplar” for the rebirth required from all of those who follow Christ. The rebirth of the Christian comes about through a virginal and spiritual

⁴¹ Ibid., 74.

⁴² Ibid., 76.

⁴³ See Garrigou-Lagrance, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 45–49 wherein Garrigou-Lagrance argues that Thomas’ teaching underwent development on this issue, and that there is good reason to believe that St. Thomas had embraced the teaching essentially as defined in *Ineffabilis Deus* by the end of his life. Moreover, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrance explains the proper intention behind St. Thomas’ most famous words on this matter while also maintaining that Thomas “did not distinguish sufficiently the debt [of original sin] from actually incurring the stain,” (47). Moreover, to Fr. Garrigou-Lagrance’s credit, he praises Duns Scotus for his correct teaching regarding this doctrine: “It is Scotus’s flory (Thomists should consider it a point of honour to admit that their adversary was right in this matter) to have shown the supreme becomingness of this privilege [of the Immaculate Conception]...” (42).

⁴⁴ ST III, q. 28, a. 1: “Primo, propter mittentis patris dignitatem conservandam. Cum enim Christus sit verus et naturalis Dei filius, non fuit conveniens quod alium patrem haberet quam Deum, ne Dei dignitas transferretur ad alium.”

(rather than carnal) spouse in the Church.⁴⁵ St. Thomas here cites St. Augustine, who says, “It behooved that our Head, by a notable miracle, should be born, after the flesh, of a virgin, that He might thereby signify that His members would be born, after the Spirit, of a virgin Church.”⁴⁶

Of course, Mary’s virginity is perpetual for she remains a virgin even after the conception and birth of Our Lord. Here St. Thomas gives four arguments of fittingness for Mary’s perpetual virginity: 1) as Christ is the only Son of the Father, so ought he to be the only son of his mother; 2) Mary’s participation in procreation through the conjugal act would be opposed to the dignity of the Holy Spirit who finds special sanctuary in the womb of Mary as that place wherein He “had formed the flesh of Christ;” 3) that this would imply a certain ungratefulness on the part of Mary regarding that Son which she already has and that miracle whereby she conceived without intercourse; 4) that it would have been an “extreme presumption” (*maximam praesumptionem*) for Joseph to have taken away that special grace of virginity given to her by God.⁴⁷ As we can see, all of the reasons for Mary’s virginity, not only at the time of Christ’s conception, but throughout the entirety of her life, are rooted in God effecting a fitting mother for Christ.

The Many and Pre-Eminent Graces of Mary: Her Suffering and Death

After considering just some of the many and pre-eminent graces of Mary, we are left with one particular question: if Mary was truly free from original sin, free from personal sin, and filled to the brim with holiness unlike any other mere creature, why did she suffer so? Any parent can only imagine the horror of having a child ripped from them, falsely accused, spat upon, stripped, mocked, and brutally killed. Moreover, perhaps harder for us to understand, Mary certainly grieved, like her son, for the mass of sin of which made Christ’s self-sacrifice necessary. Garrigou-Lagrange says:

But to know just how far grief for sin can go, one must turn to the heart of Mary. Her grief sprang from an unequalled love for God, for Jesus crucified, and for souls – a love which surpassed that of the greatest saints, and even of all the saints united, a love which had never ceased to grow, a love which had never been

⁴⁵ ST III, q. 28, a. 1: “Quarto, propter ipsum finem incarnationis Christi, qui ad hoc fuit ut homines renascerentur in filios Dei, non ex voluntate carnis, neque ex voluntate viri, sed ex Deo, idest ex Dei virtute. Cuius rei exemplar apparere debuit in ipsa conceptione Christi.”

⁴⁶ St. Augustine, *De Sanct. Virg.*

⁴⁷ ST III, q. 28, a. 3.

restrained by the slightest fault or imperfection. If such was Mary's love, what must her grief have been!⁴⁸

This sentiment is rendered beautifully in the prayerful words of the *Stabat Mater*:

Quis non posset contristari
Matrem Christi contemplari
dolentum cum filio?

Pro peccatis suae gentis
vidit Iesum in tormentis
et flagellis subditum.

Vidit suum dulcem natum
moriendo desolatum
dum emisit spiritum.

Who would be unable to feel compassion on beholding Christ's
Mother suffering with her Son?

She saw Jesus in torment and subjected to lashing for the sins of
His people

She saw her sweet child dying, forsaken, as He gave up his spir-
it.⁴⁹

The same mystery of suffering in holiness arises when one contemplates the death of Mary. Of course, for the Mother of God, death was not a punishment for sin, since she was sinless. It is noteworthy that there is disagreement among the tradition whether Mary did indeed die. St. Thomas holds that she did die,⁵⁰ as did many of the Church Fathers, such as St. John Damascene.⁵¹ However, it is beyond the scope of this brief work to consider the arguments of those who held otherwise. However, if she did indeed die, why?

⁴⁸ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 104.

⁴⁹ Diversely attributed to Jacopone da Todi, Pope Innocent III, and St. Bonaventure. Translation is mine, though based on the literal translation derived from www.stabatmater.info.

⁵⁰ *Expositio Salutationis angelicae*, a. 1: "The Blessed Virgin was spared this penalty [that the body turn to dust], for her body was raised up into heaven, and so we believe that after her death she was revived and transported into heaven."

"Et ab hac immunis fuit beata virgo, quia cum corpore assumpta est in caelum. Credimus enim quod post mortem resuscitata fuerit, et portata in caelum."

⁵¹ See *Three Sermons on the Dormition of the Virgin*.

First, while Mary was not guilty of sin, she did not receive that special grace given to Adam and Eve in the Garden whereby their bodies would not corrupt and fall into death. For St. Thomas, death is *natural* for animals, including man (as rational animal), insofar as the body is composed of matter, and matter naturally corrupts.⁵² As such, Garrigou-Lagrange states, “Thus the deaths of Jesus and Mary were consequences of the inherent weakness of human nature left to itself and unsustained by any preternatural gift.”⁵³

But as with Mary’s suffering at the foot of the Crucified Lord, her death is fitting given her radical communion with her son. As strange as it may seem, we may list even Mary’s suffering and death among the plenitude of her graces. In her dying, Mary possesses radical “participation in the Cross of Jesus,”⁵⁴ handing herself over to the same death as her son, bearing the burdens of that death which, like her son, she did not warrant. Such an embrace of death consummates her communion with Jesus Christ. Garrigou-Lagrange points to the words of St. Francis de Sales:

The Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, died of love for her Son....
If the early Christians were said to have but one heart and one soul because of their perfect mutual love, if St. Paul lived no longer for himself but Christ lived in him because of the intense union of his heart with the heart of his Master... how much more true is it that the Blessed Virgin and her Son had but one soul, one heart, and one life... so that her Son lived in her.”⁵⁵

We return again to the contemplative words of the *Stabat Mater*, as theological-ly robust as they are spiritually edifying. In the prayer below, the penitent soul calls out to the Blessed Mother to help him unite himself with the Crucified Lord. Mary is called upon precisely because it is she who has most perfectly exemplified how to do the following.

Fac ut portem Christi mortem
Passionis fac consortem
Et plagas recolare.

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
Fac me cruce inebriari,
Et cruore Filii.

⁵² ST I-II, q. 85, aa. 5 & 6; *De malo*, q. 5, a. 5.

⁵³ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 125.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵⁵ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 126. Cited from St. Francis de Sales, *Homiliae duae de dormitione Virginis Mariae*.

Grant that I may bear the death of Christ,
 the fate of his Passion,
 and contemplate His wounds.

Grant that I may be wounded with His wounds,
 inebriated by the cross
 and by His Blood.

In a mysterious way, it is precisely Mary's holiness and plenitude of grace which makes her suffering and death fitting, not because she had merited the suffering of a grieving mother or the rending of soul from body, but because she, in all things, is but a window of clarity into the life of her son. As he suffered and died, so did she. As the members of Christ's Body suffer and die in him, so does she. Her anguish in life, unstained by sin, is all that much more meritorious insofar it embraces that which is undeserved, all *for the sake of* God's love for men, even those men who spit upon and mock God. Garrigou-Lagrange says so well:

There is one wonderful thing, one delight of contemplatives, which we should not overlook. It is that the privilege of the Immaculate Conception and the fullness of grace did not withdraw Mary from pain, but rather made her all the more sensitive to suffer from contact with sin, the greatest of evils. Precisely because she was so pure, precisely because her heart was consumed by the Love of God, Mary suffered pains to which our imperfection makes us insensible.⁵⁶

Conclusion

Though much more can be said regarding the plenitude of the grace of Mary, it should be clear that her holiness, her very being, is more radically connected with God than any other mere creature in creation. All of her honorific names, her myriad of perfections, her adornment in an abundance of graces, etc. all flow directly from that which most properly describes her, *Mother of God*. This title far surpasses the dignity of Christ's bishops, popes, and saints. Recall that at Pentecost, it is Mary who is present, uniting the Apostles at the birth of the Church, acting as their (and now our) mother. Mary herself did not receive the office of priest or bishop, but as Garrigou-Lagrange reminds us, "had Mary received the priestly ordination... she would have received something *less* than what is implied in her title of Mother of God."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 45.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

God did not wait upon Mary to see if she would be a worthy mother for Him. God did not risk a mother who would be unfitting as an ark of the new covenant. These notions would imply that God waits upon man to be good apart from Him, rather than being for us the source of our every good, just as He is the source for our very being *hic et nunc*. Moreover, these notions would imply a separation between God and His mother, a potency for division, tension, and even the thwarting of the divine plan of the Incarnation. It is God Himself who, in the most proper sense of the word, *predestined* Mary to *freely be* that luminous gate through which Christ entered the world and through which the world can enter Christ. The predestination of Mary to be the Mother of God made her supremely fitting for her plenitude of grace. This showering of graces upon Mary effected her *free participation* in the mystery of the Incarnation. As such, this doctrine of Mary's predestination admits of no distance between God and his Mother, but instead causes their profound unity. For this reason, Garrigou-Lagrange places his finger directly upon the centrality of this doctrine for our every understanding of who Mary is.

For the divine maternity, being but a real relation to the Incarnate Word, is not enough of itself to sanctify Mary. But it called out for, or demanded, the fullness of grace which was granted her to raise her to the level of her singular mission. She could not have been predestined to be any other kind of mother to the Saviour than a worthy one. Everything follows from that certain truth. All Mariology is dominated by it...⁵⁸

All Mariology ought to, therefore, incorporate and contemplate the indispensable character of this doctrine. The simple and sweet power of God to work on and with humans for the sake of truth and goodness reached an apex in His own mother. Like the sun, God is the sole source of that heat which warms the world and causes life to be. God is the sole source of being. And as being is convertible with goodness, God is the sole source of goodness. Can it be a surprise, then, that He predestined, that is, prepared, such a lovely creature as his mother to be as she was? Is it a surprise that she was so full of goodness, the perfections of being, withheld from mixing in any way with defect and non-being? Is it a surprise that that which is nearest the sun is so enveloped in its warmth? This woman "clothed in the sun" (Rev 12:1) is indeed clothed in divinity.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 23.

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Our Lady's Presence in the Mass in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II

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I. Introduction*

The link between the celebration of the Eucharist and the commemoration of the Mother of God is one that is already found in the earliest Christian documents on the Eucharistic Liturgy and it is more than probable that the oral tradition antedates the written, with roots deriving from the era of the Apostles.¹ The ancient practice is echoed in the sound instinct of the faithful that Mary cannot be separated from her Son, especially at the moment when his sacrifice is being renewed on the altar and is confirmed in the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which explicitly states that

in celebrating this annual cycle of the mysteries of Christ, the holy Church venerates with special love the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, united by an inseparable bond with the saving work of her Son [*In hoc annuo mysteriorum Christi circulo celebrando, Sancta Ecclesia Beatam Mariam Dei Genetricem cum peculiari amore veneratur, quae indissolubili nexu cum Filii sui opere salutari coniungitur*].²

In fact, this solemn statement reflects with accuracy the unique position accorded to Mary in the venerable Roman Canon (First Eucharistic Prayer) where she is commemorated in an altogether special way: *Communicantes, et memoriam venerantes, in primis gloriosa semper Virginis Maria, Genetricis Dei et Domini nostri Iesu Christi*.³

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¹ Cf. Giuseppe Crocetti, S.S.S., *Maria e l'Eucaristia nella Chiesa* (Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 2001)149-160 and the many excellent articles on this theme in Ermanno M. Toniolo, O.S.M. (ed.), *Maria e l'Eucaristia* (Rome: Centro di Cultura Mariana «Madre della Chiesa», 2000) and *Liturgie dell'Oriente Cristiano a Roma nell'Anno Mariano (1987-88): Testi e Studi* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990).

² The Pope cited this particular text in §78 of his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* of May 31, 1998 [*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana) hereafter cited as *Inseg* XXI/1 (1998) 1184; *Osservatore Romano* (weekly edition in English; First number = cumulative edition number; second number = page) hereafter cited as *ORE* 1549:X].

³ Sadly, by refusing to translate *in primis* the I.C.E.L. translation does not do full justice to Our Lady's position, even if she still retains the first place chronologically.

To my knowledge, no Pope ever reflected upon and taught more authoritatively about the “inseparable bond” between Mary and the Eucharist than did Pope John Paul II. While his crowning achievement in calling special attention to this bond is the sixth chapter of his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (§53-58) which he entitled “At the School of Mary, ‘Woman of the Eucharist’”, this was by no means his only contribution on this subject. He gave regular and deliberate attention to this theme in the course of his long pontificate of over twenty-six years, even if this may have been more apparent from the time of the publication of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* on 17 April 2003 until his death when he frequently referred to Mary as the “Woman of the Eucharist”. In analyzing the many references hidden in numerous documents and addresses, I hope to draw out his magisterial teaching on Mary’s indissoluble link with the Eucharist and particularly her presence in the Mass, a teaching which he presented with consistency and conviction, a teaching which constitutes a precious patrimony for the entire Church.

II. Mary’s Mediating Presence in the Mystery of Christ

In §22 of his programmatic first Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* of March 4, 1979, John Paul II had already sketched Mary’s presence in the mystery of the Redemption and in Christian life in broad strokes which were at the same time pregnant with meaning to be further developed, effectively insisting that her mediation is absolutely unique and that consequently she “must be on all the ways of the Church’s daily life”:

For if we feel a special need, in this difficult and responsible phase of the history of the Church and of mankind, to turn to Christ, who is Lord of the Church and Lord of man’s history on account of the mystery of the Redemption, we believe that nobody else can bring us as Mary can into the divine and human dimension of this mystery. Nobody has been brought into it by God himself as Mary has. It is in this that the exceptional character of the grace of the divine Motherhood consists. Not only is the dignity of this Motherhood unique and unrepeatable in the history of the human race, but Mary’s participation, due to this Maternity, in God’s plan for man’s salvation through the mystery of the Redemption is also unique in profundity and range of action. [*Nemo ut Maria eo introductus est ab ipso Deo. In hoc quippe singularis indoles gratiae maternitatis divina consistit. Non solum est unica minimeque iterabilis huius maternitatis dignitas in humani generis historia, sed unica etiam – quod attinet ad eius profunditatem et ad amplitudinem eius*

actionis – participatio est, qua Maria, propter eandem maternitatem, consilio divino de salute humana communicavit per mysterium Redemptionis] ...

The special characteristic of the motherly love that the Mother of God inserts in the mystery of the Redemption and the life of the Church finds expression in its exceptional closeness to man and all that happens to him. It is in this that the mystery of the Mother consists. The Church, which looks to her with altogether special love and hope, wishes to make this mystery her own in an ever deeper manner. For in this the Church also recognizes the way for her daily life, which is each person.

The Father's eternal love, which has been manifested in the history of mankind through the Son whom the Father gave, "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life", comes close to each of us through this Mother and thus takes on tokens that are of more easy understanding and access by each person. Consequently, Mary must be on all the ways for the Church's daily life. Through her maternal presence the Church acquires certainty that she is truly living the life of her Master and Lord and that she is living the mystery of the Redemption in all its life-giving profundity and fullness [*Eternus Patris amor, qui in historia humani generis per Filium est manifestatus, quem Pater dedit, «ut omnis qui credit in eum non pereat, sed habeat vitam aeternam», nobis offertur per hanc Matrem atque hoc modo signa accipit ad intellegendum accommodatiora et faciliora homini. Ita fit, ut Maria in omnibus viis cotidiana vita Ecclesiae versetur oporteat. Eo quod ut Mater praesens adest, Ecclesia certum habet se reapse vitam vivere Magistri sui et Domini, se e mysterio vivere Redemptionis cum tota eius vivificatoria plenitudine*].⁴

While the Pope does not speak explicitly here of Mary's relationship to the Sacraments and to the Eucharist, he lays a solid foundation for understanding it which I would summarize in the following points. (1) In accord with the great tradition, he emphasizes the uniqueness of Our Lady's divine maternity and her participation in the mystery of the Redemption. (2) He declares that the eternal love of the Father, manifested through the Son, comes close to us through the Mother. He presents it as axiomatic that "no one can bring us into the divine and human mystery of the Redemption as Mary can" precisely because "nobody has been brought into it by God himself as Mary has". Although he would draw out the nature of

⁴ *Inseg* II/1 (1979) 607-608 [U.S.C.C. Edition 97, 98].

this maternal mediation and its mode of operation at much greater length in the third part of his Marian Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (§38-47) and in many other places⁵, the foundation already appears here: “Mary’s participation ... in God’s plan for man’s salvation ... is ... unique in profundity and range of action”. (3) Thus he concludes that Mary must be on all the ways of the Church’s daily life.

In §9 of his next Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia* of November 30, 1980, the Pope presented Mary as the Mother of Mercy, underscoring that she was uniquely called to bring people close to the mystery of mercy:

Mary is also the one who obtained mercy in a particular and exceptional way, as no other person has. At the same time, still in an exceptional way, she made possible with the sacrifice of her heart her own sharing in revealing God’s mercy. This sacrifice is intimately linked with the cross of her Son, at the foot of which she was to stand on Calvary. Her sacrifice is a unique sharing in the revelation of mercy, that is, a sharing in the absolute fidelity of God to His own love, to the covenant that He willed from eternity and that He entered into in time with man, with the people, with humanity; it is a sharing in that revelation that was definitively fulfilled through the cross. No one has experienced, to the same degree as the Mother of the crucified One, the mystery of the cross, the overwhelming encounter of divine transcendent justice with love: that “kiss” given by mercy to justice. No one has received into his heart, as much as Mary did, that mystery, that truly divine dimension of the redemption effected on Calvary by means of the death of the Son, together with the sacrifice of her maternal heart, together with her definitive “fiat” [*Maria insuper est, quæ singulari prorsus extraordinarioque pacto – sicut alius nemo – misericordiam cognovit et eodem tempore item eximio perquam modo consecuta est cordis sui sacrificio, ut propria evenire posset participatio sua ipsius revelationis divinæ misericordiae. Quod sacrificium proxime coheret cum eius Filii cruce, sub qua etiam ille in Calvariae loco adstitit. Ipsius proinde sacrificium hoc peculiaris omnino communicatio est in patefacienda misericordia; nempe communicatio est absolutæ Dei fidelitatis erga proprium amorem ad fœdus, quod inde ab ævo sempiterno voluit quodque in tempore pepigit cum homine, cum populo, cum genere humano; participatio*

⁵ For an excellent introduction to Marian mediation in John Paul II, cf. Manfred Hauke, “La Mediazione materna di Maria secondo papa Giovanni Paolo II,” *Maria Corredentrice: Storia e Teologia* VII (Frigento: Casa Mariana Editrice, 2005) 35-91.

est revelationis illius, quæ semel est in æternum per crucem transacta. Similis Maria, Crucifixi Matris, nemo mysterium crucis est expertus, hoc est iustitiæ transcendentis divinæ cum amore consternantem congressionem: «osculum» illud iustitiæ impertitum a misericordia. Similis Maria hoc mysterium animo nemo suscepit: eam rationem vere divinam redemptionis, quæ per Filii mortem in Calvaria monte acta est una cum materni cordis eius sacrificio et cum decretoria ipsius «fiat»].

Mary, then, is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows its price, she knows how great it is [*Ergo Maria ea quidem est quæ divinæ misericordiæ interius percipit mysterium; cuius præterea novit pretium intellegitque ipsum quam sit magnificum*]. In this sense, we call her the Mother of mercy: Our Lady of mercy, or Mother of divine mercy; in each one of these titles there is a deep theological meaning, for they express the special preparation of her soul, of her whole personality, so that she was able to perceive, through the complex events, first of Israel, then of every individual and of the whole of humanity, that mercy of which "from generation to generation" people become sharers according to the eternal design of the most Holy Trinity.

The above titles which we attribute to the Mother of God speak of her principally, however, as the Mother of the crucified and risen One; as the One who, having obtained mercy in an exceptional way, in an equally exceptional way "merits" that mercy throughout her earthly life and, particularly, at the foot of the cross of her Son; and finally as the one who, through her hidden and at the same time incomparable sharing in the messianic mission of her Son, was called in a special way to bring close to people that love which He had come to reveal [*de illa nempe, quæ more extraordinario misericordiam experta «meretur» aquabili modo talem misericordiam progrediente omni sua vita terrestri ac præsertim infra Filii crucem; ac de ea tandem, quæ absconditam incomparabilemque simul per communionem messianici Filii sui muneris destinata peculiari ratione est ad hominibus illum apportandum amorem, quem ipse revelatum venerat*].⁶

With a few bold strokes the Pope sketches once again the mystery of Mary and her unique role in the work of our redemption. (1) He begins by stating that she

⁶ *Inseg* III/2 (1980) 1510-1511 [St. Paul Edition 30-31].

“obtained mercy in a particular and exceptional way, as no other person has”, thus alluding to the preservative redemption of her Immaculate Conception. (2) Then he states that “the sacrifice of her heart” ... “is a unique sharing in the revelation of mercy”, thus alluding to her intimate union with Jesus in the offering of his perfect sacrifice on Calvary.⁷ (3) “No one” he insists “has experienced, to the same degree as the Mother of the crucified One, the mystery of the cross,” hence “she knows its price”.⁸ (4) “Having obtained mercy in an exceptional way, in an equally exceptional way” the Mother of mercy “‘merits’ [*meretur*] that mercy throughout her earthly life and, particularly, at the foot of the cross of her Son.”⁹ (5) Thus Mary “was called in a special way” to bring to people that love which Jesus “had come to reveal”.¹⁰

III. The Profound Link between the Eucharist and Mary

Since “no one can bring us into the divine and human mystery of the Redemption as Mary can” because of her own unique participation in that mystery, then she must be involved *par excellence* in the privileged moment when the Church draws her life from the Eucharist. In fact, in §44 of his Marian Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* of March 25, 1987, John Paul II provided an important confirmation of the fundamental link between Mary and the Eucharist:

Her motherhood is particularly noted and experienced by the Christian people at the *Sacred Banquet* – the liturgical celebration of the mystery of the Redemption – at which Christ, his *true body born of the Virgin Mary*, becomes present.

⁷ Cf. Arthur Burton Calkins, “The Heart of Mary as Coredeptrix in the Magisterium of Pope John Paul II” in *S. Tommaso Teologo: Ricerche in occasione dei due centenari accademici* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana “Studi Tomistici” #59, 1995) 320-335.

⁸ On the Our Lady’s knowledge of the price [*pretium*] of the redemption, cf. St. Bonaventure, *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti*, 6 in *Doctoris seraphici S. Bonaventurae ... Opera Omnia*, vol 5, ed PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura (Ad Claras Aquas [Quaracchi]: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1891), 486.

⁹ Cf. St. Pius X’s Encyclical *Ad Diem Illum* of February 2, 1904 in which he speaks of how Mary merited [*promeruit*] to become the reparatrix of the lost world and how she merits [*promere*] *de congruo* what Christ merits *de condigno* [*Acta Sanctae Sedis* hereafter cited as *AAS* 36 (1903-1904) 453-454; *Our Lady: Papal Teachings*, trans. Daughters of St. Paul (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1961) hereafter cited as *OL* #233-234]. For a discussion of this terminology cf. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., “Our Lady’s Coredeptrix,” in Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M. (ed.), *Mariology*, 2 (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1957) 383, 409-411.

¹⁰ This seems to parallel without the use of more technical language St. Pius X’s conclusion about Mary as *princeps largientiarum gratiarum ministra* in *Ad Diem Illum* [*AAS* 36 (1903-1904) 454; *OL* #234].

The piety of the Christian people has always very rightly sensed a *profound link* between devotion to the Blessed Virgin and worship of the Eucharist [*Merito ergo populus christianus pro pietate sua semper arctum nexum inter devotionis officia erga Beatam Mariam Virginem et cultum eucharisticum conspexit*]: this is a fact that can be seen in the liturgy of both the West and the East, in the traditions of the Religious Families, in the modern movements of spirituality, including those for youth, and in the pastoral practice of the Marian Shrines. *Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist* [*Maria fideles ad Eucharistiam deducit*].¹¹

Here the Pope does not so much analyze this “profound link” as simply call our attention to it as a fundamental datum, a “given” of the Catholic tradition which he had already commented upon in *Redemptor Hominis* and *Dives in Misericordia*. He summarizes it thus: “Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist”.

In his homily for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi on June 2, 1988, he cited the Second Vatican Council’s teaching in *Lumen Gentium* §58 on Mary’s presence on Calvary and then stated

*The reality of the Sacrifice – res Sacramenti – and the Mother’s Heart pierced with the sword of sorrow under the Cross! The Church has always seen this profound link and has wanted the Mother of God near her on the ways of her Eucharistic pilgrimage through faith. This faith unites each of us with Christ and takes us into the very centre of his redemptive love. Who is closer to this center, who is more united with the Redeemer, if not the Mother, the Heart of the Mother?*¹²

Here he resorts to the symbolic language of the heart, which he had amply developed in other places¹³, in order to emphasize “this profound link” which the Church has always recognized between Mary and the Eucharist. Finally, in his last Holy Thursday Letter to Priests, dated March 13, 2005 from Rome’s Gemelli Polyclinic, he stated once again that:

¹¹ *Inseg* X/1 (1987) 734 [St. Paul Edition 63].

¹² *Inseg* XI/2 (1988) 1731 [ORE 1047:11-12].

¹³ Cf. Arthur Burton Calkins, *Totus Tuus; John Paul II’s Program of Marian Consecration and Entrustment* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate “Studies and Texts”, No. 1, 1992) hereafter cited as *Totus Tuus* 76-79, 248-254; “The Hearts of Jesus and Mary in the Magisterium of Pope John Paul II,” *Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis in Civitate Onubensi (Huelva - Hispania) Anno 1992 Celebrati IV: De Cultu Mariano Saeculo XX a Concilio Vaticano II usque ad Nostros Dies* (Vatican City State: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1999), 147-167.

The relationship between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Eucharist is a very close one, as I pointed out in the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (cf. nn. 53-58). In its own sober liturgical language, every Eucharistic Prayer brings this out. Thus in the Roman Canon we say: “In union with the whole Church we honour Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God”. In the other Eucharistic Prayers, honour leads to petition, as for example in Prayer II: “Make us worthy to share eternal life with Mary, the virgin Mother of God.”¹⁴

IV. *Caro Christi, Caro Mariæ*

The unique bond between Mary and the Eucharist was further specified by the Pope, in an Angelus address which he gave in Seville, Spain on the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1993:

Ave verum corpus natum ex Maria Virgine!

At this hour of the Angelus, when the People of God recall the annunciation to the Virgin Mary of the mystery of the incarnation, the Church’s faith and piety are centred today on Christ, Son of the Virgin Mary, Light of the nations, present in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist offered to the Father as the glorious victim of reconciliation in the sacrifice of the new and eternal covenant and given to us as the Bread of Life.

St. John wished to combine in his Gospel the revelation of the Eucharistic mystery and a mention of the incarnation. Jesus is the living Bread come down from heaven for the life of the world (cf. Jn. 6:51). The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. This leads us to the annunciation, when the Angel of the Lord told Mary the great news and by her free and loving consent, she conceived the Word in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus there is a very close bond between the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary, which medieval piety summarized in the expression “*caro Christi, caro Mariæ*”: the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist is sacramentally the flesh he assumed from the Virgin Mary. There-

¹⁴ *Inseg* XXVIII (2005) 223 [ORE 1886:5].

fore, I wanted to emphasize in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* that “Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist” (n. 44).¹⁵

By the very use of the Latin citations the Holy Father indicates that he is recapitulating here an insight on the bond between the Eucharist and Mary which has been a part of the Church’s patrimony of faith from its earliest days. *Ave verum corpus natum ex Maria Virgine!*¹⁶ Hail, true Body born of the Virgin Mary! *Caro Christi, caro Mariae.*¹⁷ The flesh of Christ which we receive in the Eucharist is truly the flesh which he received from Mary.¹⁸ Thus the Holy Father reasons in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* §55:

In a certain sense Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God’s Word*. The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the Annunciation Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord’s body and blood.

As a result, there is a profound analogy between the *Fiat* which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the *Amen* which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived “through the Holy Spirit” was “the Son of God” (Lk. 1:30-35). In continuity with the Virgin’s faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.¹⁹

In an even more evocative and poetic way, the Holy Father drew out the implications of this reality in a marvelous Angelus address which he gave on the Feast

¹⁵ *Inseg* XVI/1 (1993) 1508-1509 [ORE 1295:8].

¹⁶ For the text of this Eucharistic hymn, cf. Matthew Britt, O.S.B., *The Hymns of the Breviary and Missal* (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc, 1948) 191-192. On its origin, cf. *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) 1:1124.

¹⁷ In Domenico Casagrande’s *Enchiridion Marianum Biblicum Patristicum* (Rome: «Cor Unum», 1974) there are a large number of entries under this phrase.

¹⁸ Cf. Crocetti, 46; René Laurentin “L’Eucaristia e la Vergine,” in Mons. Antonio Piolanti (ed.), *Eucaristia: Il Mistero dell’Altare nel Pensiero e nella Vita della Chiesa* (Rome: Desclée & C., 1957) 632-634.

¹⁹ *Inseg* XXVI/1 (2003) 506-507 [ORE 1790:IX].

of Corpus Christi, June 5, 1983 and which I consider a real gem of Eucharistic-Marian spirituality:

“Ave, verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine”!

Hail, true Body born of the Virgin Mary!

On the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, our grateful thanks is raised to the Father, who has given us the Divine Word, the living Bread come down from heaven, and our thanks is joyfully raised to the Virgin, who offered the Lord his innocent Flesh and his precious Blood which we receive at the altar. “Ave, verum Corpus”: true Body, truly conceived through the work of the Holy Spirit, borne in the womb with ineffable love (Preface II of Advent), born for us of the Virgin Mary: “natum de Maria Virgine”.

That divine Body and Blood, which after the consecration is present on the altar, is offered to the Father, and becomes Communion of love for everyone, by consolidating us in the unity of the Spirit in order to found the Church, preserves its maternal origin from Mary. She prepared that Body and Blood before offering them to the Word as a gift from the whole human family that he might be clothed in them in becoming our Redeemer, High Priest and Victim.

At the root of the Eucharist, therefore, there is the virginal and maternal life of Mary, her overflowing experience of God, her journey of faith and love, which through the work of the Holy Spirit made her flesh a temple and her heart an altar: because she conceived not according to nature, but through faith, with a free and conscious act: an act of obedience. And if the Body that we eat and the Blood that we drink is the inestimable gift of the Risen Lord, to us travellers, it still has in itself, as fragrant Bread, the taste and aroma of the Virgin Mother.²⁰

In the passage of this Angelus address just cited, the emphasis is clearly on Mary’s collaboration in the Incarnation. The Pope points out that just as we should thank the Father for the gift of the Divine Word, the living Bread come down from heaven, so also we should thank the Virgin “who offered the Lord his innocent Flesh and his precious Blood which we receive at the altar”. He then reinforces this reason for our gratitude to Mary by stating that the Body and Blood of Christ

²⁰ *Inseg* VI/1 (1983) 1446-1447 [ORE 788:2].

which we receive in the Eucharist “preserves its maternal origin from Mary”. By taking on our human nature from her, the Holy Father points out, Jesus became the perfect Mediator between God and man and therefore our High Priest as well as the perfect victim. This is another datum profoundly imbedded in the great tradition.²¹ Indeed, in the concrete, the Incarnation can never be separated from its goal, the Redemption. By virtue of supplying the matter for the sacrifice, Mary is already related to the Redemption, a concept beautifully developed in St. Pius X’s great Marian Encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*.²²

What I believe to be a particularly evocative contribution to the discourse on the link between Mary and the Eucharist made by John Paul II is the graceful assertion that “At the root of the Eucharist, therefore, there is the virginal and maternal life of Mary” [*Alla radice dell’Eucaristia c’è dunque la vita verginale e materna di Maria*] and that, thus, as the food for pilgrims, the Eucharist “still has in itself, as fragrant Bread, the taste and aroma of the Virgin Mother” [*esso porta ancora in sé, come Pane fragrante, il sapore e il profumo della Vergine Madre*].

V. Mary’s Involvement in the Offering of the Sacrifice of the Cross

What we have been considering up to now has served as prelude to another profound truth of faith. Let us now return to the next section of that truly remarkable Angelus address of Corpus Christi 1983:

“*Vere passum, immolatum in Cruce pro homine*”. That Body truly suffered and was immolated on the Cross for man.

Born of the Virgin to be a pure, holy and immaculate oblation, Christ offered on the Cross the one perfect Sacrifice which every Mass, in an unbloody manner, renews and makes present. In that one Sacrifice, Mary, the first redeemed, the Mother of the Church, had an active part. She stood near the Crucified, suffering deeply with her Firstborn; with a motherly heart she associated herself with his Sacrifice; with love she consented to his immolation (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 58; *Marialis Cultus*, 20): she offered him and she offered herself to the Father.²³

In an eminently succinct way and with absolute theological precision John Paul II at once restated very clearly the truth of Mary’s active participation in the work

²¹ Cf. *Totus Tuus* 193-199.

²² Cf. *ASS* 36 (1903-1904) 452-453 [*OL* #229-231].

²³ *Inseg* VI/1 (1983) 1447 [*ORE* 788:2].

of our redemption as presented in *Lumen Gentium* §56-58 and 61 and the papal magisterium while also advancing his own unparalleled teaching on Mary's presence in the Mass. Let us analyze the components of this very synthetic presentation.

1. The Pope summarizes even more incisively what he had already said above: Jesus was “born of the Virgin to be a pure, holy and immaculate oblation” [*Nato dalla Vergine per essere oblazione pura, santa e immacolata*]. Not only does this statement imply the salvific purpose of the Incarnation, but it also implies Mary's Immaculate Conception and, more remotely, the virginal conception and the virginal birth of Christ – all of this so that Christ could be for us the pure victim, the holy victim, the immaculate victim [*hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam*] as he is correctly described in the original Latin of the Roman Canon, poorly rendered in the present English translation as “this holy and perfect sacrifice”.

2. Next, with explicit reference to the teaching on Marian coredeemption in *Lumen Gentium* §58 and in Paul VI's *Marialis Cultus* §20, he declares that Mary offered Christ to the Father [*lo offrì ... al Padre*]. While the principal and primary offering to the Father was that made by Christ himself, the Church's magisterium is also very clear that Mary also offered him to the Father: the “New Eve” consciously and deliberately offered the “New Adam” to the Father for the redemption of the world. Here are two instances of this teaching by previous Popes.

Pope Benedict XV, in his Letter *Inter Sodalicia* of May 22, 1918, speaking of Our Lady's presence on Calvary (Jn. 19:25-27) which he says was “not without divine design”²⁴ stated that

Mary suffered and, as it were, nearly died with her suffering Son; for the salvation of mankind she renounced her mother's rights and, as far as it depended on her, offered her Son to placate divine justice; so we may well say that she with Christ redeemed mankind [*Scilicet ita cum Filio patiente et moriente passa est et pæne commortua, sic materna in Filium jura pro hominum salute abdicavit placandaque Dei justitiæ, quantum ad se pertinebat, Filium immolavit, ut dici merito queat, Ipsam cum Christo humanum genus redemisse*].²⁵

Lest anyone think that Benedict is speaking here in hyperbolic idiom, let it be noted that his language is carefully measured. He says that Mary “offered her Son to placate divine justice to the extent that it pertained to her to do so” – *quantum ad*

²⁴ The phrase *non sine divino consilio* is used both in Benedict XV's *Inter Sodalicia* [*Acta Apostolica Sedis* hereafter cited as *AAS* 10 (1918) 182; *OL* #267] and in §58 of *Lumen Gentium* to describe Mary's position beneath the Cross of Jesus as specifically willed by God. While the verbal borrowing of this terminology is indisputable, the conciliar document makes no reference to it.

²⁵ *AAS* 10 (1918) 181-182 [*OL* #267] emphasis my own.

se pertinebat. Hence her offering, while it is not on the same level as that of her divine Son, is nonetheless united with that of Jesus.

The Servant of God Pius XII also gave this teaching classic expression in his Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis* of June 29, 1943:

She [Mary] it was who, immune from all sin, personal or inherited, and ever most closely united with her Son, *offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father together with the holocaust of her maternal rights and motherly love*, like a new Eve, for all the children of Adam contaminated through this unhappy fall ... [*Ipsa fuit, quae vel propria, vel hereditaria labis expers, arctissime semper cum Filio suo coniuncta, eundem in Golgotha, una cum maternorum iurium maternique amoris sui holocausto, nova veluti Eva, pro omnibus Adae filijs, miserando eius lapsu foedatis, Aeterno Patri obtulit*].²⁶

I would like to summarize what I have just presented with the marvelously concise comments which Pope John Paul II made on Saint Joseph's Day in 1995 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Castelpetroso:

Dear brothers and sisters, may you also offer the Lord your daily joys and labors in communion with Christ and through the intercession of his Mother venerated here as *she offers to the Father the Son who sacrificed himself for our salvation* [*Carissimi Fratelli e Sorelle, sappiate anche voi offrire al Signore le gioie e le fatiche quotidiane, in comunione con Cristo e per intercessione della Madre sua, qui venerata mentre presenta al Padre il Figlio immolato per la nostra salvezza*].²⁷

Note here the Pope's theological precision: he speaks of Mary offering the Son to the Father, but further qualifies the Son as he "who sacrificed himself for our salvation". Mary's offering of Christ always implies first his own offering of himself.

3. Now let us consider the next part of the assertion which John Paul II made in the Angelus address of June 5, 1983, namely that "Mary offered herself to the Father" [*si offrì al Padre*]. We might say that this, too, is contained implicitly in Mary's *fiat* spoken on the momentous day of the Annunciation. The "yes" which came from her heart on Golgotha in offering her Son to the Father to satisfy for the sins of the world cannot really be separated from her total abandonment to the Father's will which is the offering of herself. Indeed, it is necessary to distinguish

²⁶ *AAS* 35 (1943) 247-248 [OL #383] emphasis my own. Pius XII quoted this text again in his Encyclical Letter *Ad Cali Reginam* of October 11, 1954, *AAS* 46 (1954) 635 [OL #705].

²⁷ *Inseg* XVIII/1 (1995) 542 [ORE 1384:3] emphasis my own.

between Mary's offering of her Son and her offering of herself to the Father – and this distinction is certainly made by the magisterium because it involves the offering of two distinct persons, one divine and one human. Nonetheless, these two offerings, while not on the same level, were simultaneous and united.

We have already weighed the famous text of Benedict XV's *Inter Sodalicia* from the viewpoint of Mary's offering of Christ, now let us examine that text from the perspective of Mary's self-offering and of her "paying the price of mankind's redemption" along with Christ.

*Mary suffered and, as it were, nearly died with her suffering Son; for the salvation of mankind she renounced her mother's rights and, as far as it depended on her, offered her Son to placate divine justice; so we may well say that she with Christ redeemed mankind [Scilicet ita cum Filio patiente et moriente passa est et pane commortua, sic materna in Filium jura pro hominum salute abdicavit placandæque Dei justitiæ, quantum ad se pertinebat, Filium immolavit, ut dici merito queat, Ipsam cum Christo humanum genus redemisse].*²⁸

It should be noted that this statement takes nothing away from the fact that Jesus' merits were all-sufficient or that Mary, as a human creature, could never make an offering that would equal that of her divine Son. Rather what Benedict XV does is to underscore Mary's active participation by her own suffering in the redemption wrought on Calvary. As if by way of commentary, two years later, in his homily at the canonization of St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, he said that "the sufferings of Jesus cannot be separated from the sorrows of Mary".²⁹ True, they can be logically distinguished, yet they are indissolubly united.

The union of Jesus' and Mary's sufferings for our salvation is brought out beautifully by the Servant of God Pius XII in his great Sacred Heart Encyclical of May 15, 1956, *Haurietis Aquas*:

By the will of God, the most Blessed Virgin Mary was inseparably joined with Christ in accomplishing the work of man's redemption, so that our salvation flows from the love of Jesus Christ and His sufferings intimately united with the love and sorrows of His Mother [Cum enim ex Dei voluntate in humanæ Redemptionis peragendo opere Beatissima Virgo Maria cum Christo fuerit indivulse coniuncta, adeo ut ex Iesu Christi

²⁸ *AAS* 10 (1918) 182 [OL #267] emphasis my own.

²⁹ *AAS* 12 (1920) 224 [Bro. Richard Zehnle, S.M. (trans.) "Marian Doctrine of Benedict XV," *Marian Reprint* (Marian Library, University of Dayton) No. 70:9].

caritate eiusque cruciatibus cum amore doloribusque ipsius Matris intime consociatis sit nostra salus projecta].³⁰

In this classic passage every word is carefully weighed and measured in order to make a declaration on the redemption and Mary's role in it which remains a classic for its clarity and precision. Pius professes that "our salvation flows from the love of Jesus Christ and His sufferings" [*ex Iesu Christi caritate eiusque cruciatibus*] which is "intimately united with the love and sorrows of His Mother" [*cum amore doloribusque ipsius Matris intime consociatis*]. The Latin preposition *ex* indicates Jesus as the source of our redemption while three other Latin words, *cum* and *intime consociatis* indicate Mary's inseparability from the source. Finally, let us note Pius' insistence on the fact that this union of Jesus with Mary for our salvation has been ordained "by the will of God" [*ex Dei voluntate*].

While it would be possible to quote numerous other texts from the papal magisterium in support of Mary's sacrifice of herself in union with Jesus for our salvation, I wish to cite just one more, which comes from Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* of February 11, 1984 and which can also serve as a marvelous recapitulation of his magisterium and that of his predecessors on this point:

It is especially consoling to note – and also accurate in accordance with the Gospel and history – that at the side of Christ, in the first and most exalted place, there is always His Mother through the exemplary testimony that she bears *by her whole life* to this particular Gospel of suffering. *In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that they were not only a proof of her unshakable faith but also a contribution to the Redemption of all. ... It was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but which was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world.* Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the cross together with the beloved disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son [*Est imprimis solacii causa – res sane Evangelio et historia comprobata – quod iuxta Christum, loco primario et probe significato, sancta eius Mater semper adest ad dandum egregium testimonium, quod tota vita sua de hoc singulari doloris perhibet. Permulta et vehementes passiones confluxerunt in talem nexum et colligationem, ut non solum fidem eius inconcussam comprobarent, verum etiam ad redemptionem omnium conferrunt ... dolores Beatae Mariae*

³⁰ *AAS* 48 (1956) 352 [OL #778] emphasis my own.

*Virginis in Calvariae loco ad fastigium pervenerunt, cuius altitudo mente humana vix fingi quidem potest, sed certe arcana fuit et supernaturali ratione fecunda pro universalis redemptione. Ascensus ille in Calvariae locum, illud «stare» inxtra Crucem una cum discipulo praeter ceteris dilecto, communicatio prorsus peculiaris fuerunt mortis redemptricis Filii».*³¹

Another citation from *Salvifici Doloris* may help to provide further context for the truths which underlie this mystery of Mary's coredemptive suffering:

The sufferings of Christ created the good of the world's Redemption. This good in itself is inexhaustible and infinite. No man can add anything to it [*Christi passio bonum redemptionis mundi effecit, quod quidem in se ipso inexhaustum est et infinitum neque ei quidquam ab ullo homine addi potest*].³²

But at the same time "Mary's suffering [on Calvary], beside the suffering of Jesus ... was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world." Thus the Pope strikes that careful balance which is always a hallmark of Catholic truth: he upholds the principle that the sufferings of Christ were all-sufficient for the salvation of the world, while maintaining that Mary's sacrifice was nonetheless "a contribution to the Redemption of all".

VI. Mary's Involvement in the Offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass

Now let us listen to the final part of that memorable Angelus address of *Corpus Christi* 1983:

Every Eucharist is a memorial of that Sacrifice and that Passover that restored life to the world; every Mass puts us in intimate communion with her, the Mother, whose sacrifice "becomes present" just as the Sacrifice of her Son "becomes present" at the words of consecration of the bread and wine pronounced by the priest.³³

It is precisely here in the third part of this brief but theologically dense address that John Paul II broke new ground in applying the received teaching on Marian coredemption to the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I have found no similar statement in the magisterium of his predecessors. His thesis is precisely that Mary's sacrifice

³¹ *Inseg* VII/1 (1984) 308-309 [St. Paul Editions 40-41] except for "by her whole life," emphasis my own.

³² *Inseg* VII/1 (1984) 307 [St. Paul Editions 37-38].

³³ *Inseg* VI/1 (1983) 1447 [ORE 788:2].

becomes present in the Mass just as her Son's sacrifice becomes present. This is true above all precisely because Jesus *is* Mary's sacrifice; she offered him in sacrifice on Calvary to the Father for us. Secondly, this is also true because Mary's sacrifice of herself is indissolubly united to the sacrifice of Jesus. Certainly Mary's sacrifice is always ancillary, subordinate to and dependent on his, but at the same time it is also inextricably united to his sacrifice of himself. Hence the Pope used his Message of August 15, 1996 to the 19th International Marian Congress, held in Częstochowa, Poland from August 24–26, 1996, in order to underscore Mary's presence in the sacrifice of Calvary and her presence in the sacrifice of the Mass:

Every Holy Mass makes present in an unbloody manner that unique and perfect sacrifice, offered by Christ on the tree of the Cross, in which Mary participated, joined in spirit with her suffering Son, lovingly consenting to his sacrifice and offering her own sorrow to the Father (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 58). Therefore when we celebrate the Eucharist, the memorial of Christ's pass-over, the memory of his Mother's suffering is also made alive and present, this Mother who, as an unsurpassable model, teaches the faithful to unite themselves more intimately to the sacrifice of her Son, the one Redeemer. Through spiritual communion with the sorrowful Mother of God, believers share in a special way in the paschal mystery and are opened to this extraordinary action of the Holy Spirit which produces a supernatural joy because of communion with the glorious Christ, on the example of the joy granted to Mary in the glory of heaven, as the first person to share in the fruits of the Redemption.³⁴

Both of these marvelous texts speak clearly of Mary's presence in the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, but the second goes even farther in presenting her "as an unsurpassable model" [*come insuperabile modello*] for the faithful in uniting "themselves more intimately to the sacrifice of her Son" [*ad unirsi più intimamente al sacrificio del Figlio*]. Even more, in this second text the Pope passes from speaking of Our Lady's role as Coredemptrix to her role as Mediatrix i.e., her function in "opening up the faithful" to the extraordinary action of the Holy Spirit in producing supernatural joy in them because of their communion with the glorious Christ – and this "on the example of the joy granted to Mary in the glory of heaven, as the

³⁴ OR 6 settembre 1996, 4 [ORE 1462:2]. Unfortunately, for some strange reason the original Italian text is not found in the *Insegnamenti*, but it was published in the daily edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* on the date indicated and also in *Miles Immaculatae* 32:2 (Luglio/Dicembre 1996) 444-446.

first person to share in the fruits of the Redemption”. I leave it to others to analyze the type of Mary’s mediatorial causality which the Pope is describing here.³⁵ (There is no little irony in the fact that the second of these magnificent texts was intended for a gathering of mariologists in Częstochowa some of whose leading participants drew up a document highly critical of the traditional doctrine on Marian coredeemtion and strongly opposed to the definition of Mary as Coredeptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate!³⁶ One wonders if this could have had anything to do with the omission of this highly significant text from the *Insegnamenti*.)

These two extraordinary texts are not the only instances of Pope John Paul II’s teaching on Mary’s presence in the Mass. He showed remarkable consistency on this matter to the point that I believe it can be recognized as part of his ordinary magisterium on the basis of the frequency with which he proposed this doctrine [*frequenti propositione eiusdem doctrina*].³⁷ I offer these further enlightening confirmations of this teaching.

On August 25, 2001, he introduced the Mass he was celebrating for Polish pilgrims in this way:

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman ...” (Gal. 4:4). This saving mystery, in which God has assigned to the woman Mary of Nazareth, a role that cannot be replaced, is continually made present in the Eucharist. When we celebrate the Holy Mass, the Mother of the Son of God is in our midst and introduces us to the mystery of His redemptive sacrifice. Thus, she is the mediatrix of all the grace flowing from this sacrifice to the Church and to all the faithful.³⁸

We notice here not only the accentuation on Mary’s presence in the Mass but also, as was the case in the Message to the Marian Congress of August 15, 1996, the further emphasis on Mary as “the mediatrix of all the grace flowing from this sacrifice to the Church and to all the faithful”. Although in itself a brief statement which Marian minimalists will readily dismiss as “marginal and therefore devoid of doctri-

³⁵ Cf. John A. Schug, O.F.M.Cap., *Mary, Mother* (Springfield, MA: St. Francis Chapel Press, 1991) 121-199.

³⁶ OR 4 giugno 1997, 10 [ORE 1494:12].

³⁷ *Lumen Gentium* §25. Cf. *Totus Tuus* 266-269.

³⁸ *Inseg* XXIV/2 (2001) 192 [ORE 1707:1]. For the second part of the text beginning with “When we celebrate ...”, I have followed the English translation from the Polish given in ORE 1776:V where it was quoted in the Instruction by the Congregation for the Clergy of August 4, 2002, “The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community”, §13.

nal weight”³⁹, I submit that this statement, along with that of August 15, 1996, is of great importance as verifying and continuing in the line of the magisterium of Leo XIII and St. Pius X on Mary as Mediatrix of all graces and it further takes a specific position with regard to Our Lady’s mediation of the grace of the sacraments.⁴⁰ Again on November 23, 2001 in his address to the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Clergy the Pope said:

I recommend to each one to turn, in the daily exercise of pastoral care, to the maternal help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, seeking to live in profound communion with Her. In the ministerial priesthood, as I wrote in the *Letter to Priests, on the occasion of Holy Thursday 1979*, “there is the wonderful and penetrating dimension of nearness to the Mother of Christ” (n. 11). When we celebrate Holy Mass, dear Brother priests, the Mother of the Redeemer is beside us. She introduces us into the mystery of the redemptive offering of her divine Son. “*Ad Jesum per Mariam*”: may this be our daily programme of spiritual and pastoral life!⁴¹

On this occasion the Pope was speaking to priests in a manner which seems reminiscent of Padre Pio.⁴² So convinced is he that one wonders if he was speaking from personal experience. Yet again he speaks of Our Lady’s mediatorial role: it is she who “introduces us into the mystery of the redemptive offering of her divine Son” [*che ci introduce nel mistero dell’offerta redentrice del suo divino Figlio*].

Certainly the most solemn of his statements about Mary’s presence in the celebration of the Eucharist occurs in §57 of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*:

“Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk. 22:19). In the “memorial” of Calvary all that Christ accomplished by his passion and his death is present. Consequently *all that Christ did with regard to his Mother* for our sake is also present. To her he gave the beloved disciple and, in him, each of us: “Behold, your Son!”. To each of us he also says: “Behold your mother!” (cf. Jn. 19: 26-27).

³⁹ *Documenti pontifici secondari, e quindi senza peso dottrinale* is the phrase which occurs in the unsigned commentary on the Declaration of the Theological Commission of the Czestochowa Mariological Congress in OR 4 giugno 1997, 10 [ORE 1497:10].

⁴⁰ Cf. Joaquín Ferrer Arellano, “Marian Coredeemption and Sacramental Mediation,” in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross: III Maria, Mater Unitatis* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2003) 70-126.

⁴¹ *Inseg* XXIV/2 (2001) 944-945 [ORE 1721:2].

⁴² Cf. Padre Pio’s letter of 1 May 1912 to Padre Agostino wherein he speaks of Our Lady accompanying him to the altar, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, *Letters I* (San Giovanni Rotondo, 1980) 312.

Experiencing the memorial of Christ's death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving this gift. It means accepting – like John – the one who is given to us anew as our Mother. It also means taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves at the school of his Mother and allowing her to accompany us. Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist. This is one reason why, since ancient times, the commemoration of Mary has always been part of the Eucharistic celebrations of the Churches of East and West [*In Eucharistia vivere memoriam mortis Christi requirit etiam ut hoc donum continenter excipiat. Significat sumere nobiscum – exemplum Ioannis secuti – illam quæ identidem uti Mater nobis datur. Significat eodem tempore munus exsequi se Christo conformandi, sive scholam Matris frequentando sive comitatum eius acceptando. Maria præsens est, cum Ecclesia et uti Mater Ecclesiæ, in singulis nostris celebrationibus eucharisticis. Sicut Ecclesia et Eucharistia indivisibile continent binomium, ita quoque dicendum est de binomio Maria et Eucharistia. Idcirco commemoratio quoque Mariæ in eucharistica Celebratione, ab antiquè inde aetate, unanimes est in Ecclesiis tam Orientalibus quem Occidentalibus*].⁴³

With regard to this passage, it may be said, once again, without any exaggeration that John Paul II broke new ground in making explicit the link between Mary and the Mass. Clearly there is no Pope who ever commented more frequently or with greater profundity on the text of John 19:25-27.⁴⁴ He found in it the basis for Mary's *kenosis*⁴⁵, Marian coredemption⁴⁶, Mary's spiritual maternity⁴⁷, her motherhood of the Church⁴⁸, Marian devotion⁴⁹, Marian consecration and entrustment⁵⁰.

⁴³ *Inseg* XXVI/1 (2003) 508 [ORE 1790:IX-X].

⁴⁴ Cf. Arthur Burton Calkins (ed.), *TOTUS TUUS. Il Magistero Mariano di Giovanni Paolo II* (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 2006) 25-26 and *passim*.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Redemptoris Mater* §18.

⁴⁶ Cf. Arthur Burton Calkins, "Pope John Paul II's Teaching on Marian Coredemption" in Mark I. Miravalle, S.T.D., (ed.), *Mary Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate, Theological Foundations II: Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical* (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, 1997) 134-144; "Pope John Paul II's Ordinary Magisterium on Marian Coredemption: Consistent Teaching and More Recent Perspectives" in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross – II: Acts of the Second International Symposium on Marian Coredemption* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2002) 21-27.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Totus Tuus* 208-213.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Redemptor Hominis* §22; *Redemptoris Mater* §47.

Now situating this entrusting of John to Mary and Mary to John within the Eucharistic context of the sacrifice of Jesus anticipated on the first Holy Thursday and consummated on the first Good Friday, he teaches that

In the “memorial” of Calvary all that Christ accomplished by his passion and his death is present. Consequently *all that Christ did with regard to his Mother* for our sake is also present. To her he gave the beloved disciple and, in him, each of us: “Behold, your Son!”. To each of us he also says: “Behold your mother!” (cf. Jn. 19: 26-27).

Experiencing the memorial of Christ’s death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving this gift. [*In «memoria» Calvaria præsens est id quod in passione et in morte sua Christus explevit. Quare id non deest quod Christus explevit etiam erga Matrem pro nobis. Ipsi enim tradens discipulum prædilectum, et in eo tradi unumquemque nostrum: «Ecce filius tuus!». Pariter dicit quoque unicuique nostrum: «Ecce mater tua!».*

In Eucharistia vivere memoriam mortis Christi requirit etiam ut hoc donum continenter excipiatur.]

According to Pope John Paul II, then, our living the total experience of the Eucharistic memorial of Christ’s death effectively requires that we accept Mary as Mother and welcome her into our lives.⁵¹ From this datum he underscores once again that “Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist” [*Maria præsens est, cum Ecclesia et uti Mater Ecclesiæ, in singulis nostris celebrationibus eucharisticis.*]

Finally, as a way of summarizing the Pope’s teaching on this matter, we have this brief statement in §14 of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis* of October 16, 2003:

The Bishop’s solid Marian devotion will be constantly related to the liturgy, where the Blessed Virgin is particularly present in the celebration of the mysteries of salvation and serves as a model of docility and prayer, of spiritual oblation and motherhood for the whole Church [*Solida marialis Episcopi devotio continenter ad sacram Liturgiam referetur, ubi in salutis mysteriis celebrandis peculiarem præsentes*

⁴⁹ Cf. his audiences of May 11, 1983; November 23, 1988; April 23, 1997; May 7, 1997.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Totus Tuus* 238-248.

⁵¹ On the concept of receiving/welcoming Mary, cf. *Totus Tuus* 152-153, 240-248.

tiam obtinet Virgo ipsaque universae Ecclesiae precandi, audiendi, offerendi itemque spiritalis maternitatis excimium est exemplar].⁵²

VII. Mary as Exemplar for the Participation of the Faithful at Mass

As we have just seen, the Holy Father's insistence on Mary's presence in the Mass, her union with the offering of Jesus to the Father in sacrifice, is the perfect model for all of the faithful at Mass. Here is how he put it in his general audience address of September 10, 1997:

Mary was a witness to the historical unfolding of the saving events, which culminated in the Redeemer's Death and Resurrection, and she kept "all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19).

She was not merely present at the individual events, but sought to grasp their deep meaning, adhering with all her soul to what was being mysteriously accomplished in them.

Mary appears therefore as the supreme model of personal participation in the divine mysteries. She guides the Church in meditating on the mystery celebrated and in participating in the saving event, by encouraging the faithful to desire an intimate, personal relationship with Christ in order to cooperate with the gift of their own life in the salvation of all [*Maria appare, pertanto, come supremo modello di partecipazione personale ai divini misteri. Ella guida la Chiesa nella meditazione del mistero celebrato e nella partecipazione all'evento di salvezza, promuovendo nei fedeli il desiderio di un intimo coinvolgimento personale con Cristo per cooperare con il dono della propria vita alla salvezza universale*]. ...

The Blessed Virgin also represents the Church's model for generously participating in sacrifice.

In presenting Jesus in the temple and, especially, at the foot of the Cross, Mary completes the gift of herself which associates her as Mother with the suffering and trials of her Son. Thus in daily life as in the Eucharistic celebration, the "Virgin presenting offerings" (*Marialis cultus*, n. 20) encourages Christians to "offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pt.

⁵² *Inseg* XXVI/2 (2003) 416 [ORE 1815:V].

2:5) [La vergine costituisce, altresì, per la Chiesa il modello nella partecipazione generosa al sacrificio.

*Nella presentazione di Gesù al tempio e, soprattutto, ai piedi della croce, Maria compie il dono di sé che l'associa quale Madre alla sofferenza ed alle prove del Figlio. Così nella vita quotidiana come nella Celebrazione eucaristica la «Vergine offerente» incoraggia i cristiani ad «offrire sacrifici spirituali graditi a Dio, per mezzo di Gesù Cristo».*⁵³

Here the Holy Father indicates Mary's exemplary role in two ways: she serves as guide for "the Church in meditating on the mystery celebrated and in participating in the saving event" and serves as "the Church's model for generously participating in sacrifice". In these two points, I believe, the Holy Father provided the most authentic key to interpreting the teaching in §41 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the active participation [*actuosa participatio*] of the faithful in the Eucharist and in §48 of the same dogmatic constitution on the offering of themselves in union with the immaculate victim offered through the hands of the priest [*immaculatam hostiam, non tantum per sacerdotis manus, sed etiam una cum ipso offerentes, seipsos offerre discant*].

In §86 of his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* of May 31, 1998, he further illustrates Mary's role:

Without in any way detracting from the centrality of Christ and his Spirit, Mary is always present in the Church's Sunday. It is the mystery of Christ itself which demands this: indeed, how could she who is *Mater Domini* and *Mater Ecclesiae* fail to be uniquely present on the day which is both *dies Domini* and *dies Ecclesiae*?

As they listen to the word proclaimed in the Sunday assembly, the faithful look to the Virgin Mary, learning from her to keep it and ponder it in their hearts (cf. Lk. 2:19). With Mary, they learn to stand at the foot of the Cross, offering to the Father the sacrifice of Christ and joining to it the offering of their own lives. With Mary, they experience the joy of the Resurrection, making their own the words of the Magnificat which extol the inexhaustible gift of divine mercy in the inexorable flow of time: "His mercy is from age to age upon those who fear him" (Lk. 1:50). From Sunday to Sunday, the pilgrim people follow in the footsteps of Mary, and her maternal intercession gives special power and fervour to the prayer which rises from the Church to the

⁵³ *Inseg* XX/2 (1997) 296, 297 [ORE 1508:7].

Most Holy Trinity [*Nil sane ipsa præcipuis Christi eiusque Spiritus officiis detrahens adest in omni Dominica Ecclesia. Hoc ipsum Christi mysterium deponit: quomodo enim Illa, quæ Mater Domini est atque Mater Ecclesiæ, non peculiari titulo adesse posset eo ipso die qui simul et dies Domini est et dies Ecclesiæ?*

Fideles qui in dominicali congressione proclamatum audiunt Verbum Virginem Mariam respiciunt at ea discentes illud idem custodire et suo ponderare in corde. Cum Maria sub cruce consistere discunt, ut Patri Christi sacrificium offerant suæque vitæ donum cum eo consociant. Gaudium resurrectionis cum Maria experiuntur, suas faciunt eius voces Magnificat quæ inexhaustum divinæ misericordiæ donum decantant perpetuo in temporis fluxu itinere: «Et miseridocrida eius in progenies et progenies timentibus eum». Ex Dominica in dominicam diem Mariæ vestigia peregrinans premit populus, atque ius maternæ preces vehementem insigniter et efficacem reddunt precationem illam, quam ad sanctissimam Trinitatem tollit Ecclesia].⁵⁴

I would underscore four points here. (1) With regard to the Liturgy of the Word, Mary is presented as the exemplar, the peerless “ponderer of the Word in her heart”. (2) With regard to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Mary teaches the faithful how “to stand at the foot of the Cross, offering to the Father the sacrifice of Christ and joining to it the offering of their own lives”. We have already seen this brought out in the previous citation. (3) The third point is the linking of the sacrifice of the Cross and the Resurrection as the “Paschal Mystery”. Mary’s experience of the joy of the Resurrection makes her the model singer of the Magnificat, in thanksgiving for the “great things” which the Lord accomplishes in us through the Eucharist, a thought which the Pope would develop further in §58 of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. (4) The final point is that the Holy Father links Mary’s presence in the Eucharist with her mediatorial role of intercession as Advocate on behalf of her children: “her maternal intercession gives special power and fervour to the prayer which rises from the Church to the Most Holy Trinity” [*ius maternæ preces vehementem insigniter et efficacem reddunt precationem illam, quam ad sanctissimam Trinitatem tollit Ecclesia*].

VIII. Summary of John Paul II’s Teaching on Mary and the Eucharist

Let us review some of the most salient features of the teaching of Pope John Paul II on the bond between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Eucharist.

⁵⁴ *Inseg XXI/1* (1998) 1188-1189 [ORE 1549:XI].

1. In *Redemptoris Mater* §44 he stated that Mary's "motherhood is particularly noted and experienced by the Christian people at the *Sacred Banquet*". In that same paragraph he declared that "Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist".

2. The body and blood of Christ had its only human source in the body and blood of Mary: the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist is sacramentally the flesh he assumed from the Virgin Mary. The Eucharist, then, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation and thus evokes Mary's presence.

3. To use the Pope's own words: "At the root of the Eucharist, therefore, there is the virginal and maternal life of Mary. As fragrant Bread, the Eucharist has the taste and aroma of the Virgin Mother."

4. Jesus was born of the Virgin to be a pure oblation, pleasing to the Father.

5. On Calvary Mary offered Jesus to the Father and she offered herself to the Father in union with him. This is to state the essence of what has come to be referred to as the doctrine of Marian coredemption.

6. On Calvary Mary's suffering reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human perspective but which was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world.

7. Mary's sacrifice "becomes present" just as the Sacrifice of her Son "becomes present" at the words of consecration of the bread and wine pronounced by the priest. Here it must be specified that one is not speaking of the transubstantiation which takes place in the sacred species, but of a mystical presence of Our Lady which accompanies the sacrifice of Christ.

8. Mary introduces us into the mystery of the redemptive offering of her divine Son.

9. Mary is "in our midst", "beside us", "particularly present" in our celebration of the Eucharist. The particular mode of this presence remains to be further specified.

10. Nonetheless, Mary's presence in the celebration of the Eucharist is active, as it was on Calvary. But in the Mass not only does she renew her sacrifice, but she also is the mediatrix of all the grace flowing from the sacrifice of the Mass to the Church and to all the faithful.

11. Experiencing the memorial of Christ's death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving the gift of his Mother, of being entrusted to her anew.

12. Mary serves as guide for the Church in meditating on the mystery celebrated and in participating in the saving event and serves as the Church's model for generously participating in sacrifice and, in a particular way, for offering to the Father the sacrifice of Christ and joining to it the offering of their own lives.

13. Our Lady's maternal intercession gives special power and fervour to the prayer which rises from the Church to the Most Holy Trinity.

IX. By Way of Conclusion

I believe that Pope John Paul II has truly illuminated the bond between Mary and the Eucharist, bringing the magisterium to the highest level of insight that it has thus far attained on this matter. His teaching on Mary's presence in the Mass as one who offers the sacrifice in union with Christ, while clearly grounded in Scripture and Tradition, has broken new ground in the magisterium. He has also broken new ground in teaching about Mary's mediation of the graces of the Mass and of the sacraments. Up to now one could only find such assertions in the testimony of the mystics and in the reflection of certain theologians whose work is considered passé by many. He further elucidated Mary's role as guide for the faithful to the Mystery of the Eucharist and in their participation in the Mass.

It seems that up to now very few are aware of this marvelous Eucharistic-Marian patrimony of Pope John Paul II. Beyond a few generic references to Mary as "the Woman of the Eucharist", it seems to be almost totally unknown. What I have presented here is only an initial exposition of this extraordinarily rich doctrine which needs to be analyzed in depth by theologians and studied by the faithful. Even more, it needs to be appropriated and lived. We may be sure that it will be contested in certain circles, but the darkness will not overcome it (cf. Jn. 1:5) because it is a teaching which is especially needed in our day. Thus it was that the Lord providentially arranged that John Paul II should give voice to it. This doctrine is above all a testimony to Our Lady's role in the work of our redemption as Coredeptrix and Mediatrix of all graces, a function which she continues to fulfill in an altogether unique way in the Eucharistic Mystery, as our late Holy Father had the grace to underscore with such consistency and at the same time constantly unveiling new facets of the relationship between Mary and the Eucharist. Our Lady's role in the celebration of the Eucharist and in our lives needs to be proclaimed, celebrated and lived. The more that we do so, the more that the entire Church does so, the more the entire world will be transformed by the Eucharist Mystery.

Conference Proceedings

Mary Co-redemptrix in the Spanish Tradition and Its Definability¹

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There is an Italian song by Andrea Bocelli named *Vivo per Lei*, “I live for Her,” that is, for Music. The song says beautiful things about music, as if music was a Lady. At one moment he confesses: *If I had another life, I would also live it for her*. I very much like to hear this song while looking at Mary, our Holy Mother, instead of Music. At this point of the song, I always think that if I had not one, but a million more lives, I would like to live them all for Her, for our Lady. I would want to spend my time talking about Her, loving Her, studying Her, entering more and more deeply into her Heart.

My essay has two different parts. The first one is about Spain and Co-redemption. The second one is a biblical reflection on the convenience of proclaiming Co-redemption as a Marian dogma.

I. Our Lady and Spain

Spain is often called “Land of Mary” due to the great love she has received from the Spanish people.² Also, regarding Marian co-redemption, there are several fruits in this country.³ I will treat three aspects: 1) Theology: Three scholars talking about Co-redemption; 2) Christian life: Three examples of vows and consecrations for dogmatic proclamations; 3) A recent initiative: the Marian Diocesan Forum (in Getafe, Madrid).

¹ This work has been carried out with the financial support of the Spanish Center for Ecclesiastical Studies attached to the *Spanish National Church of Santiago and Montserrat*, in Rome, within the framework of the research projects of the 2017-2018 academic year.

² For example, there were many journals about Our Lady published in Spain in the 1920s: *Anales de Nuestra Señora del Sagrado Corazón* (Barcelona), *Lourdes* (Barcelona), *Revista Mariana* (Manresa), *Toia Pulchra* (Vich, 1909), *El Mensajero de María* (Totana, 1913), *Estel María* (Valls, 1917), *La Virgen de Don Bosco* (Málaga 1917), *Magisterio Avemariano* (Granada, 1919), *La Inmaculada Milagrosa* (Sevilla, 1919), *Revista Mariana* (Córdoba, 1923), *Inmaculata* (Valencia 1924), *Páginas Marianas* (Vitoria, 1924), etc.

³ There were several congresses about Our Lady’s mediation: *Congreso Mariano de Zaragoza* (1908), *Congreso Mariano Monfortiano de Barcelona* (1918), *Asamblea Mariana de Covadonga* (1926), and *Congreso Hispano Americano de Sevilla* (1929). Cf. N. Pérez, *Historia Mariana de España II* (Toledo 1995).

The theological Spanish tradition on Co-redemption

There is a strong theological tradition in Spain on Mariological mediation and Co-redemption and there are numerous studies about it.⁴ The Spanish Jesuits accepted Cardinal Mercier's proposal from Belgium to promote a dogmatic proclamation of *Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces*. In fact, in 1916, the journal *Sal Terrae* began this movement with several publications that were continued in the journal *Razón y Fe* by Jesuit Fr. Pablo Villada, who published all his articles in 1917 in a book entitled "For the dogmatic definition of Our Lady's universal mediation," the first one on this topic in Spain.⁵

In 1940, right after the end of Spain's civil war (1936-1939), the Spanish Mariological Society was founded, the third one of its kind in the world (after Belgium in 1931 and France in 1934).⁶ Its main goal was to organize a symposium every year with studies and talks by the most important Spanish scholars on Mariology, and to publish their works in the journal of the Society "Estudios Marianos." The society has often treated themes related to Marian Co-redemption in its symposia. For instance:

1942: Mary's Cooperation to salvation: Marian Co-redemption

1947: Spiritual Motherhood

1957: Marian Co-redemption (again)

1965 and 1967: the Marian teaching in *Lumen Gentium* (Vatican Council II) with studies by Olegario Domínguez, Emilio Sauras and Ángel Luis Iglesias on the Marian mediation in the council's debate

2003: Mary's collaboration and redemption

2017: Marian Mediation

⁴ Some of the most popular Spanish scholars on Marian mediation in the '20s are the Fathers Santiago Alameda, Nazario Pérez, José Bau, Venancio Carro, Anibal González and Juan González Arintero. Cf. F. M. Requena, "María Mediadora en la espiritualidad de los años veinte en España: el testimonio de *La Vida Sobrenatural*": *Scripta de Maria* (2004), 341-363; J. Lekan, *Maternidad espiritual de María. Aportación de los mariólogos españoles en el último siglo (1940-1985). Extracto de la Tesis Doctoral presentada en la Facultad de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra* (EDSTh 27.4; Pamplona 1995).

⁵ P. Villada, *Por la definición dogmática de la mediación universal de la Santísima Virgen* (Gabriel López del Horno, Madrid 1917).

⁶ Cf. Díez Merino, L., "Los orígenes de la Sociedad Mariológica Española," *Scripta de Maria* (2011), 131-166.

So, there have been several scholars in the twentieth century studying these questions in Spain. But now, I will mention only three important researchers from different times of the century.⁷

1) *José María Bover (1877-1954)*⁸

This eminent Jesuit is well known in Spain, mainly for teaching the Bible from 1911 to 1950 and for two biblical publications: a Theology of Saint Paul, the first important one in Spanish literature and a very relevant translation of the Bible to Spanish, being co-author with F. Cantera. Studies on Mary came later due to a provident calling. At first, he thought there was no theological basis for Marian co-redemption and universal mediation. In fact, he went in 1918 to a Marian Congress where he was scandalized by the exaggerations he heard there about Marian Mediation. But something happened in the Church... Due to so many petitions asking for the dogmatic proclamation of the Universal Mediation of Mary, at the beginning of the 1920's, the Holy See formed three commissions of expert theologians in order to study the question in Italy, Belgium and Spain. Fr. Bover was chosen to coordinate the Spanish commission on mediation. When he began to study it in depth, he changed his mind. There were another two scholars in his team, Ángel Amor Ruibal and Isidro Gomá. All of them, as well as the whole team from Belgium, gave a positive answer to the Holy Father about the dogmatic proclamation.⁹

From 1922 to 1928, he wrote much on this topic from different perspectives, defending the universal mediation of Our Lady: studies on the Fathers of the Church, on the Scripture, on Liturgy, a Catechism on Marian Universal Mediation, becoming a famous defender of the titles Mediatrix and Co-redemptrix.

He developed his Mariology from his studies on the letters of Saint Paul, mainly from two important ideas: Christ as the second Adam and the total body of Christ, the Head (Jesus), and the body (the Church):

If there is a second Adam, there must be a second Eve, Our Lady. Therefore, she is also the mother of all the redeemed humankind, just as Eve is the mother of every human being.

⁷ Cf. R. Sol, "La mediación de María en autores de la Sociedad Mariológica Española": *Estudios Marianos* 84 (2018), 245-279.

⁸ Cf. T. Ayuso, "El Padre José María Bover, S.I.," *Estudios Bíblicos* 13 (1954), 333-368; F. P. Solá, "R.P. José María Bover Oliver, S.I.," *Estudios Marianos* 15 (1955), 339-347; T. Ayuso, "In memoriam. El P. José María Bover, S.I.," *Revista Española de Teología* 15 (1955), 107-126; Sol, "La mediación de María," 246-256.

⁹ Cf. G. M. Besutti, "La Mediazione di Maria secondo gli studi di due Commissioni istituite da Pio XI," *Marianum* 47 (1983), 37-174.

If Mary is the mother of Christ (the Head), she must also be the mother of His body (Christians).

His main work was published in 1940, a great study on *Mary Universal Mediatrix and Marian Soteriology* (=Role of Mary in salvation), more than 400 pages long. It is impossible to relate it all in this essay, but his conclusion is as follows: "I began my Mariological studies with very strong preventions against the main truths on Marian Soteriology. But Saint Paul and the reading of the patristic writings as well as the pontifical documents later dispelled with shame my preventions, changing them into the most solid conviction about the truth, increasingly brighter and brighter, of Mary's Co-redemption and universal Mediation."¹⁰

Fr. José Bover died some years before the Vatican Council II in 1954.

2) Narciso García Garcés (1904-1989)¹¹

Fr. Narciso, a claretian religious, defended his doctorate in theology with a thesis entitled "Mater Coredemptrix," at the Angelicum University, in Rome. All of his life was dedicated to teaching Mariology. He was the main promotor and founder of the Spanish Mariological Society in 1940 and its first president, remaining in this role almost for 40 years. In this year, he published his doctorate study on Co-redemption in Latin with extensive data about the different authors, their opinions, their positive and negative reasons on the topic, etc.¹² At that moment the debate was great among theologians. His work had two sections:

1. Spiritual Motherhood of Mary in Scripture and Tradition. The main points are the same as those postulated by Fr. Bover: Mary as the Second Eve and her Motherhood of the body of Christ, the Church, because she is the mother of the Head, Christ himself.

¹⁰ J. M. Bover, *María, Mediadora universal o Soteriología mariana* (CSIC, Madrid 1946), 7. Cf. Id., "Mujer, he ahí a tu hijo. Maternidad espiritual de María para con todos los fieles, según San Juan XIX, 26-27," *Estudios eclesidásticos* 1 (1922), 5-18; Id., *La Mediación universal de la Virgen en Santo Tomás de Aquino* (El Mensajero del Corazón de Jesús, Bilbao 1924); Id., *Deiparae Virginis Consensus. Corredemptionis ac Mediationis Fundamentum* (CSIC, Madrid 1942); Id., *La Mediación universal de María* (El Mensajero del Corazón de Jesús, Bilbao 1947); Id., *Meditaciones sobre la Mediación Universal de María* (La Editorial, Zaragoza 1947).

¹¹ Cf. J. M. de Jaime Loren, J. de Jaime Gómez, "Narciso García Garcés (Ojos Negros 1904-1989)": *Xiloca* 33 (2005), 89-118; Á. L. Iglesias, T. Iturriaga, "In memoriam R.P. Narciso García Garcés (1904-1989)": *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 39 (1989), 345-366; E. Barea, "Narciso García Garcés. Fundador de Ephemerides Mariologicae": *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 51 (2001), 49-56; Sol, "La mediación de María," 256-268.

¹² Cf. N. García Garcés, *Mater Coredemptrix, seu de possibili illatione a spirituali Maternitate B.M. Virg. ad formalem eius Corredemptionem* (Marietti, Turín – Roma 1940).

2. The movement from spiritual motherhood to Co-redemption. There is research on liturgy, popes and fathers of the Church; answers to the classical difficulties on co-redemption and the theological relationship between spiritual motherhood and Co-redemption.

That same year he published a handbook on Mariology, *Titles and Greatness of Mary*, explaining all the mysteries and prerogatives of Our Lady.¹³ His theological principle was Mary as the Mother of the Total Christus (Head and Body), dividing his work into three points:

1. How she was prepared for this motherhood from the beginning.
2. How she, indeed, acts as Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church.
3. How her glorification is: the glory of the Mother.

For us, the interesting point is the development of Mary as Mother of the Church. There, Fr. Narciso ventures to go deep into reflection on mediation and co-redemption. The mediatrix title implies three functions, one of them being that of Co-redemptrix: Mary really cooperates for our salvation. There are a lot of conclusions on this topic, and he distinguishes among those he considers certain and others esteemed dubious. He legitimates the title of Co-redemptrix in different ways: mainly as a second Eve and as partner of Christ. There is a real merit in Mary, analogically, in her salvific collaboration.

The second function of mediation is being Advocate for all humanity and the third one is being dispensatory of all graces. These two functions are also developed in detail.

After completing these works, Fr. Narciso worked hard for 30 years as president of the Spanish Mariological Society and director of its journal, as well as being a great divulgator of Marian co-redemption, attending International Marian Congresses all over the world. In 1951, he founded another Marian journal, *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, and some years later he was called to participate in Vatican Council II as a Spanish bishops' consultant. When the document on Mary and the Church,

¹³ Cf. Id., *Títulos y grandezas de María o explicación teológico-popular de los misterios y prerogativas de la celestial Señora* (Coculsa, Madrid 1940, 1952, 1959). For other works, cf. Id., *Catecismo de la devoción al Corazón de María* (Coculsa, Madrid 1943); Id., "Cooperación de María a nuestra redención a modo de sacrificio": *Estudios Marianos* 2 (1943), 195-247; Id., "La devoción al Corazón de María en la poesía religiosa latina de la Edad Media": *Estudios Marianos* 4 (1945), 173-284; Id., "Raíz y fruto de la maternidad espiritual de María": *Estudios Marianos* 7 (1948), 299-340; Id., *Cordis Mariae Filius* (Gráficas Claret, Barcelona 1949).

Lumen Gentium, was approved in November 1964, he got discouraged, but he was soon able to read the text in a very positive manner. A new Mariological perspective and innovative orientations were born within the Council and chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*. Fr. Narciso was the Spanish theologian that more often published articles and studies on this topic, always highlighting the Marian mediation aspects.¹⁴

3) Enrique Llamas (1926-2017)¹⁵

Fr. Enrique, a Carmelite priest specialist on XVI and XVII century Spanish Mariology was the president of the Spanish Marian Society after Fr. Narciso for almost 20 years. His main Mariological work was published in 1964, and its content is clear in its title: *Christ and Mary, unique principle of Salvation*.¹⁶

Unfortunately, this study appeared a few weeks before the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* and he obviously couldn't have cited this essential document, since his book became an "old" text right after its birth. We find in it several ideas on mediation from his professor and thesis director, Fr. Cuervo, who published an interesting work three years later entitled *Divine Motherhood and Marian co-redemption*.¹⁷ Returning to Fr. Llamas's publication, he indicates that the main question on Mariology is to determine accurately Mary's role and position in God's plan of salvation, that is, Marian Co-redemption: "It is our days [said in 1964] Mariological problem and the key for a right and adequate solution of so many other truths."¹⁸ He studies the formulation "Christ and Mary, unique principle of salvation" from all possible points of view: its history, meaning, significance, comparison with other formulations and theological arguments for its utilization. He defends that Our Lady truly paid for human beings the price of their redemption and that she offered

¹⁴ Cf. Id., "La Santísima Virgen en el Concilio," *Estudios Marianos* 26 (1965), 275-310; Id., "La Santísima Virgen nuestra Madre, y nuestra Madre la Santa Iglesia Católica," *Estudios Marianos* 26 (1965), 311-342; Id., "La Sociedad Mariológica Española, de sus orígenes a su actividad en el Concilio," *Estudios Marianos* 27 (1966), 25-83; Id., "Introducción preliminar y nn. 52 a 59," in *Concilio Vaticano II. Comentarios I. Constitución sobre la Iglesia* (BAC, Madrid 1966), 924-981; Id., *La Virgen de nuestra fe* (Coculsa, Madrid 1967); Id., "Explicación última del puesto y misión de la Virgen": *Estudios Marianos* 31 (1968), 69-104; Id., "Los mariólogos españoles y el cap. VIII de la *Lumen Gentium*": *Scripta de Maria* 3 (1980), 525-591.

¹⁵ Cf. All the articles of the journal *Estudios Marianos* 79 (2013), due to his 86th birthday, were dedicated to him; and also L. Díez Merino, "Perfil académico del Prof. Enrique Llamas Martínez OCD," *Estudios Marianos* 80 (2014), 13-44; P. Largo, "En memoria del P. Enrique Llamas," *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 67 (2017), 367-372; R. Llamas, "El P. Enrique, mi hermano," *Miriam* 66 (2017), 232-233; Sol, "La mediación de María," 269-278.

¹⁶ E. Llamas (= Enrique del Sagrado Corazón), *Cristo y María. Único principio de salvación* (Herder, Barcelona 1964).

¹⁷ Cf. M Cuervo, *Maternidad divina y corredención mariana* (Ope, Pamplona 1967).

¹⁸ Llamas, *Cristo y María*, 15.

to God the same sacrifice her divine Son offered.¹⁹ The conclusion of his study is clear: she can be called Co-redemptrix rightfully and truthfully and it can be defined as a dogma. Of course, there are not two principles of salvation but one, because Mary's cooperation is subordinated to her Son's salvation.

As I mentioned before, after this work came *Lumen Gentium*. Then Fr. Llamas began to write articles on this topic from different perspectives, also explaining the Council's text.²⁰ Avoiding extreme positions, he supports the opinion that the cooperation of Mary and the redemption is the basis of Council's Mariology. Therefore, it should also be in the heart of our modern mariologies, integrating the dynamic and active role of Mary in the redemption, which can be called in a correct sense co-redemption. She collaborates with her Son—in the council's perspective of the history of salvation—all throughout his life, with salvific actions in different moments.

He also commented on the great text of Saint John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, underlining again the perspective of Mary's mediation.²¹ Some years later, in 1998, he published another article showing the salvific connection between her divine motherhood and her collaboration in the redemption of humanity.²² With her "let it be done," she collaborates actively and efficiently in the objective redemption (the act of redemption itself).

We can conclude the presentation of these three Spanish theologians saying that all of them agree in this last sentence: Mary collaborated in the Redemption itself, in our salvation in the Paschal Mystery of our Lord's death and resurrection. All of them accept and use Co-redemptrix as a right title for Our Lady.

We could mention other Spanish scholars with the same position, for example Fr. Joaquín Arellano Ferrer (1931-2017), who published a book entitled *The Immaculate's Maternal Mediation, Ecumenical Hope for the Church: Towards the Fifth Marian Dogma*,

¹⁹ Ibid., 170.

²⁰ Cf., Id., "La corredención mariana a través de una controversia teológica del siglo XVII: La figura de la Madre Ágreda," *Estudios Marianos* (1958), 210-241; Id., *La Madre Ágreda y la mariología del Vaticano II* (Arca de la Alianza, Madrid 2007), 135-180; "La cooperación de María a la redención en el siglo XVII y en la madre Ágreda"; Id., "Puesto de María en la economía de la Redención," *Estudios Marianos* 30 (1968), 33-67; Id., "La cooperación de María a la salvación. Nuevas perspectivas después del Vaticano II," *Scripta de Maria* (1979), 423-447; Id., "María predestinada para la redención de los hombres," in *A Teología do Santuario Mariano II* (Braga 1965), 37-50; Id., "El puesto de María en la economía de la salvación," in *María en la Iglesia de hoy* (Coculsa, Madrid 1973), 7-19; Id., "La Soledad redentora. María, en su soledad, colabora a nuestra redención," *Miriam* 27 (1978), 186-189.

²¹ Cf. Id., "La Mediación materna de María en la Encíclica *Redemptoris Mater*," *Estudios Marianos* 61 (1995), 149-180.

²² Cf. Id., "Maternidad divina y colaboración de María a la Redención," *Estudios Marianos* 64 (1998), 387-413.

*Theological Arguments.*²³ Nevertheless, the three that we have seen are probably the most important ones.

The vows and consecrations in Spain for dogmatic proclamations

In order to create an adequate context for the Spanish vows, let us begin with the Immaculate's Dogma and some examples. In 1466, the little town of Villalpando and its entire diocese, Zamora, made a solemn vow to defend the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. It was the first vow for its defense. Valencia's University in 1530, Granada and Alcalá's in 1617 and Barcelona, Salamanca and Valladolid's in 1618, proclaimed her patronage: all professors were obliged to make a vow and to take an oath of teaching and defending this doctrine before joining these universities. In 1779, King Charles III extended this oath to all the universities in his kingdom (Spain and Latin America).²⁴

It would be nice to find these vows and oaths for Mary Co-redemptrix in our universities today, although it seems difficult. Nevertheless, in the twentieth century, we can find in Spain other vows for co-redemption as interesting as these. I will present three examples: a nun, a saint and a city.

1) The nun

María Ángela Sanz Tena was a girl of seventeen when she entered the Cloister of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in Cantalapiedra (Salamanca), of the Poor Sisters of Saint Claire. A year later, on March 25, 1949, she took the name of "Mary, Grace of our Universal Mediatrix," and offered all her hidden life in this Monastery for the proclamation of this dogma. I met her several times before she died in 2017 (June 23). All her sisters remember nowadays how proud she was of her name and how she was absolutely confident on the dogmatic proclamation of this truth, sooner or later.

2) The saint

Saint Pedro Poveda (1874-1936), diocesan priest, Founder of the Teresian Association and Martyr in the religious persecution during the civil war in Spain (1936-1939) was canonized by Saint John Paul II in Madrid in 2003. On February 2, 1926, he wrote this vow:

Having done my oaths to defend with my life the mysteries of
the Assumption in body and soul and the universal Mediation

²³ J. Ferrer Arellano, *La Mediación Materna de la Inmaculada. Esperanza Ecueménica de la Iglesia. Hacia el quinto dogma mariano. Razones Teológicas* (Arca de la Alianza, Madrid 2006).

²⁴ Cf. L. Carbajo, I. De Villalpando, "La devoción a la Inmaculada Concepción en España. La Villa y Tierra de Villalpando," *Cristiandad* 881 (2004), 13-16.

[of Mary], I beg Our Lady the grace of becoming a martyr for
[the proclamation of] these two dogmas.

Since that date, once a year, every March 25, the Teresians – the daughters of San Pedro Poveda – with their pupils, go to the chapel in order to renew the vow. One by one, in a row in front of the priest, they receive the oaths, and with their hand on the Gospels, kneel on ground, and repeat with emotion: “I swear to defend with my life the mysteries of Assumption of Our Lady in body and soul into Heaven and of her role as Mediatrix in the bestowing of all the graces.” Frequently, the priest in front of them was a bishop or even a Cardinal.²⁵

Ten years after his first oath, Our Lady accepted the vow of San Pedro Poveda and he died as a martyr at the beginning of the religious persecution (July 28, 1936). Fourteen years after his martyrdom, in 1950, the dogma was proclaimed. Another is still waiting. Perhaps Our Lady needs someone else offering himself as a martyr for its proclamation.

3) A city

Seville is a Spanish city known for its devotion to Our Lady and the great amount of *cofradías* and brotherhoods under her advocacy. Most of them make vows and oaths defending the universal mediation of Mary as we read in their regulations, in the brotherhoods created before the Council Vatican II, as well as in those created after it. All of them have been approved by the local bishop. This vow was introduced for the first time in 1924 (14-XII-1924), promoted by Pedro Ayala, S.I., in the Congregation of The Immaculate and Saint Luis Gonzaga. Soon after, many other congregations, even the cathedral chapter and the town hall of Seville, joined these vows and the petition to the Holy Father asking for the dogmatic proclamation. Every year (August 15), the cathedral chapter renews its faith on the universal mediation of Mary and the vow to extend and defend this truth.

It is impossible to replicate here the names of all the religious groups that made these vows and oaths. It is enough to say that, in Seville alone, there are 170,000 lay people according to the scholar who made the study in 1996.²⁶ The formulation of the vow is different in each congregation, but only in small details. For example, in the *cofradía* of Our Lady of Patrocinium, the priest asks: “Do you swear to defend, as if it was a dogma of Faith, even until the pouring of your own blood if

²⁵ Josefa Segovia, "Assumpta est Maria," *Spes Nostra* (1941), 69-73.

²⁶ Cf. J. A. Riestra, “La devoción mariana en las cofradías españolas en la actualidad: las hermandades de Gloria de la ciudad de Sevilla,” in PAMI, *De cultu mariano saeculo XX. Maria, Mater Domini, in misterio salutis quod ab Orientis et Occidentis Ecclesiis in Spiritu Sancto hodie celebratur. Acta congressus mariologici-mariani internationalis in sanctuario mariano Czesztochoviensi anno 1996 celebrati. IV* (PAMI, Città del Vaticano 1999), 409-454.

needed, the belief that Our Lady is Patrocinator and Universal Mediatrix of all the graces?” And everybody answers emphatically, “Yes, I do.” It strikes in this brief formulation and in almost all the others the decision to pour out their own blood.

In another vow we read, “we will confess it [Marian mediation] and defend it with all our strength until the last blow of our life and the pouring out if it was necessary all the blood of our veins. Therefore, we solemnly promise it, we make a vow to it and we swear it” It is remarkable also to mention that in many of these vows and oaths we find the terms “co-redemption” and “co-redemptrix” united to the spiritual motherhood and the universal mediation of Our Lady.

We have eight million people asking the Holy Father to proclaim the fifth Marian Dogma. What about eight million people swearing vows and oaths of blood for its proclamation? I am sure that we would achieve not only the Dogma, but also an amazing Kingdom of Martyrs.

The Marian Diocesan Forum (in Getafe, Madrid)

Due to the centenary of Fatima, in my diocese of Getafe (Madrid), we began to think about the possibility of asking the proclamation of Our Lady as Spiritual Mother of all peoples, as Co-Redemptrix. We were three people, another priest doctor in theology, a lay mother and I. As not everybody in the priesthood agreed, either on the concept or on the opportunity and viability of the proclamation of this dogma, we decided to create a forum as a means to dialogue and study together all these questions, led by our auxiliary bishop, José Rico Paves, doctor in Theology and Patristics. We looked for a lot of bibliographies, articles, and books on Marianology and Mediation, Co-Redemption, etc. The bishop formed a Committee presided by the auxiliary one, a sister of *Mater Dei* (Argentina), another priest doctor in theology and rector of the seminary, and the three of us. We built a web site, www.foromariano.es, where we have uploaded all the material we have found, and we continue to update it every day. There is a section on “co-redemption,” where I explain briefly what we understand about Our Lady’s Co-redemption, what its truth is, and a reflection on the benefits of proclaiming it as a dogma. Here we can also find the bibliography folders with all the information I have already mentioned and much more. About 200 articles in different languages, mainly in Spanish, and a lot of very interesting books.

Currently there are about 220 people registered, most of them from Spain, but also from America, Australia, and many other countries.

II. Should the Dogma of Mary Co-redemptrix be proclaimed? A Biblical Reflection

The second part of my essay is a fruit of the Marian Forum: a biblical reflection on the dogmatic proclamation of Mary Co-redemptrix. Saint Teresa of Calcutta affirmed that when the Pope proclaims this dogma, great blessings would come on the Church. Taking the assumption that this is so, what we ask ourselves is: would proclaiming this Marian dogma produce that effect prophesied by St. Teresa of Calcutta? Is it proper for God to act like this? Does it agree with the divine pedagogy? What do we find in the Bible and in the history of salvation?

In order to shed light upon this discussion, we are going to consider the example of Abraham, our father in the faith. It was with him that God began salvation history approximately four millennia ago. Perhaps the first words that God directed to him can help to enlighten us:

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you. I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing. *I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse those who curse you. And through you I will bless all the nations*" (Gen 12:1-3).

It is interesting to see how from the very beginning, God blesses one man and not many. But above all, it is remarkable that He makes the blessing that He wants to give to all mankind depend upon whether or not they themselves bless that one that He has chosen and blessed. In other words: in His plan, He wants to bless all humanity through one man, under the condition that mankind joins together in blessing God's chosen one. If they bless him, they will receive the same blessing that Abram received. If, on the contrary, they curse him, their same curse will come upon them for having called "cursed" the one that God has declared "blessed." The conclusion is obvious: it is beneficial for mankind to bless Abram in order to achieve his own salvation/blessing. God bids them to take this step, recognizing his choice, even though it could seem unjust or arbitrary. Let us consider what the exegete, P. Beauchamp says:

The chosen one is the only one par excellence, the blessed, but blessed for the sake of all the rest. Upon this individual, this one who has been set apart, depends the future of all the families throughout the world, that is, the future of all mankind. "I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse those who curse you"

(Gen 12:3). Question: Is man, therefore, bound to recognize Abraham's authority, honor him and, in the end embrace his beliefs? Answer: they must only bless him. Given that the only option is either to bless or to curse, it is necessary to conclude that cursing him is a real possibility. Men will undergo the temptation to curse him, and not only to curse him but to curse God through him. After all, why did He bless only one man, why not me, or, —in a still more subtle critique (more correct)— why not everyone? This is the scandal caused by Israel's being chosen [and in the end, by Mary's being chosen] the scandal of all divine election. Answer: all are blessed, absolutely everyone, if they just bless one man; that is the condition. Question: no condition has been placed upon the promise made to Abraham; is that just? Answer: this is where the envy that impedes the blessing surfaces; he who is envious, envies God and the life that comes from Him. The life that comes forth from God and gives of itself has no other cause beyond itself. Divine love has no cause: God loves all the families of the earth and he desires that they come to this knowledge through Abraham. [...] In reality, God says to one individual, to Abraham: “I love you so much that I make myself responsible for you and I want all mankind to know this. And upon coming to know this, I want them to bless you!”²⁷

Indeed, in the very origin of salvation history, the need is expressed for all mankind to bless one man, so that the salvation that God has desired for all may reach its fullness. The same occurs with the mystery of the election of Mary Most-Holy, whose role in salvation history is prefigured by Abraham. It is necessary that everyone blesses her, as universally as possible, so that the blessing may reach all humanity in the fullness of salvation.

That is why she herself says in the Magnificat: “All generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me” (Lk 1:48-49). Mary's words do not come forth from pride, or from the desire to be exalted. It's entirely the opposite... they come from having perceived in full depth, the saving vitality of God's election: all generations, upon praising and blessing Mary, the most-faithful daughter of Abraham and his purest fruit, may redound upon themselves not only the blessing of our father in the faith, but also the very blessing of the Mother of God. Mary knows this and rejoices in the salvation that all who bless her will achieve, despite the fact that it is not always easy for man to bless someone other

²⁷ P. Beauchamp, *Cincuenta retratos bíblicos* (BAC Popular 200; BAC, Madrid 2014), 4-5.

than himself. This has already happened to Cain. Instead of rejoicing fraternally at Abel's being blessed and joining in this blessing, and so gaining for himself the same benefits, he became jealous; he desired to be the chosen one, the blessed, and thereby lost all blessing (cf. Gen 4:1-16).

Let's be honest: God asks something that is impossible; the story of Cain who killed Abel because God preferred his offering above his own was already proof enough. [...] The radiant call made to Abraham is disposed to multiple dangers. God has asked the nations to bless him (cf. Gen 12:1-3). Must we worry about Abram, foreseeing a shadow upon the future of the nations, before whom God places the difficult test of asking them to bless his chosen one? Being blessed is not a misfortune; having to bless should not be so either, but how many conflicts does it indeed announce!²⁸

The pedagogy of being chosen is present throughout all of salvation history: God chooses Jacob over Esau, Joseph over his brothers, Israel before all other peoples, the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron above all the rest, David above Saul and so on. We are not dealing with a minor characteristic of the story of the plan of salvation.

On the other hand, as Beauchamp says, neither having to bless Abraham, nor any of God's chosen-ones should be considered a misfortune. And we must indeed conclude that neither should having to bless Mary be considered a misfortune. Especially if, after having reflected upon the call made to Abraham, we realize that it is in this way that God has desired to extend his blessing to all of humanity.

Blessing Mary, therefore, with a fifth dogma that recognizes and proclaims the great things that God has done in her, would be an action fully in accord with the divine pedagogy employed in his plan of salvation. The downpour of graces announced by St. Teresa of Calcutta for when this dogma is proclaimed can thus be understood in the light of Genesis 12.

The Church certainly has no more solemn, profound and radical way to bless Mary in the entire world, than by proclaiming a dogma. The proclamation made by the Pope in the name of the entire Church of the truth of Mary as essential collaborator in the salvific work of her Son, a proclamation that would declare this as a truth of the faith, a truth that obliges all Catholics, would bring God's blessing upon the entire Church. This would be adapting oneself to the divine pedagogy that He Himself has both taught us and demanded of us. To proclaim this dogma

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

is to make all Catholics bless Mary as Spiritual Mother, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate, and thus open their hearts to God's blessing, God who desires in this way to extend to all men the same blessing that He bestowed upon Mary.

If the one who calls Abraham blessed is blessed, it is conceivable that, if the Church dogmatically proclaims Mary the spiritual Mother of humanity, it will receive more fully the grace of her motherhood, and the Church itself will be enabled more gracefully to be a spiritual mother of Christians and men.

If the Church proclaims Mary Co-redemptrix, according to the divine logic, Christians will live the redemption of Christ more deeply, and they will become co-redeemers in Mary, collaborating with God more effectively in the redemption and salvation of the world.

If the Church proclaims Mary Mediatrix, it will open itself even more to Our Lady's mediation, and be a better mediator of God's grace for the world.

If the Church proclaims Mary Advocate, it will receive an even more powerful intercession from Our Lady, and it will be able to intercede for the world more perfectly still.

Hence, the present suitability of proclaiming the said dogma has been presented. We could almost say that the need of proclaiming this dogma is so that all the grace that God has destined upon mankind may be bestowed. It would indeed be unfortunate, and truly a great responsibility if we were to deprive the Church of such a blessing simply by not blessing Mary with this proclamation.

Mary in the Redemption: The Eastern European Perspective

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September 15, as we know, is the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. In Slovakia, we say *Our Lady of Seven Sorrows*, and it is not only a liturgical feast, but a solemnity. Holy Mass is said including the *gloria* and *credo*, but it is also considered a state holiday, where the shops are closed. At ten in the morning, bishops and thousands of people are at Holy Mass in Šaštín – this is the main sanctuary in Slovakia to celebrate Holy Mass, and this Holy Mass was transmitted in state television.

So, we ourselves, with many other Christian faithful people throughout the world, accept as a true fact, that She, the Virgin Mary – Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, true man and true God, can and should have the title of Coredemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate.

During the Second Vatican Council, there were only 54 bishops who wanted a conciliar pronouncement on Mary as Coredemptrix. 362 bishops desired a conciliar statement on Mary's mediation, while 266 of them asked for a dogmatic definition; but, as we know, the Council was to be primarily pastoral in its orientation, and did not want to make any dogmatic definitions. But we also know that the *Prænotanda* to the first conciliar draft document on the Virgin Mary contained these words: "Omissæ sunt expressiones et vocabula quædam a Summis Pontificibus adhibita, quæ licet in se verissima, possent difficulius intelligi a fratribus separatis (in casu a protestantibus). Inter alia vocabula adnumerari queunt sequentia: Corredemptrix humani generis."¹

It is clear that the role and place of Virgin Mary, as the nearest human person to the Son of God on earth and in heaven, was really close to Him in his work of salvation. It is clearly stated in the second point of our Declaration of January 1,

¹ Certain expressions and words used by Supreme Pontiffs have been omitted, which, in themselves are absolutely true, but which may only be understood with difficulty by separated brethren (in this case Protestants). Among such words may be numbered the following: Coredemptrix of the human race. In *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, Vol. I, Pt. IV (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1971), 99. See in Arthur B. Calkins, "The Mystery of Mary Coredemptrix in the Papal Magisterium," in: Mark Miravalle (ed.), *Mary Coredemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today* (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 2002).

2017, that “Mary’s participation in the saving work of Jesus is entirely dependent on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, the only divine Redeemer.”²

It was my privilege to know personally Cardinal Tomáš Špidlík during my theological studies at the Pontifical Lateran University and the priestly formation in the Pontifical College of St. John of Nepomuk during the 1980s.

His view in this matter was clear: “When we contemplate the manner of cooperation in which Mary cooperated with Christ, we must consider especially the three moments or mysteries: The Incarnation, the Death and the Resurrection... There is no doubt about Mary’s collaboration in the mystery of Incarnation. She, as Mother of Incarnate God, has the right to be called Coredemptrix.”³

I can say the same about Msgr. Brunero Gherardini, my professor of Ecclesiology. His position was also clear: “The truth of Marian Coredemption meets in a totally and amply verifiable way all the conditions of a true doctrine, and should be Church doctrine. Its foundation is indirect but implicit, in the Scriptures; in the Fathers and Theologians; and so in the Magisterium.”

It is known that the Church in Slovakia, and in other eastern European countries, was persecuted until 1989 by the Communists. Some dioceses in my homeland were without bishops for more than 30 years. From 1973 to 1988 there were only three Bishops in Slovakia.

But during this period, several Slovak bishops were living in exile, mainly in Rome but also in other places. Two of them in particular are of concern with regard to our present theme, Mary Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate.

During my theological studies and priestly formation in Rome (I alone was a refugee), I had the fortune to live close to our exiled Slovak Bishop, Paul Hnilica, SJ.⁴ He, before his fleeing from Slovakia, had made a vow to Our Lady the Coredemptrix: “If I reach Rome safely, I want to inform the Holy Father about the real conditions of the persecuted Church. I want to spend the rest of my life spreading the doctrine of the Coredemptrix and making known the mystery of Coredemption in the light of the Holy Spirit.”

Bishop Paul Hnilica was a world-renowned apostle of the Fatima message and left us a valuable theological and cultural heritage. Maybe some of you have read or

² “The Role of Mary in Redemption: A Document of the Theological Commission of the International Marian Association,” *Ecce Mater Tua*, vol. 1 (2018), 23–37.

³ Tomáš Špidlík: *Eva – Maria nella Tradizione dei Padri*. In: AA.VV., *Maria Corredentrice Storia e Teologia I*. Frigento (AV): (Casa Mariana Editrice Bibliotheca Corredemptionis B. V. Mariae, Studi e Ricerche 1, 1998), 126.

⁴ He was born on March 30, 1921. He was consecrated in Slovakia by diocesan Bishop Robert Pobožný on September 29, 1950 as priest, and three months later, on January 2, 1951 as bishop. To save his life, he had to escape to the West. President of a lay movement, recognized by the Holy See, The Family of Mary Coredemptrix. He died October 8, 2006.

personally listened to his lecture in February of 2000 at the International Symposium on Marian Coredemption, Ratcliffe, England.

He said there that all the Christians are invited to cooperate with Jesus in the redemption, according to the words of St. Paul who writes, “to make up in my own body all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church” (cf. Col 1:24).

He, Bishop Hnilica, called Pope John Paul II the pope of the *Totus Tuus* – the pope of the Coredemptrix. Together with Mary Coredemptrix, we, as humble servants of the Lord, will be raised up by God to understand the height, depth, and width of the mystery of our redemption and of our coredemption, together with, and under the guidance, of Mary, our coredeeming Mother.⁵

The other Slovak bishop living in this communist time was Dominik Hrušovský, who was rector of the Slovak Institute of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Rome. In the last years of his active life, he was Apostolic Nuncio to the Republic of Belarus. He, as young priest, delivered a paper about Mary Coredemptrix at the International Mariological Congress at Lourdes in 1958.⁶

I lived several years near Bishop Paul Hnilica, and in 1997, I knew about his controversy with one Slovak auxiliary bishop concerning Virgin Mary’s title coredemptrix. You can read about it in my book.⁷

Another one, a world renowned Slovak historian, still living, Milan Ďurica, SDB (1925), at one time the professor at Padua University, and a *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council, said in his essay, *Slováci a Sedembolestná (Slovaks and Our Lady of Seven Sorrows)*, he wrote: “The Gospel represents Mary most strikingly in moments of Her heroic participation in the Son’s Passion, which earned her the title Coredemptrix of the World.”⁸

About 25 years ago, in September 1994, on the Feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, Patroness of Slovakia, the archbishop Ján Sokol, the first and unique archbishop-metropolitan of Slovakia, in his homily which was broadcast by Slovak

⁵ Paul Hnilica, “The Mystery of Coredemption in the Message of Fatima,” in *Acts of the International Symposium on Marian Coredemption*, Ratcliffe College (N. Leicester) Ratcliffe on the Wreak, England, February 21–26, 2000 (Academy of the Immaculate [New Bedford, MA] 2001), 1–14.

⁶ Dominik Hrušovský, “Beata Maria Virgo Coredemptrix et passiones atque dolores actuales Mystici Corporis Christi,” in *Maria et Ecclesia; Acta congressus mariologici-mariani in civitate Lourdes anno 1958 celebrati*. Vol. IX. *Maria et propagatio ac consolidatio ecclesiae* (Pontificia academia mariana internationalis, Roma 1961), 30–42.

⁷ Ján Košíar, *Could Holy Mary Be Called Coredemptrix*, (North Carolina: Lulu press, 2017).

⁸ Milan S. Ďurica, *Slováci a Sedembolestná: kultúrne historický náčrt (Slovaks and Our Lady of Seven Sorrows: cultural and historical point of view)*. Linea recta brevissima, nr. 14, (Bratislava: Lúč – Ústav dejín kresťanstva, 2008), 14.

State Radio, said: "Properly by her suffering with her Son, she became Coredeptrix of the human race."⁹

These words remain a clear testimony of the archbishop's position about Mary Coredeptrix. Maybe Archbishop Sokol read the little book from Mark Miravalle, published also in a Slovak translation.¹⁰

After the fall of the communist regime, several Catholic religious magazines and revues were born. One of these was and is the monthly *M Rosa*, dedicated to the Virgin Mary.¹¹ The magazine contains many articles about Marian apparitions in the world and in Slovakia, about Eucharistic miracles, etc.

One of the frequent authors and contributors of this periodical was Bishop Paul Hnilica. So it was naturally, that the paper *M Rosa* came in contact with the American movement *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrix*.¹² In 1996,¹³ this Marian magazine published the *Vox Populi* petition and this attracted as many as 25,000 signatures.¹⁴

The editor-in-chief, Mr. Anton Selecký, asked the Slovak bishops' conference what the bishops were thinking about the petition for fifth Marian dogma. He received the answer: "The activities in relation to such a petition are free. It is the case of a personal Christian responsibility."¹⁵

On May 24, 1997, Bishop Hnilica sent a letter to all the Slovak bishops:

I would like to say to you that up until now, the petition supporting the dogma of Mary as Coredeptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate has been signed by many Christians including more than four million faithful, 470 Bishops and 44 Cardinals from around the whole world. These petitions were presented to the Holy Father. [...] The movement *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrix* has started in America and is supported by many eminent Church personalities and a large body of faithful on every continent. We consider with goodwill, this activity, aiming at greater knowledge of Mary Coredeptrix.

⁹ Slovenský rozhlas (Slovak State Radio) September 15, 1994. Text was published in *Katolícke noviny*, (Slovak Catholic Newspaper, anno 109 (1994), nr. 37), 1.

¹⁰ Mark Miravalle, *Mary: Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate* (Goleta, CA: Queenship, 1993); Slovak edition, *Mária Spoluvykupiteľka, Prostrednica, Orodovnica* (Bratislava: Magnificat, 1995).

¹¹ The first number was issued in October 7, 1993.

¹² This Marian international movement was founded by Mark Miravalle, STD, in the year 1993.

¹³ *M Rosa*, Anno IV, May 1996, 13-14.

¹⁴ *M Rosa*, Anno VI, March-April 1998, a special number, 74.

¹⁵ Košiar, *Could Holy Mary Be Called Coredeptrix?*, op. cit., 98 and 166.

Some theologians in the West, even those who speak negatively about the title Mary Coredemptrix and about the possibility of its proclamation as dogma of faith, however say, that this question is free and open to discussion.

The petition movement for the dogmatic definition of Mary as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate is a challenge for studying the question of the fifth Marian dogma. This is the opinion of Cardinal Ratzinger, and this initiative was not forbidden by anybody in Rome.

The holy father John Paul II alone, used the title Coredemptrix at least six times: at the general audience on September 8, 1982; at the Angelus allocution on November 4, 1984; and March 31, 1985; January 31, 1985 in Ecuador; March 24, 1990 in an audience for sick; and at the Angelus on October 6, 1991.

Similarly, cardinals (44), bishops (470) and faithful (4.2 million) expressed their love to Mary as “Coredemptrix,” “Mediatrix,” and “Advocate” with their signatures on the petition sheets.” This is what Bishop Paul Hnilica wrote to other Slovak bishops in 1997.¹⁶

Some Catholic priests, in other places besides Slovakia, still have difficulties with this term, Coredemptrix. Two years ago, I found an article in Bratislava’s parishes bulletin QUO,¹⁷ about John Paul II, where I read: “He [John Paul II] rightly refused the title Coredemptrix, while the only Redeemer is her Son, Jesus Christ.” I asked the author about this statement and where he had found this affirmation. I received no answer. But I could quote him several places and dates, where Pope John Paul II properly used the title Coredemptrix.

From the published documents in *L’Osservatore Romano* and *Insegnamenti*, the title was used *seven times*.¹⁸ Six of them are well-known, and the seventh became known to me only in 2016.

¹⁶ Košiar, *Could Holy Mary Be Called Coredemptrix?*, op. cit., 102–105.

¹⁷ Daniel Dian, “Mária Matka milosrdenstva, Mária Kráľovná pokoja” (Mary Mother of Mercy, Mary Queen of Mercy), in *QUO*, information bulletin of catholic parishes in Bratislava (anno 26, September 2016), 1.

¹⁸ The occurrences are as follows.

1. In greetings to the sick after the general audience of September 8, 1982, Pope John Paul II said: “Mary, though conceived and born without the taint of sin, participated in a marvelous way in the sufferings of her divine Son, in order to be *Coredemptrix* of humanity.”

2. In Rome, in a General Audience on December 10, 1982: “Dear infirm people, I am inviting also you to direct a thought of fervent devotion to Mary, the joy of our hearts, comforter of all the suffering people. As we also are tested by pain, we can not forget to rejoice in our God, who has clothed us in garments of salvation and in a mantle of holiness, to be able to transform our pain into loving offer, in imitation of the Virgin Mary, *the Coredemptrix*.”

Please consider some recent examples about the use of the term Mary Coredeptrix in Slovakia. Exactly one year ago in a program broadcast by the Slovak Catholic Radio Lumen on September 15, 2017, on the solemnity of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, the Patroness of Slovakia, it was said: “The first person who joined her suffering to that of Jesus, was his mother Mary. Jesus was surely able to accomplish human redemption without Mary. But it pleased God to accept the offer of human love – the love willing to have a share in his suffering and pain. And he chose Mary, since a mother was always ready to stay with her son even in his suffering. That is the reason why we can call our Mother Mary the Coredeptrix.” This text, by a well-known Slovak priest and preacher, was already published in 2010 and one year ago was read in a radio broadcast.¹⁹

Thanks be to God that in Slovakia we have now a deeply devoted bishop to the Virgin Mary, bishop of the diocese of Rožňava, where during communist time, was secretly ordained priest and Bishop Paul Hnilica (1950 and 1951). His name is Stanislav Stolárik, who recently in public spoke about Mary Coredeptrix:

“Mary is our mother; Mary is praying for us and defends us as Advocate. She is also our mother because through her as Mediatrix, we receive the graces of re-

3. On November 4, 1984, in his Angelus address in Arona: “To Our Lady – *the Coredeptrix* – St. Charles turned with singularly revealing accents.”

4. On January 31, 1985, in an address at the Marian shrine in Guayaquil, Ecuador: “Mary goes before us and accompanies us.... The Gospels do not tell us of an appearance of the risen Christ to Mary. Nevertheless, as she was in a special way close to the Cross of her Son, she also had to have a privileged experience of his Resurrection. In fact, Mary’s role as *Coredeptrix* did not cease with the glorification of her Son”.

5. On March 31, 1985, Palm Sunday and World Youth Day: “At the Angelus hour on this Palm Sunday, which the Liturgy recalls also the Sunday of the Lord’s Passion, our thoughts run to Mary, immersed in the mystery of an immeasurable sorrow. Mary accompanied her divine Son in the most discreet concealment pondering everything in the depths of her heart... May, Mary our Protectrix, *the Coredeptrix*, to whom we offer our prayer with great outpouring, make our desire generously correspond to the desire of the Redeemer.”

6. On March 24, 1990, addressing the sick and those who serve them: “May the Most Holy Mary, *Coredeptrix of the human race*, next to her Son, give you always courage and confidence! And may you be accompanied also by my blessing which I now bestow on you with all my heart!”

7. In commemorating the sixth centenary of the canonization of St. Brigitte of Sweden on October 6, 1991: “Brigitte looked to Mary as her model and support in the various moments of her life... She invoked her as the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Sorrows, and *Coredeptrix*, exalting Mary’s singular role in the history of salvation.”

¹⁹ Anton Fabián, *Vydarený život (I). Zamyslenia inšpirované evanjeliom. (A successful life I, Reflections inspired by the Gospel)*. Prešov: 2010, Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška (Michal Vaško Publishing House), 322.

demption. She is our Mother because she suffered for all people as a painful mother, whom we call Mother of Seven Sorrows, and then it is right to call her Coremptrix,” said Bishop Stolárik.²⁰ The next day, May 13, the hundred and first anniversary of Fatima, and Day of Mothers, Bishop Stolárik repeated it in his own in the Cathedral Church in Rožňava: “The Virgin Mary is Coremptrix, because she suffered with her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.”²¹

* * *

Another Catholic country in central and eastern Europe with deep Marian devotion is Poland. My friend and colleague from the time of our theological studies in Rome at the Pontifical Faculty Marianum, Fr. Grzegorz Bartosik OFM Conv, has sent me some Polish articles about this theme.²²

Zbigniew Kraszewski (1922–2004), from 1970 who was the auxiliary bishop in Warsaw, left the following testimony: “Mary is Mediatrix in an exceptional and universal sense: she is an intermediary as Coremptrix during her life on earth and as a dispenser of all graces in heaven.”²³

To another Polish author, the priest Fr. Wincenty Granat (1900–1979), Rector of Catholic University of Lublin, the title of Virgin Mary “Coremptrix” is, according with De Aldam, J. Bittremieux, J. M. Borer, J. Carol, R. Laurentin, M. Ros-

²⁰ Homily of Bishop of Rožňava, Stanislav Stolárik during Day of Mother of all People in Nitra (Slovakia) May 12, 2018 transmitted live by Slovak Catholic Radio Lumen. www.tkkbs.sk/view.php?cislocianku=20180514041.

²¹ www.burv.sk/2018/06/08/najvacsie-stastie-kazdej-mamy-7-velkonocna-nedela-b-homilia-mons-stanislava-stolarika-pocas-sv-omse-v-katedrale-nanebovzatie-panny-marie-v-roznave-sv-omsa-v-priamom-prenose-rtvs-d/

²² Grzegorz Bartosik, *Mediatrix in Spiritu Mediatore. Pośrednictwo Najświętszej Maryi Panny jako uczestnictwo w pośredniczącej funkcji Ducha Świętego w świetle teologii współczesnej*, (Niepokalanów: 2006); *The Holy Spirit and The Immaculate in the mystery of salvation according to saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe (Spiritus Sanctus et Immaculata in mysterio salutis iuxta Sanctum Maximilianum Kolbe)*, in *De culto mariano saeculo XX. Maria, Mater Domini, in mysterio salutis quod ab orientis et occidentis ecclesias in Spiritu Sancto Hodie celebratur. Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis in Sanctuario Mariano Częstochoviensi anno 1996 celebrati*, vol. V (Città del Vaticano, 2000), 391–406.

²³ Zbigniew Kraszewski, “Udział Matki Bożej w dziele odkupienia,” in *Gratia plena – Studia Teologiczne o Bogurodicy*, ed. Bernard Przybylski (Poznan–Warszawa–Lublin: Księgarnia sw. Wojciecha, 1965), 277–301.

chini and others, wholly normal.²⁴ The same holds for Fr. Witold Pietkun (1911–1981), who has dedicated to Mary Coredemptrix an entire chapter of his book.²⁵

An interesting study about Virgin Mary and her role in the life of the Church remains in the work of Mark Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate* (1993), which was published also in Slovak under the title *Mária Spoluykúpielka, Prostrednica, Orodoonica*²⁶ and in Polish, *Maryja Wspólodkupicielka, Pośredniczka, Orędowniczka*.²⁷ Witold Wojciechowski in his article *Nony Dogmat Maryjny (New Marian Dogma)* writes that in Poland the petition of *Vox populi* has the signatures of 43 bishops.²⁸ In one web site I noted that it is two years old and has today only 1,189 signatures.²⁹

We can see that the opinion of theological experts and bishops is still varying and ambiguous. So we see that it is necessary to pray fervently for the intention that the Holy Spirit illuminate our minds and hearts for a right comprehension of the role of the Virgin Mary as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate.

Deo vobisque gratias.

²⁴ Wincenty Granat, “Boga rodzica–Wspólodupielka” (Mother of God–Coredemptrix), in *Homo Dei*, anno XXVI, November–December 1967, nr. 6 (84), 811–22.

²⁵ Witold Pietkun, *Maryja matka chrystusa: Rozwoj dogmatu maryjnego*. Warszawa: 1954 Pax, 1954, Chapter II: Wspólodupielka (Coredemptrix), 179–88.

²⁶ Cf. note 12 above.

²⁷ Kamyk, Borowianka: 1993, Druk-Allegro.

²⁸ www.gloria.tv/article/3TuyinTuvupZBFJmbPZwHVGE1.

²⁹ www.citizengo.org/pl/34969-blagamy-pasterzy-kosciola-katolickiego-w-polsce-wyprosic-proklamacje-v-dogmatu-u-ojca-swietego.

The Role of Mary in the Work of Redemption: Seven Key Moments

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Introduction

The role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the economy of salvation is rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation. God chose to unite creation to himself by becoming incarnate *ex Maria virgine*.¹ The eternal plan for the created cosmos, therefore, includes the Blessed Mother. The role of Mary in the economy of salvation is, therefore, not something marginal but central. In fact, the Blessed Virgin Mary is part of God's plan from all eternity. The theology of Marian co-redemption unfolds in seven key moments: 1) Mary's predestination as the Co-redemptrix; 2) Mary's Immaculate Conception; 3) Mary's free consent to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate at the Annunciation; 4) Mary's union with her Son "in the work of salvation" from "the time of Christ's virginal conception up to His death";² 5) Mary's union with Christ's passion and her offering of her crucified Son to the Father; 6) Mary's glorious assumption body and soul into heaven; 7) Mary's ongoing maternal mediation of the grace with and under Christ, the one Mediator. Each of these moments deserves individual attention, but all of them combine to illuminate Mary's essential role in the work of redemption.

1. Mary's predestination as Mother of the Redeemer and Co-redemptrix

Mary was predestined to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word. According to Bl. John Duns Scotus (c. 1265–1308), the predestination of the Incarnation was part of God's original plan and not dependent on the sin of the first man.³ This means that Mary was predestined from all eternity to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate. In his 1854 bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, proclaiming the dogma of the Immacu-

¹ Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann, eds. *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), n. 150 (henceforth D-H).

² Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 57.

³ Edward T. Oakes, S.J. *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic and Evangelical Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011), 206–209. See John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 7 q. 3.

late Conception, Bl. Pius IX affirmed the predestination of Mary, but he seemed to link this predestination to the lamentable fall of the human race:

God Ineffable—whose ways are mercy and truth, whose will is omnipotence itself, and whose wisdom “reaches from end to end mightily, and orders all things sweetly”—having foreseen from all eternity the lamentable wretchedness of the entire human race which would result from the sin of Adam, decreed, by a plan hidden from the centuries, to complete the first work of his goodness by a mystery yet more wondrously sublime through the Incarnation of the Word. This he decreed in order that man who, contrary to the plan of Divine Mercy had been led into sin by the cunning malice of Satan, should not perish; and in order that what had been lost in the first Adam would be gloriously restored in the Second Adam. From the very beginning, and before time began, the eternal Father chose and prepared for his only-begotten Son a Mother in whom the Son of God would become incarnate and from whom, in the blessed fullness of time, he would be born into this world.⁴

In this passage, Pius IX leaves open the question whether the predestination of the Incarnation was conditioned by the foreseen fall of the human race, but he clearly affirms that God’s foreknowledge of the fall results in the Incarnate Word’s mission of redemption. This means that Mary was predestined not only to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word but also the Mother of the Redeemer. Vatican II also affirms the Blessed Virgin’s predestination, and it likewise links this predestination to redemption:

Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the

⁴ Pius IX, bull, *Ineffabilis Deus* (Dec. 8, 1954): <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9ineff.htm>. It should be noted that in the 43rd edition of Denzinger-Hünermann’s *Compendium* (English ed. 2012) the reference to the foreseen wretchedness of the human race is omitted via ellipsis in n. 2800.

work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls.

Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace.⁵

This passage shows that Mary was predestined from eternity to be the Mother of the Redeemer. She also was predestined to be “above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord.” This means that Mary’s association with Christ in the work of redemption was predestined. The Blessed Virgin, therefore, is the predestined Co-redemptrix from all eternity because the redemption of the human race necessarily involves her singular and free association with the work of redemption.

2. Mary’s Immaculate Conception and her Co-redemptive Role

Mary’s preservation from all stain of original sin is directly related to her co-redemptive role. This is clearly taught by Bl. Pius IX in his 1854 bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*. As he explains, Mary’s immunity from original sin enabled her, as the New Eve, to triumph completely over the Devil:

And, indeed, it was altogether fitting that so venerable a mother, aglow with radiance, ever adorned with the splendors of a most perfect holiness and entirely immune from the stain of original sin, should have the most complete triumph over the ancient serpent. It was she to whom the Father willed to give his only Son, generated from his heart and equal to himself and whom he loves as himself. And he wished to give him in such a way that he would be, by nature, one and the same common Son of God the Father and the Virgin. And as the Son himself actually chose her to be his mother, just so the Holy Spirit willed and ordained that she should conceive and give birth to the one from whom he himself precedes.⁶

As can be seen, Mary’s immunity from original sin and most perfect holiness enables her to be the Co-redemptrix who triumphs over the ancient serpent, the Devil.

The Blessed Mother’s Immaculate Conception also allows her to be a fitting Mother to the Incarnate Word who is like us in all things but sin (cf. Heb 4:15). The Word could only take his human nature from one who is “full of grace” and

⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (Nov. 21, 164), 61: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

⁶ Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (Dec. 8, 1854) in in Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann, eds. *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals* [henceforth D-H] (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), n. 2801.

free from sin (original as well as personal). This is brought out vividly by Pope St. Leo I:

[Christ] assumed the form of a servant without the defilement of sin, enriching the human without diminishing the divine ... He is generated, however, by a new birth: because an inviolate virginity, not knowing concupiscence has supplied the matter of the flesh. (*quia inviolata virginitas concupiscentiam nescivit, carnis materiam ministravit*), From the mother of the Lord, nature, not guilt, was assumed (*Assumpta est de matre Domini natura, non culpa*).⁷

God chose to redeem the world by the Incarnation. Mary's Immaculate Conception enables her to provide a human nature to the Word of God that is free from any trace of sin. Her Immaculate Conception, therefore, enables her to be the Co-redemptrix whose immunity from original sin is necessary for the Word to assume a human nature that was never touched by sin.

3. Mary's Free Consent to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate at the Annunciation

Mary's Immaculate Conception prepared her to give her free and full consent to the invitation to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate. Many Church fathers recognized the Virgin Mary as the New Eve who collaborates with Christ, the New Adam, in bringing salvation to the human race. St. Justin Martyr (†165) and St. Irenaeus (c. 130–202) both highlight the Eve-Mary parallelism, and Irenaeus makes this a prominent feature of his soteriology of recapitulation. As he writes: "By disobeying, Eve became the cause of death for herself and the whole human race. In the same way Mary ... by obeying ... became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race."⁸

In the Christian East, Church fathers such as St. Ephraem of Syria (c. 306–373) and St. Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315–403) affirm Mary as the New Eve, and they acknowledge her indispensable role in the work of redemption. St. Ephraem says that God chose Mary to be "the instrument of our salvation."⁹ St. Epiphanius sees Mary as bringing forth "the Cause of Life" to the human race just as Eve

⁷ Pope Leo I, Tome to Flavian in D-H, 293–4.

⁸ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.22: *oboediens et sibi et universo generi humano causa facta est salutis*; see Luigi Gambero S.M. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, translated by Fr. Thomas Buffer. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 54. See also J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina* (Paris, 1844ff) 7: 959 [henceforth PL] and Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 56.

⁹ Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus": *The Story of Mary Coredeptrix* (Goleta CA: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 70.

brought the cause of death.¹⁰ St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) exclaims that, through the Mother of God, “the devil is cast down from heaven” and “the fallen creature is raised up to heaven”¹¹

During the Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) highlights the importance of Mary’s free consent at the Annunciation as needed for “a sort of spiritual wedlock [*quoddam spirituale matrimonium*] between the Son of God and human nature” and, therefore, “through the Annunciation the consent of the Virgin in the place of all human nature [*loco totius humanae naturae*] was awaited”¹² Mary, therefore, speaks for the entire human race. She welcomes the Redeemer into her womb and into human history. Pope Leo XIII draws upon this insight of St. Thomas in his 1891 encyclical, *Octobri mense*:

The eternal Son of God, about to take upon himself our nature for the saving and ennobling of man and about to consummate thus a mystical union between himself and all mankind, did not accomplish his design without adding there the free consent of the elect Mother who acted in some way in the role of the human race itself, according to the illustrious and most true opinion of St. Thomas: “Through the Annunciation, the consent of the Virgin, in the place of human nature, was awaited.”¹³

As the New Eve Mary is also the new “mother of the living” (Gen 3:20). Her free consent to be the Mother of the Word of God was an essential contribution to the redemption of the human race according to God’s most wise design. Mary made an active contribution to the redemption of the human race by saying yes to God’s invitation to be the mother of the Word Incarnate. Vatican II underscores the active collaboration of Mary in the work of redemption in *Lumen Gentium*, 56:

Thus Mary, a daughter of Adam, consenting to the divine Word, became the mother of Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Embracing God’s salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption.

¹⁰ Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 1.3, t.2; J.–P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca* (Paris, 1857ff) [henceforth PG] 42.729; Miravalle 2003: 70.

¹¹ Cyril of Alexandria, *Homilia In Deipara*: PG 65.681; as cited in Michael O’Carroll C.S.Sp. *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000) 239.

¹² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III, q. 30, a. 1. This text of Aquinas is cited by Leo XIII in his September 22, 1891 encyclical, *Octobri mense*; see D-H, 3274.

¹³ Leo XIII, encyclical, *Octobri mense* (September 22, 1891): D-H, 3274.

Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she “being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.” Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert in their preaching, “The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith.” Comparing Mary with Eve, they call her “the Mother of the living,” and still more often they say: “death through Eve, life through Mary.”¹⁴

At the Annunciation, Mary is clearly an active collaborator with God’s salvific plan. In other words, at the Annunciation, she is the Co-redemptrix.

4. Mary’s Union with Christ during His Earthly Ministry

Vatican II’s *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* tells us that Mary, the Mother of God, “is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son (*indissolubili nexu cum Filii sui opere salutari coniungitur*).”¹⁵ This inseparable or indissoluble bond between Mary and the saving work of her Son is manifested from the time of Christ’s conception in her womb up to His death.

Vatican II, in *Lumen Gentium* 57, explains this union between Mary and Jesus in these terms:

This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ’s virginal conception up to His death it is shown first of all when Mary, arising in haste to go to visit Elizabeth, is greeted by her as blessed because of her belief in the promise of salvation and the precursor leaped with joy in the womb of his mother. This union is manifest also at the birth of Our Lord, who did not diminish His mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it, when the Mother of God joyfully showed her firstborn Son to the shepherds and Magi. When she presented Him to the Lord in the temple, making the offering of the poor, she heard Simeon foretelling at the same time that her Son would be a sign of contradiction and that a sword would pierce the mother’s soul that out of many hearts

¹⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), n. 56.

¹⁵ Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (December 4, 1963), n. 103.

thoughts might be revealed. When the Child Jesus was lost and they had sought Him sorrowing, His parents found Him in the temple, taken up with the things that were His Father's business; and they did not understand the word of their Son. His Mother indeed kept these things to be pondered over in her heart.¹⁶

The Council goes on to note some of the significant appearances of Mary in the public life of Jesus, At the marriage feast of Cana, for example, the Blessed Mother "moved with pity" interceded to bring about "the beginning of miracles of Jesus the Messiah."¹⁷ In his 1987 encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*, St. John Paul II sees Mary's intercession at Cana as an expression of her maternal mediation. In this regard, he notes:

This maternal role of Mary flows, according to God's good pleasure, "from the superabundance of the merits of Christ; it is founded on his mediation, absolutely depends on it, and draws all its efficacy from it." It is precisely in this sense that the episode at Cana in Galilee offers us a sort of first announcement of Mary's mediation, wholly oriented towards Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power.¹⁸

Mary's maternal mediation, therefore, serves the work of redemption with and under the work of her divine Son, the one Mediator between God and the human race (1 Tim 2:5). Mary's entire being is oriented toward the revelation of her Son's saving power.

5. Mary's Union with Christ in His Passion and her Offering of her Son to the Father

Vatican II tells us that Mary remained united with her divine Son in a special way under the Cross of Calvary:

The Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, grieving exceedingly with her only begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with His sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the

¹⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), n. 57.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 58.

¹⁸ John Paul II, encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater* (March 25, 1987), n. 22.

cross as a mother to His disciple with these words: “Woman, behold thy son”¹⁹

Mary’s offering at Calvary is twofold. She offers her own sufferings to God in participation with the passion of her Son, and she offers her Son to the Father as his Mother. Although some Church fathers speak of Mary’s suffering under the Cross, her immediate co-redemptive role took time to develop. By the seventh century, we find various references to the Blessed Mother as she who redeems us with the Redeemer.²⁰ St. Andrew of Crete (c. 660–740) states that: “All of us have obtained salvation through her”.²¹ By the ninth century, Mary’s co-redemptive role becomes more explicit in Alcuin (d. 804) in the West and in St. Tarasius (d. 806) and St. Theodore the Studite (d. 826) in the East.²² In the tenth century, John the Geometer († c. 990) sees Mary’s suffering as playing a role in God’s plan of redemption.²³ John speaks of Mary suffering great evils for Christ and for us ²⁴

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) develops both Marian co-redemption and Marian mediation. He speaks of the Virgin Mary’s “offering the divine Victim in the temple for our reconciliation with God.”²⁵ Bernard also sees Mary making “satisfaction” for the transgression of Eve and he introduces the notion of Mary co-suffering with Christ by means of her “compassion” (*cum passio*) with him in her heart.²⁶

Mary’s co-suffering with Christ came to be understood as truly meritorious. Theologians of the Post-Tridentine period of the 1500s and 1600s—such as the Jesuits Salmaron, Suárez, and Salazar—made a distinction between *meritum de condigno*—which belongs only to Christ—and *meritum de congruo*, which belongs to Mary.²⁷ Condign merit (*meritum de condigno*) is equivalent, sufficient, adequate or deserved merit in which there is an equal proportion between the good act and its reward, recompense, or effect: e.g. Christ’s passion and death, and resurrection merited redemption in a condign way. Congruous merit (*meritum de congruo*) is fitting or appropriate merit in which there is no strict equivalence or proportion between the good action and its reward or effect. The reward or good effect is, however, granted by God in an appropriate or fitting way out of benevolence. The Blessed

¹⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

²⁰ Miravalle, 2003, 78–79.

²¹ Andrew of Crete, *Canon in Beatae Annae conceptionem*: PG 97, 1307. Miravalle, 2003, 79.

²² Miravalle, 2003, 79–80.

²³ O’Carroll 2000: 204.

²⁴ Miravalle 2003: 81; O’Carroll 2000: 204.

²⁵ Bernard, *Sermo 3 de Purificatione*; PL 183.370.

²⁶ Bernard, *Homilia 2 super Missus est*; PL 183.62; Miravalle 2003: 86.

²⁷ O’Carroll, 306.

Mother, therefore, by her intimate and unique association with Christ, is said to have shared in the work of redemption by way of congruous merit.

St. Pius X, in his 1904 encyclical, *Ad Diem Illum*, teaches that Mary presented her Son for the sacrifice and participated in the sacrifice herself:

Moreover it was not only the prerogative of the Most Holy Mother to have furnished the material of His flesh to the Only Son of God, Who was to be born with human members (S. Bede Ven. L. Iv. in *Luc.* xl.), of which material should be prepared the Victim for the salvation of men; but hers was also the office of tending and nourishing that Victim, and at the appointed time presenting Him for the sacrifice. ... When the supreme hour of the Son came, beside the Cross of Jesus there stood Mary His Mother, not merely occupied in contemplating the cruel spectacle, but rejoicing that her Only Son was offered for the salvation of mankind, and so entirely participating in His Passion, that if it had been possible she would have gladly borne all the torments that her Son bore (S. Bonav. 1. Sent d. 48, *ad Litt. dub.* 4). And from this community of will and suffering between Christ and Mary she merited to become most worthily the Reparatrix of the lost world (Eadmeri Mon. *De Excellentia Virg. Mariae*, c. 9) and Dispensatrix of all the gifts that Our Savior purchased for us by His Death and by His Blood.²⁸

The merit of Mary, of course, is congruous and not condign. Nevertheless, it is truly meritorious through participation. St. Pius X explains this mystery in these terms:

It cannot, of course, be denied that the dispensation of these treasures is the particular and peculiar right of Jesus Christ, for they are the exclusive fruit of His Death, who by His nature is the mediator between God and man. Nevertheless, by this companionship in sorrow and suffering already mentioned between the Mother and the Son, it has been allowed to the august Virgin to be the most powerful mediatrix and advocate of the whole world with her Divine. ... We are then, it will be seen, very far from attributing to the Mother of God a productive power of grace - a power which belongs to God alone. Yet, since Mary carries it over all in holiness and union with Jesus Christ, and has

²⁸ Pius X, encyclical, *Ad Diem Illum* (February 2, 1904), n. 12.

been associated by Jesus Christ in the work of redemption, she merits for us *de congruo*, in the language of theologians, what Jesus Christ merits for us *de condigno*, and she is the supreme Minister of the distribution of graces.²⁹

Pius X's successor, Pope Benedict XV (r.1914–1922), in his letter *Inter Sodalicia* likewise affirms Mary's merit and her active participation in the offering of her Son on the Cross. Thus, he writes:

Mary suffered and, as it were, nearly died with her suffering Son; for the salvation of mankind she renounced her mother's rights and, as far as depended on her, offered her Son to placate divine justice; so we may well say that she with Christ redeemed mankind.³⁰

St. John Paul II, in his 1984 apostolic letter *Sabvific Doloris*, also sees Mary's suffering under the cross as a sharing in the redeeming death of her Son. He also teaches that Mary's suffering is supernaturally fruitful for the redemption of the world:

it was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but which was mysterious and supernaturally fruitful for the redemption of the world. Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the Cross together with the Beloved Disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son. And the words which she heard from his lips were a kind of solemn handing-over of this Gospel of suffering so that it could be proclaimed to the whole community of believers.³¹

Mary's participation in the suffering her divine Son on Calvary provides a model for all of us to follow. We are joint heirs with Christ "if only we suffer with him so that we may be glorified with him" (Rom 8:17). Mary's participation in the passion, however, is more intense and more fruitful than our own. As the Mother of the Incarnate Word she is able to offer her divine Son as his Mother and our mother. Mary under the Cross represents the Church and, as the mother of the living, the entire human race

²⁹ Ibid., n. 13–14.

³⁰ Benedict XV, letter, *Inter Sodalicia* (May 22, 1918): *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 10 (1918), 182.

³¹ John Paul II, apostolic letter, *Sabvific Doloris* (February 11, 1984) n. 25.

6. Mary's Glorious Assumption into Heaven and the Mediation of Grace

We might be tempted to think that Mary's co-redemptive work ends at Calvary, but this is not the case. Vatican II makes it clear that after Mary's assumption into heaven she continues act as our "mother in the order of grace."³²As the Council teaches:

This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into the happiness of their true home.³³

As our heavenly Mother, Mary continues her "salvific duty" of bringing us "the gifts of eternal salvation." Salvation takes place in the Church, and Mary, as spiritual Mother, participates in the saving mission of her Son.

7. Mary's Ongoing Mediation of Grace with and under Christ, the one Mediator

The final stage of Mary's co-redemption is her ongoing mediation of grace from heaven. As we have seen, Mary will continue to care for the brethren of her Son until they are led into the happiness of their true home. The objective redemption was accomplished by the Paschal mystery: Christ's passion, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. There remains, however, the subjective redemption or salvation of every human person.

Numerous popes have affirmed Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces, but it's important to understand what this means. Fr. Ludwig Ott, in his *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, makes a helpful distinction between two senses of Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces. In the general or universal sense, Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces because of her cooperation in the Incarnation. This is called *mediatio in universali*. This teaching he considers to be a *sententia certa*.³⁴ In another sense, Mary is

³² *Lumen Gentium*, 61.

³³ *Lumen Gentium*, 62.

³⁴ Ludwig Ott, *Fundamental of Catholic Dogma*, translated by Patrick Lynch and revised and updated by Robert Fastiggi (London: Baronius Press, 2018) 229.

understood as the Mediatrix of all graces by her actual intercession from heaven. Fr. Ott believes this is a *sententia pia et probabilis* (a pious and probable opinion).³⁵ Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces based on her cooperation with the Incarnation (*mediatio in universal*) is so clearly attested to in the sources of the faith that Ott believes it could be proclaimed a dogma. Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces by means of her intercession in heaven (*mediatio in speciali*) is less definitely attested to in tradition, but “its definition does not seem impossible.”³⁶

The ordinary papal Magisterium certainly provides support for Mary as Mediatrix of all graces. Leo XIII, in his 1891 encyclical, *Octobri mense*, teaches the following:

Consequently, it may be affirmed with no less truth and justice that absolutely nothing from this immense treasury of all the graces brought forth by the Lord—inasmuch as “grace and truth have come from Jesus Christ” [Jn 1:17]—is imparted to us, by the will of God, except through Mary. Thus, just as no one can go to the supreme Father except through the Son, so, as a rule, no one can go to Christ except through the mother.³⁷

Similar affirmations can be found in writings of Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI, and Pius XII.³⁸ Three references to Mary as Mediatrix of all graces are found in one writing of John XXIII,³⁹ and at least seven references to Mary as Mediatrix of all graces are found in various discourses of St. John Paul II.⁴⁰ Pope Benedict XVI in his May 11, 2007 homily for the canonization of St. Antonio de Sant’Anna Galvão, OFM in São Paulo, Brazil stated that “there is no fruit of grace in the history of salvation that does not have as its necessary instrument the mediation of Our Lady.”⁴¹ In a letter to dated January 10, 2013, Benedict XVI commended the mission of Archbishop Zimowski for the World Day of the Sick to the intercession of the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 232.

³⁷ D-H, 3274.

³⁸ Ott, 231.

³⁹ Fr. Alessandro M. Apollonio F.I., “Mary Mediatrix of All Graces” in *Mariology: A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, and Consecrated Persons*, ed. Mark Miravalle (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 2007), 451.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 458.

⁴¹ Benedict XVI, homily of May 11, 2007, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/pt/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20070511_canonization-brazil.html (accessed May 2, 2019).

Blessed Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mediatrix of all graces (*Mediatricis omnium gratiarum*).⁴²

Mary's ongoing mediation of grace from heaven can be understood as an expression of her co-redemptive work. Although Christ merited objective redemption by his passion, death, and resurrection, the working out of redemption in the life of the Church continues. Mary, by her mediation of grace in the life of the Church, continues in her work as Co-redemptrix.

Conclusion

Mary's identity as the Co-redemptrix is manifested through seven key moments or periods of time: 1) her predestination; 2) her Immaculate Conception; 3) her free consent given at the Annunciation; 4) her union with Christ during his earthly ministry; 5) her union with Christ's passion under the Cross; 6) her glorious Assumption; and 7) her ongoing mediation of grace from heaven. Mary's entire existence is dedicated to the saving work of her Son. United to Christ by an indissoluble bond, she shares in his redemptive work as the New Eve and Co-redemptrix.

⁴² Benedict XVI, Letter to Archbishop S. Zimowski January 10, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/la/letters/2013/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20130110_card-zimowski.html (accessed May 2, 2019).

