

## **Marian Coredemption and Mediation at Vatican II**

ROBERT FASTIGGI, PhD

October 11, 2022 marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formal opening of Vatican II. In light of this anniversary, it seems opportune to reflect on how Marian coredemption and mediation were treated at the Council.

Between the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and Vatican II, there was great interest in Mariology. After the definition of the Immaculate Conception, “the minds of the faithful were filled with a stronger hope that the day might soon come when the dogma of the Virgin Mary’s bodily Assumption into heaven would also be defined by the Church’s supreme teaching authority.”<sup>1</sup> According to Fr. Michael O’Carroll, C.S.S.p, between 1849 and 1950, petitions for the dogmatic proclamation of Mary’s Assumption “came from 113 Cardinals, eighteen Patriarchs, 2,505 archbishops and bishops, 32,000 priests and men religious, 50,000 religious women, 8,000, 000 lay people.”<sup>2</sup> At Vatican I (1869–1870) about 200 bishops asked for a solemn definition of the Assumption, but the shortening of the council because of the Franco-Prussian War prevented consideration of this request.<sup>3</sup> At Vatican I, the French bishop, Jean Laurent, also presented a petition for Mary to be defined as Co-redemptrix. This doctrine, though, was judged in need of further maturation.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to petitions for the solemn proclamation of Mary’s Assumption, there were also petitions for a dogmatic definition of Mary’s “universal mediation of grace.”<sup>5</sup> Mary’s role as the universal Mediatrix of grace was seen as rooted in her co-redemption or

---

<sup>1</sup> Pius XII, apostolic constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus* (November 1, 1950), no 6.

<sup>2</sup> Michael O’Carroll, C.S.S.p., *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 56.

<sup>3</sup> See Manfred Hauke, *Introduction to Mariology*, translated by Richard Chonak (Washington, D.C. The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 280–281.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Miravalle, *“With Jesus” The Story of Mary Co-Redemptrix* (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 142.

<sup>5</sup> Manfred Hauke, *Mary, Mediatrix of Grace: Mary at the Foot of the Cross-IV: Supplement* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2004), 10.

cooperation in the redemption.<sup>6</sup> The petitions, though, were for a dogmatic definition of Mary's universal mediation of grace rather than her co-redemptive role. In 1896, René-Marie de la Boïse, S.J. published an article in *Études* that proposed a dogmatic definition on Mary's universal mediation of all graces.<sup>7</sup> At the second international Marian Congress held in Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1902, three papers were presented on Mary's universal mediation of grace, and the idea emerged to ask the pope to survey the bishops on the definability of this doctrine.<sup>8</sup> Influenced by the articles by de la Boïse, the Belgian Redemptorist, François Xavier Godts (1839–1928), published a 451 page book on the definability of the universal mediation of Mary according to the doctrine of St. Alphonsus Liguori.<sup>9</sup> Marian congresses during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also began to manifest increased support for the doctrine of Mary's universal mediation of grace. After the Fribourg congress of 1902, there were Marian congresses held in Rome (1904), Einsiedeln (1906), and Trier (1912).<sup>10</sup> The Fourth Breton Marian Congress of 1913 formulated a resolution addressed to Pius X in favor of a definition of Mary, Mother of Grace as “a truth of the faith.”<sup>11</sup>

Mother Magdalen of Jesus (1862–1946), the prioress of the Carmel of Uccle in Belgium claimed that the Lord had spoken to her in prayer. Christ expressed his wish for a dogmatic proclamation of the universal

---

<sup>6</sup> See Hauke, *Mary, Mediatrix*, 49, where he cites the view of Canon Jacques Bittrmieux (1878–1950) who maintained that Mary's cooperation in the Redemption “is the basis for the distribution of graces.”

<sup>7</sup> René-Marie de la Boïse, “Sur cette proposition: Toutes les graces nous viennent par la Sainte Vierge,” *Études* 68 (1896): 5–31; see Gloria Falcão Dodd, (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2012) *The Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace: History and Theology of the Movement for a Dogmatic Definition from 1896–1964* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2012), 51–52.

<sup>8</sup> Dodd, 54–55.

<sup>9</sup> F.X. Godts, *De definibilitate mediationis universalis Deiparae: disquisitio theologica juxta doctrinam S. Alphonsi occasione jubilei semisaecularis definitionis Immaculati B.M.V. Conceptus* (Bruxellis: Missionum Exter. Prov. Belg. C.S.S.R. 1904); see Dodd, 57 and Hauke, *Mediatrix of Grace*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Hauke, *Mary, Mediatrix*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

mediation of Mary.<sup>12</sup> Mother Magdalen later claimed that the Blessed Virgin appeared to her and communicated to her “the full meaning of her universal mediation.”<sup>13</sup>

Mother Magdalen of Jesus developed a close relationship with Cardinal Désiré Joseph Mercier (1851–1926), who was the Archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels and the Primate of Belgium from 1906 until his death in 1926. During their very first meeting, Mother Magdalen revealed to Mercier her conviction that it was will of the Lord for the universal mediation of the Mother of God to be proclaimed a dogma.<sup>14</sup> Mercier was persuaded to make an informal request for the dogma to Pius X in 1906.<sup>15</sup> He later became more active in promoting the dogma. In a pastoral letter of April 25, 1915, he “announced for the first time in printed form his desire for a definition of Mary’s universal mediation.”<sup>16</sup> Cardinal Mercier subsequently organized petitions from the Belgian bishops, clergy, religious, and theological faculty of Louvain University.<sup>17</sup>

The petitions organized by Mercier were examined by the Holy Office with Fr. Alberto Lepidi, O.P. as the expert consultant. Lepidi did not believe it was opportune to pursue such a dogmatic proclamation. Moreover, he noted that the title, co-redemptrix—which was used in the petitions along with Mediatrix of all graces—had not been approved by the Holy Office in 1747 when the Bishop of Ascoli, Italy asked permission to refer to Mary as “the co-redemptrix of the entire human race (*Coredemptrix totius generis humani*).<sup>18</sup> This might have played a role in persuading Mercier to focus on Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces “without the title of *coredemptrix*.”<sup>19</sup> It is clear, though, that he

---

<sup>12</sup> Hauke, *Mediatress of Grace*, 17–18; see also Dodd, 77.

<sup>13</sup> Hauke, *Mediatress of Grace*, 19–20

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–4.

<sup>15</sup> Dodd, 448.

<sup>16</sup> Hauke, *Mary, Mediatress*, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Dodd, 82–88.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 90

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 91. According to Fr. Hauke, Cardinal Mercier accepted the title of “Coredemptrix,” and he gave it high prominence in his concluding remarks to a Mariological Congress held in Brussels in 1921. Mercier might have been

believed Mary's mediation of all grace was rooted in her role as co-redemptrix.

Cardinal Lepidi's resistance to the title co-redemptrix was not well-informed. Apparently he was unaware that prayers invoking Mary as co-redemptrix had already been approved by the Church. On July 18, 1885, Pope Leo XIII approved a prayer of praises (*laudes*) to Jesus and Mary with an indulgence of 100 days granted by the Congregation for Indulgences and Sacred Relics. In the Italian version of the praises to Mary, she is referred to as "coredemptrix of the world" (*corredentrica del mondo*). In the Latin version, she is referred to as the "*mundo redimendo coadiutrix*." Leo XIII approved both the Italian and Latin versions of the prayer (*Acta Sanctae Sedis* [ASS] 18 [1885] p. 93). During the pontificate of Pius X, the Holy See three times gave approval to prayers invoking Mary as co-redemptrix (cf. *Acta Sanctae Sedis* [ASS] 41 [1908], p. 409); *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* [AAS] 5 [1913], p. 364; AAS 6 [1914], pp. 108–109).

The resistance of the Holy Office to the petitions did not stop Cardinal Mercier from his efforts to promote the dogma of Mary's universal mediation of grace. He was able to persuade Pope Benedict XV to approve a Mass and Office for a feast in honor Mary, Mediatrix of all graces in 1921.<sup>20</sup> The Holy Father granted the Office and the Feast to all the dioceses of Belgium and all other dioceses that request it.<sup>21</sup>

After Pius XI became pope in 1922, Cardinal Mercier spoke with him about the possibility of a dogmatic definition of Mary's universal mediation of grace. Pius XI agreed to set up three papal commissions to investigate this possibility: one in Belgium, one in Spain, and one in Rome.<sup>22</sup> The commissions in Belgium and Spain supported the definition, but the one in Rome seems to have been less supportive—

---

influenced by a book by Fr. Godts with the title, *La Corrémptrice*, published in Brussels in 1920. See Hauke, *Mediatress of Grace*, 63–65.

<sup>20</sup> Dodd, 102–104; Hauke, *Mediatress of Grace* 54–59.

<sup>21</sup> Dodd, 102.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

though the actual position of the commission remains a mystery.<sup>23</sup> Cardinal Mercier died in 1926, but others, including Mother Magdalen of Jesus continued to work for the dogma.<sup>24</sup>

Even though Pius XI did not act on the petitions to define Mary as the Mediatrix of all grace, he provided support for Mary as co-redemptrix by becoming the first pope to publicly use the title: once on November 30, 1933 (*Discorsi di Pio XI*, 2, p. 1013); again on March 23, 1934 (*L'Osservatore Romano* [OR] 25 March 1934, p. 1); and once again on April 28, 1935 (OR 29–30 April 1935 p. 1).

After the solemn definition of Mary's Assumption in 1950, many Mariologists continued to work for a subsequent definition of the Blessed Virgin as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces. In the antepreparatory phase of Vatican II, a good number of bishops asked for a conciliar statement or definition of Mary as Mediatrix of all graces and/or Co-redemptrix. Fr. Michael O'Carroll states that 382 bishops asked for a conciliar statement on Marian mediation, with 266 wanting a dogmatic definition. He also notes that 54 bishops wanted a conciliar statement on Mary as Co-redemptrix, with 36 seeking a dogmatic definition.<sup>25</sup> Fr. G.M. Besutti believes that the numbers were higher, and he states that over 500 bishops wanted a definition on Mary's mediation of grace.<sup>26</sup> In a study on the views of the Italian bishops prior to the Council, Fr. Salvatore Perrella, OSM, shows that, out of 311 bishops in Italy, 100 wished for an affirmation of Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces, with 84 of these in favor of a solemn dogmatic definition.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> See Hauke, *Mediatress of Grace*, 97–110 and Dodd, 144–151 (on the Belgian Commission); 152–166 (on the Spanish Commission); and 166–184 (on the Roman Commission).

<sup>24</sup> Hauke, *Mediatress of Grace*, 21–22.

<sup>25</sup> O'Carroll, 308.

<sup>26</sup> G.M. Besutti, O.S.M. *Lo Schema Mariano al Concilio Vaticano II* (Rome: Edizioni Marianum, 1966), 17.

<sup>27</sup> Salvatore M. Perrella, OSM, *I "Vota" R I "Consilia" Dei Vescovi Italiani Sulla Mariologia E Sulla Corredenzione Nella Fase Antepreparatoria Del Concilio Vaticano II* (Rome: Edizioni "Marianum," 1994), 208.

Although these petitions for new Marian dogma manifested the concerns of many bishops, Pope John XXIII made it clear that, because of the pastoral orientation of the council, there would not be any new dogmatic definitions.<sup>28</sup> The treatment of Mariology at the council, however, shows a concern for Marian co-redemption and Marian mediation.

Originally the plan was to integrate the treatment of Mariology into the dogmatic constitution on the Church. This plan was in force from October, 1960 until January, 1962. The theological commission, however, opted for a separate document after receiving the *schema* from the drafting committee in Jan., 1962. The theological commission approved the *schema* as a separate document on Nov. 23, 1962. It is generally believed that the chief author the 1962 Marian *schema* was the Franciscan, Carlo Balić (1899–1977), the founder of the Pontifical Marian Academy International.

In the *praenotanda* or explanatory note that accompanied the Marian *schema* of 1962, we are told that: “Certain terms and expressions used by Roman Pontiffs have been omitted, which, although most true in themselves (*in se verissima*), may be difficult for the separated brethren (as in the case of the Protestants) to understand. Among such words the following may be enumerated: ‘Coredemptrix of the human race’ [St. Pius X, Pius XI]; ‘Reparatrix of the whole world’ [Leo XIII], etc., ... .”<sup>29</sup> The 1962 schema, however, affirms Mary as “co-redemptrix” in footnote 11, which reads:

Speaking of Mary beneath the Cross, the Supreme Pontiffs say that Mary was exercising the acts of faith, hope and charity, so united by love to the pains of Christ that there is a connection between the compassion of Mary and the redemption; she renounces her maternal rights and offers a maternal

---

<sup>28</sup> Miravalle, 168.

<sup>29</sup> *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Volumen I, Periodus Prima, Pars IV* [Vatican City, 1971], p. 99.

sacrifice and becomes our spiritual mother. In brief: the compassion of Mary has a connection to the redemption in such a way that she therefore deserves to be called *co-redemptrix* and the effects are considered to be at once the fruits of the redemption of Christ and of the compassion of Mary.<sup>30</sup>

The 1962 schema also has a long footnote (no. 16) on the historical development of the term *co-redemptrix*.<sup>31</sup> It also refers to Mary as the “mediatrix of all graces” (*omnium gratiarum mediatrix*),<sup>32</sup> but it does not define her as such. Footnote 16 reads as follows:

In Christian antiquity it was customary to refer to Mary as Eve, a title which seems to be taken from the principle of “re-circulation” or parallelism between Mary and Eve. Witness in this regard is found already in St. Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho: “And since we read that he is the Son of God... and made man from the Virgin, so that in the way that the disobedience spawned by the serpent took its beginning, it would receive its dissolution in the say way ... .” Based on the same principle, St. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*) explicitly calls Mary the cause of salvation for the entire human race. After the Council of Ephesus, the very title of *Mediatrix*, or as the Greeks say, *Mesites* or *Mesetria*, is attributed to Mary. In a work of a quite ancient author (some say of the 5th century but certainly before the 8th century) we read: “For she is the *Mediatrix* of heaven and earth, who naturally accomplishes their union.” This title became more common day by day, as can be seen in the writings of St. Andrew of Crete, St. Germanus of Constantinople,

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 104. Translation by Fr. Joseph A. Komonchak, available at: <https://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/draft-on-the-blessed-virgin-1962.pdf> (accessed November 30, 2021).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 107–108.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 94.

St. John Damascene, etc. Nor are there lacking Fathers who greet Mary as “Helper of the Redeemer” or “Mother of the living” in reference to Gn 3:15.

All these have been further developed by theologians and Supreme Pontiffs, and a nomenclature was created in which Mary is at different times called the Spiritual Mother of Men, the Queen of Heaven and Earth, and at other times the New Eve, the Mediatrix and Dispenser of All Graces, and even, in fact, the Co-redemptrix. With regard to the title “Queen”, cf. Note 14; with regard to the title Spiritual Mother, cf. Note 12. With regard to the title, Co-redemptrix”, and “Companion of Christ the Redeemer”, some explanations need to be added here:

The title Redemptrix occurs already in the 10th century: “Holy Redemptrix of the world, pray for us.” When this title came into use in the 15th and 16th centuries and the immediate co-operation of the Blessed Virgin in the work of our redemption was already perceived, “con” [cum] was added to “redemptrix,” so that the Mother of God was called “corredemptrix,” [Co-redemptrix] whereas Christ continued to be called “Redemptor” [Redeemer]. Accordingly, from the 17th century onward, the title of “Co-redemptrix” was in common use not only in works geared to piety and devotion, but also in very many theological treatises [cf. Carol J., *The Co-redemption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Rome, 1950, p. 482].

With regard to the Roman Pontiffs, the word occurs in certain texts of St. Pius X et Pius XI in contexts of lesser importance. Pius XII purposely wished to avoid this expression by frequently using formulas such as “Companion of the Redeemer,” “Eminent companion



of the Redeemer,” “Loving companion of the Redeemer,” “Companion in the work of the Divine Redeemer.”

The cooperation of Mary with Jesus in the economy of our salvation is very, very often extolled by Supreme Pontiffs. Leo XIII: “The great Mother of God and likewise the companion in repairing the human race.” Pius XI: “The Redeemer was not able, due to the necessity of the work, to not associate his Mother with his work, and that is the reason why we invoke her with the title of Co-redemptrix.” Pius XII: “Mary, in procuring spiritual salvation with Jesus Christ, from the very beginning of salvation, was associated by God’s will...”

In addition to the titles mentioned, there are many others with which Mary is greeted by the faithful of Christ.

Leo XIII: “The Catholic people greet her as Help of Christians,” “Helper,” etc.

Pius VI: “Likewise [a teaching] which forbids images, especially of the Blessed Virgin, to be distinguished by any title, besides the designations, which are analogous to mysteries which are expressly mentioned in Scripture, as if other pious designations cannot be ascribed to images which are approved and commended even in the public prayers of the Church: temerarious, offensive to pious ears, especially injurious to the veneration due to the Virgin.”<sup>33</sup>

This footnote provides a marvelous summary of the history and eventual papal approval of the title, co-redemptrix. It is regrettable that

---

<sup>33</sup> Translation from Komonchak as noted above.

it was not included in what later came to be chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*.

Pope John XXIII died on June 3, 1963, and on June 21, 1963, Cardinal Montini was elected Pope Paul VI. Although John XXIII had approved the 1962 *schema* for discussion for the fall 1963 session of the council, opposition to the draft was growing. The second session of Vatican II was set to open on September 29, 1963. From August 26–29, 1963, a meeting took place in Fulda, Germany which was attended by 4 cardinals and seventy archbishops and bishops representing 10 countries, mostly from northern Europe.<sup>34</sup> During this meeting, theologians such as the Jesuit, Karl Rahner, raised objections to the 1962 *schema* on the Blessed Virgin Mary. These objections were based on fears of negative ecumenical reactions, especially to the *schema*'s reference to Mary as the “Mediatrice of all graces.”<sup>35</sup>

How can we explain the attitude of Fr. Rahner and others at the Fulda conference? In the decades just before Vatican II, some theologians focused on what some call a “Christo-typical Mariology,” which emphasizes Mary’s intimate association with Christ in the work of redemption and the mediation of grace. The titles of “co-redemptrix” and “Mediatrice of all graces” were used by these theologians in reference to Mary. Other theologians focused on an “Ecclesial-typical Mariology,” which highlights Mary’s role as a member and type (or model) of the Church. Still other theologians stressed the importance of ecumenical sensitivity in Mariology, and they wanted to downplay aspects of Catholic Mariology that might be difficult for the separated brethren to understand. All of these trends influenced the Mariology of Vatican II.

Because of the concerns raised by Fr. Rahner and others at the Fulda conference, the 1962 Marian *schema* was rejected. The next question was this: whether the council should have a separate document on the Virgin Mary or integrate it into the dogmatic constitution on the

---

<sup>34</sup> Rev. Ralph M. Wiltgen, SVD, *The Inside Story of Vatican II*—formally titled *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*—(Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, 2014), 107.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

Church (as was the plan from October, 1960 until January, 1962). A vote was taken on October 29, 1963 with the option for inclusion being adopted by a vote of 1,114 to 1,074.<sup>36</sup>

Prior to the vote for inclusion of October 29, 1963, two Cardinals were chosen to present the respective arguments in favor of a separate Marian document and in favor of integrating the Marian *schema* into the Constitution on the Church. Cardinal Santos of Manila argued in favor of a separate document and Cardinal König of Vienna argued for integration.

Both Cardinals agreed that there was a very close connection between Mary and the Church. Cardinal Santos, however, citing St. Bernard of Clairvaux, argued that Mary is not merely a member of the Church, but one who freely cooperated in the establishment of the very existence of the Body of the Church. Mariology, moreover, pertains not only to ecclesiology but also to Christology and soteriology. To include the treatment of Mary in the constitution on the Church could give the impression that the council was opting for “Ecclesio-typical” Mariology over “Christo-typical” Mariology. Cardinal König said he had no disagreement with the points made by Cardinal Santos (*Non contradico iis quae in hac materia ab alio eminentissimo Patre exponuntur*). He noted, though, that the Church was a central theme of the council and integrating Mariology into the constitution on the Church would highlight Mary’s role as “the most sublime cooperatrix of Christ in both the accomplishment and the propagation of the work of salvation through his grace” (*Beata Maria Virgo potest in tali capite vel schemate integrato optimi proponi tamquam sublimissima Christi ex eius gratia cooperatrix in opere salutis et perficiendo et propaganda*). The integration of the Marian schema into the constitution of the Church would not, therefore, be an option in favor of an “ecclesio-typical Mariology, in which the Blessed Virgin is only shown as a member of the Church among other members passively receiving the fruits of the Redeemer” (*Et ne dicas tale schema vel caput redintegratum exhibere posse tantum Mariologiam ad modum alicuius sic dictae Mariologiae ecclesiologicae, in qua scilicet Beata Virgo non*

---

<sup>36</sup> See O’Carroll, 352-353.

*exhibetur nisi ut membrum inter caetera membra Ecclesiae passive recipiens beneficia redemptoris*). Rather, Mary, with the Church, actively cooperates with Christ in the distribution of the fruits of redemption (*sed instrumentum redemptionis in manu Christi ad salutem active cooperans*). The arguments presented by both Cardinal Santos and Cardinal König manifest general agreement. At no point do they ever argue that Mariology should be reduced to ecclesiology. In fact, they both resist this view.<sup>37</sup>

The integration of the Marian schema into chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium* should not be seen as a rejection of either Marian coredeemption or Our Lady's mediation of grace. In *Lumen Gentium*, 53, we are told that the council "does not, however, have it in mind to give a complete doctrine on Mary, nor does it wish to decide those questions which the work of theologians has not yet fully clarified. Those opinions therefore may be lawfully retained which are propounded in Catholic schools concerning her, who occupies a place in the Church which is the highest after Christ and yet very close to us." This means that Vatican II in no way wished to stop theologians from doing further research on Marian coredeemption and mediation of grace.

It is also important to note that a number of theologians, including Jean Galot, S.J and Georges Cottier, O.P. (the former theologian of the papal household), believe Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* affirms the doctrine of Mary as Coredeptrix without using the term (cf. Galot in *La Civiltà Cattolica* [1994] III: 236-237 and Cottier, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 2002).

---

<sup>37</sup> See *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* Vol. II Periodus Secunda, Pars III [Vatican City, 1972], 338-345. A very good summary of the addresses of Cardinals Santos and König can be found in Frederick Jelly, O.P. "The Theological Context of and Introduction to Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*" in *Marian Studies* Vol. XXXVII (1986): 50-60.

*Lumen Gentium*, 56 affirms Marian coredeemption when, quoting St. Irenaeus, it points to Mary as “the cause of salvation” for herself and the whole human race:

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. 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 (LG, 56).

The affirmation of Mary as the New Eve goes to the heart of Marian coredeemption. The great Mariologist, Gabriele Roschini (1900-1977) understood the title Co-redemptrix this way: “The title Co-redemptrix of the human race means that the most holy Virgin cooperated with Christ in our reparation as Eve cooperated with Adam in our ruin.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, LG, 56, points to Mary’s fiat as an active cause of human salvation. Thus, in a subordinate but essential way, the Virgin Mary participated actively in our redemption.

---

<sup>38</sup> “Il titolo *Corredentrica del genere umano* significa che la Virgine SS. ha cooperato con Cristo alla nostra riparazione, come Eva aveva cooperato con Adamo alla nostra rovina.” Padre Gabriele Maria Roschini, *Chi è Maria? Catechismo Mariano* a cura di Carlo DiPietro (Pignola: Sursum Corda, 2017) domanda 83, p. 47).

*Lumen Gentium*, 58 points to another key moment in Marian coredemption: namely, the union with her divine Son's sufferings under the cross:

After this manner 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. (LG, 58).

In his General Audience of Feb. 16, 2022, Pope Francis invoked LG, 58 and said:

In the plan of salvation, the Son cannot be separated from the Mother, from the one who "advanced in the pilgrimage of faith and faithfully preserved her union with her Son even to the Cross" (*Lumen Gentium*, 58), as the Second Vatican Council reminds us.

To say that the Son cannot be separated from the Mother in the plan of salvation is a clear affirmation of Mary's coredemptive role.

*Lumen Gentium*, 61 likewise affirms Mary's coredemptive role as the predestined Mother of God who cooperated in a singular way with the saving work of her Son:

Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She

presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore, she is our mother in the order of grace. (LG, 61).

Mary's participation in the mediation of grace is clearly taught in *Lumen Gentium*, 62 when it affirms her salvific duty (*munus*) in bringing us the gifts of eternal salvation by her constant intercession:

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. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix. This, however, is to be so understood that it neither takes away from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator (LG, 62)

Although Vatican II did not explicitly refer to Mary as the co-redemptrix or the Mediatrix of *all* graces, it did affirm the key elements of Marian coredemption and mediation of grace. It's important to remember that Vatican II never intended to give a complete doctrine on the Virgin Mary or prevent further doctrinal developments. This, as we have seen, is explicitly stated in LG, 53. St. John Paul II was a bishop at Vatican II, and, as pope, he provided us with a profound understanding and development of what the council taught about the

Blessed Virgin Mary. It is noteworthy that he did not understand the council as prohibiting the invocation of Mary as co-redemptrix. In fact, he publicly used the title at least six times during his pontificate.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, St. John Paul II explicitly referred to the Virgin Mary as the “Mediatrice of all graces” at least nine times.<sup>40</sup>

We need to be grateful for the clear affirmations of Mary’s coredeemptive role at the Second Vatican Council. We also should be grateful for the council’s clear affirmation of Mary’s heavenly intercession as Mother and Mediatrice of grace. Vatican II must be understood within the continuity of the papal Marian teachings that preceded it and those that followed it. In this regard, the Marian teachings of St. John Paul II are of special importance.

*Robert Fastiggi, Ph.D., is professor of Dogmatic Theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, Michigan USA and former president (2014–2016) of the Mariological Society of America.*

---

<sup>39</sup> See John Paul II’s General Audience, 10 December 1980 (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II* [Inseg] III/2 [1980], p. 1646); General Audience 8 September 1982 (*Inseg* V/3 [1982], p. 404); Angelus Address 4 November, 1984 (*Inseg* VII/2 [1984], p. 1151); Discourse at World Youth Day 31 March 1985 (*Inseg* VIII/1 [1985], p. 889–890); Address to the Sick 24 March, 1990 (*Inseg* XIII/1 [1990], p. 743); Discourse of 6 October, 1991 (*Inseg* XIV/2 [1991], p. 756). Moreover, in a homily in Guayaquil, Ecuador on January 31, 1985, John Paul II spoke of the “co-redemptive role of Mary —*el papel corredentor de María* (*Inseg* VIII [1985], p. 319). which was translated as “Mary’s role as co-redemptrix” in the English edition of *L’Osservatore Romano* March 11, 1985, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> See article by Msgr. Arthur Calkins, S.T.D.: <http://www.motherofallpeoples.com/2010/11/mary-mediatrice-of-all-graces-in-the-papal-magisterium-of-pope-john-paul-ii/> (accessed Dec. 22, 2022).