

Ecce Mater Tua

A Journal of Mariology

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August 15, 2023
Solemnity of the Assumption

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

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

Book Reviews:

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Introduction to *Ecce Mater Tua* Vol. 8

THE EDITORS

This issue of *Ecce Mater Tua* coincides with the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary, a feast that reminds us that the Blessed Virgin Mary, taken up to heaven, continues by her constant intercession “to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation” (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 62). In the *Commentario* section, Robert Fastiggi highlights the importance of Pope Francis’s May 13, 2023 Message to Archbishop Gian Franco Saba of Sassari, Italy in which the Holy Father refers to Mary as the “Advocate close to Jesus” and the Mediatrix of all graces.” In this way, Pope Francis affirms two of the three Marian titles found in various petitions for a fifth Marian dogma.

This commentary is followed by a remarkable homily and prayer to Mary given by Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernández of La Plata, Argentina on December 8, 2020 to mark the conclusion of the national Marian year. In this homily and prayer—which we have in English—Archbishop (and Cardinal-elect) Fernández manifests his great love for the Virgin Mary, who, as our Mother, knows the whole history of our lives. In his homily, Archbishop Fernández points to the heart of Mary as the most complete Gospel because she, more than the apostles, knows the story of our Lord’s life in the most intimate and profound way. As is well-known, Archbishop Fernández has been named by Pope Francis to be the new prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. We ask the Blessed Mother to guide and protect him in this very important position.

The homily and prayer of Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernández is followed by a wonderful defense of the Marian title, co-redemptrix, written by Mary Moore. Tracing the foundations in Scripture, Church history, and the Magisterium, Mary Moore explains how the title corresponds to the truth of the Virgin Mary’s active collaboration in the work of redemption. Father Paolo Siano of Italy has recently brought to light Leo XIII’s July 18, 1885 approval 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 “co-redemptrix 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). This shows that the Marian title, co-redemptrix, has received official papal approval since 1885.

Bernhard Streisselberger follows with an appeal to the bishops of the United States to reconsider their rejection of the supernatural character of the messages of Our Lady of America. He is especially concerned with the rejection of the title of “co-redeemer” for St. Joseph as an error. As Bernhard argues, various popes have affirmed that all of the faithful can be co-redeemers, and the recognition of St. Joseph as “co-redeemer” should not be described as “an error.”

The four articles in this volume explore some important aspects of Marian doctrine and devotion. Father Andrej Mária Čaja of Slovakia investigates “The Problem of Our Lady’s Knowledge from the Perspective of the Theology of St. John Henry Newman (1801–1890).” He shows how the great English saint and scholar had a balanced view of Mary’s knowledge grounded in Scripture and sound theology. He highlights, in a special way, Mary’s knowledge through divine illumination.

Peter Coelho-Kostolny provides a beautiful exposition of the contribution of Romanos the Melodist (c. 490–550) to Mary as the “Unwedded Bride,” a title which affirms Mary as the Virgin Mother of Jesus but does not deny her genuine marriage to Joseph. This article tells of the dream Romanos had of the Blessed Mother who handed him a scroll and told him to eat it. Just as Ezekiel was asked to eat a scroll to enable his gift of prophecy, so Romanos ate the scroll in his dream to enable him to be a gifted cantor and prophet of the holy Mother of God. As Coelho-Kostolny notes, many people believe Romanos is the author of the renowned Byzantine Akathist Hymn.

Max Oswalt provides an important article on Mary’s relationship to God the Father, which is an oft-neglected theme in Mariology. He

shows that Mary can be understood as the daughter of the Father, the Spouse of the Father (with a shared Son), and the Masterpiece of the Father. He also presents Mary at Calvary, offering her Son, Jesus, to the Father, which is a truth affirmed by various popes.

The final article by Dr. Jason Bourgeois is an interesting exploration of the cultural and historical applications of the message of Fatima in the 1960s by the now-defunct publication, *The North American Voices of Fatima*. As Bourgeois notes, this publication highlighted the messages of Fatima as an antidote to some of the cultural upheavals of the 1960s: the spread of Marxist communism, the sexual revolution, and the growth of doctrinal dissent in some Catholic circles. Although the journal's support for the Vietnam War might be questioned, the application of Fatima to the problems of sexual immorality and doctrinal dissent were quite appropriate in the 1960s and continue to be today.

Commentario

Pope Francis affirms Mary as Advocate and Mediatrix of All Graces

ROBERT FASTIGGI, PHD

In a message¹ dated May 13, 2023, the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, Pope Francis sent words of encouragement to Archbishop Gian Franco Saba, the Archbishop of Sassari in Sardinia. The Holy Father's message commemorated the 80th anniversary of a 1943 vow made by Archbishop Arcangelo Mazzotti, together with the clergy and faithful of Sassari, to Our Lady of Graces (*la Madonna delle Grazie*). In this vow, the faithful of Sassari promised to have an annual feast of thanksgiving if the Madonna intervened to spare their region from the bombings of World War II. Our Lady heard these prayers, and since 1943 the faithful of Sassari have diligently observed the Feast of the Vow (*la Festa del Voto*) every May in honor of Our Lady who intervened to protect them. The Feast culminates with a procession and a Mass in the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of Graces in Sassari (*il santuario Beata Vergine delle Grazie*).

The message of Pope Francis highlights the great intercessory power of the Virgin Mary for the promotion of peace. What is of special significance is the Holy Father's affirmation of two important Marian titles—Advocate and Mediatrix of All Graces. In his message, Pope Francis writes:

The war events that have sadly marked the history of the twentieth century have been a cause of enormous suffering for humanity. The Marian tradition reminds us of the devotion of the Catholic people who, in difficult moments of life, have not hesitated to entrust themselves to the Virgin Mary as "Advocate" close to Jesus (*Avvocata presso Gesù*).

¹ Paolo Frulio, Michele Spanu. "Festa Del Voto, Il Messaggio Del Santo Padre." *Arcidiocesi Di Sassari - Sito Ufficiale*, 3 June 2023, www.arcidiocesisassari.it/2023/05/28/festa-del-voto-il-messaggio-del-santo-padre/.

The Italian preposition “*presso*” can mean “close to,” “next to,” “in the presence of,” or “with.” Pope Francis reminds us of how we should turn to Mary as our Advocate during difficult times of life. Just as the Blessed Mother was an advocate for the wedding guests at Cana (John 2), so she is our Advocate close to and with Jesus, her divine Son. St. Ireneus (c. 130–200) referred to Mary as “the advocate of the Virgin Eve” (*Adversus haereses* 5, 19), and she has been invoked as Advocate by numerous Church Fathers, saints, and popes. In the great Marian hymn, the *Salve Regina*, she is hailed as “our Advocate” (*Advocata nostra*) because we recognize her as our Mother who defends us and gives us strength, comfort, and motherly care.

Pope Francis affirms another important title in his May 13, 2023 message when he writes:

One of the ancient titles with which Christians have invoked the Virgin Mary is precisely "Mediatrice of all graces" (*Uno degli antichi titoli con cui i cristiani hanno invocato la Vergine Maria è appunto "Mediatrice di tutte le grazie"*). Entrust to her your aspirations and intentions for good kept deep within your heart; may she infect you with the joy of following Christ and serving him with humble and docile style in the Church; ask her to dispel the dullness of fear and tiredness, the spiritual lukewarmness that slows down the pace towards the goal, along with the turbulences of life.

The Holy Father recognizes and affirms the Marian title, Mediatrice of all graces, as “one of the ancient titles with which Christians have invoked the Virgin Mary.” Pope Francis is correct. The recognition of Mary as the Mediatrice of grace is ancient. St. Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444) extolled Mary as the one through whom “every faithful soul achieves salvation” (Homily 11). The Byzantine Akathist Hymn, which dates back to the sixth century, praises Mary as “the bridge leading those on earth to heaven.” Church fathers such as St. Basil of Seleucia (fifth century), St. Andrew of Crete (c. 660–740) and St. John of Damascus (c. 657–749) referred to the Blessed Virgin as Mediatrice

(*mesitis*). In the Middle Ages, St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), spoke of Mary as “the aqueduct” of grace, and he believed that God has “willed that we have everything through Mary” (*Sermon on the Aqueduct*, 7).

Popes since the eighteenth century have affirmed Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces. In 1748, Pope Benedict XIV spoke of Mary as ‘the heavenly stream which brings to the hearts of wretched mortals all God’s gifts and graces’ (Benedict XIV’s bull, *Gloriosae Dominae* [1748]). In an 1806 message to the Servites, Pius VII (r. 1800–23) referred to the Blessed Virgin as the “Dispensatrix of all graces.” In his 1854 bull defining the Immaculate Conception, Pius IX extolled Mary as “the most powerful Mediatrix and Conciliatrix in the whole world.” In his 1891 encyclical, *Octobri mense*, Leo XIII stated “that absolutely nothing from this immense treasury of all the graces brought forth by the Lord ... is imparted to us by the will of God, except through Mary” (Denz.-H 3274). Support for Mary as Mediatrix of all graces can likewise be found in St. Pius X, Pius XI, Pius XII, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. On January 12, 1921, Benedict XV, at the request of Cardinal Mercier of Brussels, approved a Feast of Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces, for all the dioceses of Belgium and any other dioceses that would request it.

Why is Pope Francis’s affirmation of Mary as Advocate and Mediatrix of all graces significant? It is well-known that since the 1990s, the international movement known as *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici*, has been asking the Roman Pontiff to consider dogmatically proclaiming the Blessed Virgin as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix of all grace, and Advocate for the People of God. In 2005 six cardinals—Telesphore Toppo, Luis Aponte Martínez, Varkey Vithayathil, C.S.S.R., Edouard Gagnon, P.S.S., Ricardo Vidal, and Ernesto Corripio Ahumada participated in a May 3–7, 2005 symposium held in Fatima, Portugal on “Mary Unique Cooperator in the Redemption” These cardinals then petitioned Benedict XVI to proclaim Mary as “the Spiritual Mother of All Humanity; the Coredemptrix with Jesus the Redeemer; the Mediatrix of all graces with Jesus, the one Mediator; and Advocate with Jesus Christ on behalf of the human race.”

In his May 13, 2023 message to Archbishop Gian Franco Saba, Pope Francis affirmed the validity of two of the Marian titles in these petitions for a new Marian dogma. The only Marian title he has not affirmed is that of Coredemptrix. I have argued², though, that Pope Francis has affirmed Mary's coredemptive role even though he, like his predecessor Benedict XVI, has distanced himself from the title of Coredemptrix. Pope Francis, of course, is correct that Jesus is the only divine Redeemer. We need to pray for the Holy Father to understand that the title, co-redemptrix, is an affirmation of Mary's unique cooperation and participation in the work of redemption. This title neither takes away nor adds anything to Christ, who is the one and only divine Redeemer (cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 62). We know that Pope Francis loves the Blessed Virgin Mary. Perhaps she will touch his heart to see that she is not only the Advocate close to Jesus and the Mediatrix of all graces, but she is also the New Eve who collaborated with and under the New Adam as the Co-redemptrix of the human race.

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.

² Fastiggi, Robert. "Pope Francis Affirms the Essence of Marian Co-Redemption and Mediation." *Ecce Mater Tua*, vol. 4, 12 June 2021, pp. 7–10.

**El lugar de María en nuestras vidas –
The Place of Mary in Our Lives³**

ARCHBISHOP (AND CARDINAL-ELECT) VICTOR MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ

We have the joy of meeting today to make an act of love for Mary. We need to do it to bring to completion this national Marian year. Some of us do it in person and others virtually, but all of us are united as an archdiocesan community that wants to express its affection for the Mother.

On August 15 I wanted to bring you a message for the Marian Year from the chapel of the Carmelite sisters, but the audio was not working, so I want to take up that message now.

We have asked ourselves how Marian devotion is grounded in the Bible. For this the key text is Lk 1, 39-45, where the visit of Mary to Elizabeth is narrated. Why is that text so important? Because it presents the attitude of Elizabeth before Mary. Moreover, it points out that Elizabeth said what she said because she was filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if we want to be faithful to the Gospel, the only fitting thing is to have that attitude of Elizabeth before Mary. And what did Elizabeth say to Mary, moved by the Holy Spirit? She told her three things.

The first is "Blessed are you among all women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Notice that the same word that is used to praise the Lord Jesus —blessed—is the one used for Mary—blessed—They are the same, not because Mary has the same perfection as Jesus, no, but because the two are inseparable, and therefore we cannot separate love for Jesus from love for his Mother.

The second sentence that Elizabeth says to Mary is: "Who am I that the Mother of my Lord should come to me". Who am I? Look at what

³ This is an English translation of: Homilía de monseñor Víctor Manuel Fernández, arzobispo de La Plata, en la clausura del Año Mariano Nacional (Catedral de La Plata, solemnidad de la Inmaculada Concepción, 8 de diciembre de 2020)
<https://aica.org/documento.php?id=420>

an attitude of humility and veneration before Mary, of feeling little before her. Therefore, we cannot have an attitude of indifference towards her, but that same humble, admired, affectionate veneration.

The third sentence that Elizabeth says to her is: "Blessed are you for having believed in the promise of the Lord." She praises Mary not only for being the mother, but for her faith, and for this reason she calls her "blessed". But let us remember that this word in the Gospel of Luke has a very deep meaning. It is not a state of mind, it is holiness, the happy ones are the blessed, those who already have a place in heaven.

So if any brother despises Mary and tells you that the Bible does not speak of devotion to her, they certainly know where they should look.

And because the Gospel itself is the one that motivates us to devotion to Mary, that is why we want to close this Marian year with a great act of love for Mary.

Today is December 8. What we celebrate about Mary today is not strictly something that can be imitated, because it is a unique and exclusive gift of God; only she has that grace, only she has been completely preserved from sin and transformed in such a full way. Why? Because no one was so united to Jesus as she was.

In fact, all Marian dogmas, everything we say about Mary, derives from one: that she is the Mother of God. But if we are at a point where an imitation is no longer possible for us, what can we do today? Contemplation, admiration, letting the eyes of the heart open and awaken to spiritual astonishment at such beauty. Because where there are no traces of sin there can only be beauty.

Let us contemplate, without letting go of our imagination. Remember that Saint Ignatius, in the spiritual exercises, invited us to make a composition of the place, to imagine the manger, to carefully imagine the different mysteries of Jesus. We can also imagine the heart of Mary; we can use imagination to let our admiration for the interior of Mary spring forth. How wonderful will that woman's heart be where there is

only love, where pure divine peace reigns without obstacles? How will that heart be that was so liberated that she could say: "my spirit rejoices in God, my savior"?

And we must not forget that in that heart is Jesus and you and I also. In that heart there is Jesus and the whole story of him, because Mary witnessed everything, from the incarnation and the birth to the death on the cross and the resurrection through all of life. None of the apostles witnessed the childhood and adolescence of Jesus, and she and John were there under the cross. But she didn't miss anything, like a good mother, she didn't miss a thing. 30 years together in the house of Nazareth, how many things does Mary know that are not in the Gospels, because in reality the most complete Gospel, the only one that is complete, is the heart of Mary. Who are we going to ask about it except her?

And when Jesus left the family and went out to preach, she was walking behind, enjoying, contemplating. All this that I am telling you is not an invention or my imagination. The Gospel says it twice: that Mary kept these things and meditated on them in her heart (Lk 2, 19). Look, two verbs: she kept them; she put them in her heart as if it were a treasure chest. She also contemplated them, she perceived the meaning, the greatness, the value of everything Jesus said and did.

How beautiful it is for Mary to be that living and luminous book, where we can find everything, the whole story of Jesus and its deepest meaning!

But she does not have inside her only the story of Jesus. She also has yours. In Revelation 12, where the figure of Mary appears in heaven, it says that she gave birth to Jesus (Ap 12, 5), and at the end it mentions "the rest of her children" (Ap 12, 17). That is to say, for her, Jesus and we are inseparable, we who are the rest of her children. And that is why she also contemplates your entire history, from the moment you were formed by your mother, while you grew up in your childhood and adolescence, each one of your joys and your sufferings, everything, from the first to the last moment of your life; she keeps everything in

her mother's heart, so she tells you just as she told Juan Diego. "Am I not here, who am your mother? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle?"

You may wonder how important this is, and I ask you to pay attention because it is extremely important, and I don't want you to leave without acknowledging it and without deeply appreciating it.

It's important that there is someone who remembers your history. Sometimes one thinks this will be his or her wife or husband, even though there will be many things that this person does not know about your history, your doubts, your sufferings. Mary knows and keeps all that. Sometimes you think that your children will be your extension and will keep in their hearts everything you told them. No, don't be fooled, they will forget about it, they will have their minds on other things. You yourself forget many things, or they remain in a kind of inner gloom, or you yourself prefer to forget them. It seems that in the end all your history faded into oblivion. But she, the mother, keeps everything that there is in your heart, she has everything you've experienced well stored there, and she knows the meaning of each thing and each moment. She does not forget. And for this reason, every time you go to pray, to talk with her, she will be able to understand more than anyone else what you say to her and also what you don't tell her, because she can read it in the context of everything you have experienced.

And she also preserves what we have experienced this year as a Church. First, out of prudence, we were all restricted for a few weeks. Shortly after, I asked the priests to start opening the places of worship and to be available for whatever the people needed.

We not only cared for the poor, but also those who needed to go to confession found a place, those who wanted to receive communion found a place. That is why in La Plata it was said that "he who seeks finds". Sometimes it was not easy to make decisions, because some wanted to keep it closed and others wanted to celebrate Mass as normal. We opted for prudence, although without leaving God's

people abandoned. Masses, communions, confirmations began to return, and in recent weeks we have become more preoccupied with baptisms.

Now we have to get those who are not going to Mass to come back, and that is why I ask everyone for a missionary effort. A little call, a question: "I haven't seen you for a long time". And if you think that more people could go at some time, propose to the priest that he add some time for Mass. Because you know that it's easier to lose good habits than to recover them, but among all of us we have to bring more people closer to the Lord. Today we put all this in the hands of the Virgin and she will surely help us. Let us now make a prayer that is an expression of our love for Mary:

Mary, today, on your feast, I want to put myself before your gaze. Look inside me, where there is so much weakness and mistrust and disbelief, and ask the Lord to increase my faith and my hope. Pray for me, Mother, so that I learn to lift my eyes to the Father. and to leave everything in his hands.

I love you Mother.

Look at me Mary, because sometimes I have a complicated heart, full of complaints and regrets, so closed in on myself that I do not recognize the love of Jesus.

I want to have a simple heart, capable of being happy with simple things, to find God in the smallest, a docile heart, that is carried away by the Holy Spirit. Mother, teach me to look at Jesus with your eyes full of wonder and tenderness. Look at me with those Mother's eyes, which kept each detail of the life of Jesus.

I love you, Mother.

Mary, today, at your feast, I want to put myself before your gaze. Look inside me, where there is so much weakness and mistrust and disbelief, and ask the Lord to increase my faith and my hope.

Pray for me, Mother, so that I learn to lift my eyes to the Father.
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Look at me with those Mother's eyes, which kept each detail of the life of Jesus.

I love you Mother.

Look at me and observe my entire life to discover the deep meaning of everything that happens to me.

Look at me and help me discover what the Lord wants from me, his project for my life. Mother, you gave everything, without keeping anything, I want to gladden your heart with generous offerings.

With the dedication of my life, with my works of love, forgiveness, kindness, service, Mary, good mother, teach me to look at others with generosity.

You who left without delay to help your cousin Elizabeth, don't let me be indifferent when someone needs me”.

Look at me Mother, ask the Lord to give me a big heart, able to give everything.

And with your maternal affection help me grow, Mother. Give me every day the encouragement of your love,

so that I never remain motionless, so that I yearn to grow in holiness more and more.

I love you Mother.

Mary, you are the Mother of those who have no one, of those who are worth nothing to the world. For in your eyes all are important, because you remember the forgotten and accompany the abandoned.

Help me feel part of the humble and simple people, like those shepherds of Bethlehem, of that people that does not forget you, that is looking for you, that loves you, no matter what others say.

I love you Mother.

Mary, the holiest, the greatest, the most blessed of all women, the only one, the privileged one, you never wanted to appear or stand out, and you were one more of your people.

Help me free myself from all need to appear, and give me that pleasure of being one more, of losing myself among the people, like you in Nazareth.

Let me rejoice with you, Mother, let me contemplate with you the Risen One. But I also ask you to look at my life, Mother. Because in me there are some things that have no light, that need the splendor of the Messiah.

I love you Mother.

Mary, Mother, look on our communities with your good eyes. Look at us and intercede for us, Mother, so that our communities give themselves with all their might to announce the risen Jesus. Ask Jesus to open his beautiful heart and pour out in every Christian community the Holy Spirit, with all the strength, joy and courage that He can give.

I love you Mother.

Mary, we are very much your children, those of us who were born on the cross and we receive you as mother. And each one is sacred to you, each one is worth more than gold to your maternal heart.

Thank you Mother, because I know that I will never be alone, abandoned or forgotten, because you will be with me in every joy and in every anguish, until you take me in your arms to heaven to the presence of the beloved Father. Amen.

IN SPANISH:

Tenemos la alegría de reunirnos hoy para hacer un acto de amor a María. Se lo debíamos al finalizar este año mariano nacional. Lo hacemos algunos presencialmente y otros virtualmente, pero todos unidos como comunidad arquidiocesana que quiere expresar su cariño a la Madre.

El 15 de agosto quise acercarles un mensaje para el Año mariano desde la capilla de las hermanas carmelitas, pero no funcionaba el audio, de manera que quiero retomar ahora aquel mensaje.

Nos preguntábamos cómo se fundamenta en la Biblia la devoción mariana. Para ellos hay un texto clave que es Lc 1, 39-45, donde se narra la visita de María a Isabel. ¿Por qué es tan importante ese texto? Porque allí se presenta la actitud de Isabel ante María. Es más, se destaca que Isabel dijo lo que dijo porque estaba llena del Espíritu Santo. Por lo tanto, si queremos ser fieles al Evangelio, lo único que cabe es tener esa actitud de Isabel ante María. ¿Y qué le dijo Isabel a María, movida por el Espíritu Santo?. Le dijo tres cosas.

La primera es “bendita tú eres entre todas las mujeres y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre”. Fíjense que la misma palabra que usa para elogiar al Señor Jesús bendito- es la que usa para María –bendita-. Los iguala, no porque María tenga la misma perfección de Jesús, no, sino porque

son inseparables los dos, y entonces no podemos separar el amor a Jesús del amor a su Madre.

La segunda frase que le dice Isabel a María es: “¿Quién soy yo para que la Madre de mi Señor venga a mí?”. ¿Quién soy yo? Miren qué actitud de humildad y de veneración ante María, de sentirse poca cosa ante ella. Por lo tanto, no podemos tener una actitud de indiferencia ante ella, sino esa misma veneración humilde, admirada, afectuosa.

La tercera frase que le dice Isabel es: “Feliz de ti por haber creído en la promesa del Señor”. Elogia a María no sólo por ser la madre, sino por su fe, y por eso la llama “feliz”. Pero recordemos que esa palabra en el Evangelio de Lucas tiene un significado muy hondo. No es un estado de ánimo, es la santidad, los felices son los bienaventurados, los que ya tienen un lugar en el cielo.

Así si algún hermano desprecia a María y te dice que la Biblia no habla de la devoción a ella, ya saben dónde tienen que buscar.

Y porque el Evangelio mismo es el que nos motiva a la devoción a María, por eso queremos cerrar este año mariano con un gran acto de amor a María.

Hoy es 8 de diciembre. Lo que hoy celebramos de María no es estrictamente algo que pueda ser imitado, porque es un don de Dios único y exclusivo, sólo ella tiene esa gracia, sólo ella ha sido completamente preservada del pecado y transformada de esa manera tan plena. ¿Por qué? Porque nadie estuvo tan unido a Jesús como ella.

De hecho, todos los dogmas marianos, todo lo que decimos de María, se deriva de uno: que es la Madre de Dios. Pero si estamos en un punto en que ya no es posible para nosotros una imitación, ¿qué cabe hoy? La contemplación, la admiración, dejar abrir los ojos del corazón y

lograr que se despierte el asombro espiritual ante tanta hermosura. Porque donde no hay rastros de pecado sólo puede haber belleza.

Contemplemos, sin dejar de usar la imaginación. Recuerden que san Ignacio, en los ejercicios espirituales, invitaba a hacer una composición de lugar, a imaginarse el pesebre, a imaginarse detenidamente los distintos misterios de Jesús. También podemos imaginar el corazón de María, usar la imaginación para dejar brotar la admiración por el interior de María. ¿Qué maravilla será ese corazón de mujer donde sólo hay amor, donde Reina sin obstáculos la purísima paz divina? ¿Cómo será ese corazón que estaba tan liberado que podía decir: “mi espíritu se estremece de gozo en Dios, mi salvador”?.

Y no hay que olvidar que en ese corazón está Jesús, y estás vos, y estoy yo. Está Jesús y toda su historia, porque María fue testigo de todo, desde la encarnación y el nacimiento hasta la muerte en la cruz y la resurrección pasando por toda la vida. Ninguno de los apóstoles fue testigo de la niñez y la adolescencia de Jesús, y en la cruz estuvieron Juan y ella. Pero a ella no se le escapó nada, como buena madre, no se le escapaba detalle. 30 años juntos en la casa de Nazaret, cuántas cosas sabe María que no están en los Evangelios, porque en realidad el Evangelio más completo, el único íntegro, es el corazón de María. ¿A quién le vamos a preguntar sino a ella?

Y cuando Jesús dejó la familia y salió a predicar, ella andaba atrás pispeando, disfrutando, contemplando. Todo esto que les estoy diciendo no es un invento o mi imaginación. Lo dice dos veces el Evangelio: que María guardaba estas cosas y las meditaba en su corazón (Lc 2, 19). Fíjense, dos verbos: las guardaba, las metía en su corazón como si fuera el arcón de los tesoros. También las contemplaba, percibía el significado, la grandeza, el valor de todo lo que hacía y decía Jesús.

¡Qué hermoso que María sea ese libro viviente y luminoso, donde podemos encontrarlo todo, toda la historia de Jesús y su más hondo significado!

Pero ella no tiene en su interior sólo la historia de Jesús. Tiene también la tuya. En Apocalipsis 12, donde aparece la figura de María en el cielo, dice que ella dio a luz a Jesús (Ap 12, 5), y al final menciona “al resto de sus hijos” (Ap 12, 17). Es decir, para ella son inseparables Jesús y nosotros, que somos el resto de sus hijos. Y por eso ella también contempla toda tu historia, desde que te formaste en tu madre, mientras crecías en tu niñez y adolescencia, cada una de tus alegrías y tus sufrimientos, todo, desde el primer al último instante de tu vida, todo se está guardando en su corazón de madre, que te dice como le dijo a Juan Diego. “¿No estoy yo aquí que soy tu madre?. ¿No estás acaso en el hueco de mi manto?”.

Ustedes podrán preguntarse qué importancia tiene esto, y yo les pido que presten atención porque es sumamente importante, y no quiero que se vayan sin reconocerlo y sin valorarlo profundamente.

Es importante que haya alguien que recuerde tu historia. A veces uno piensa que será su esposa, su esposo, aunque ¿cuántas cosas habrá que esa persona no sabe, de tu historia, de tus dudas, de tus sufrimientos. María sí conoce y guarda todo eso. A veces pensás que tus hijos serán tu prolongación y conservarán en tus corazones todo lo que les contaste. No, no te engañes, se irán olvidando, tendrán la cabeza en otras cosas. Vos mismo te olvidás de muchas cosas, o quedan en una especie de penumbra interior, o vos mismo preferís olvidarlas. Parece que al final toda tu historia se esfumara en el olvido. Pero ella, la madre, sí que guarda todo en tu corazón, ella tiene allí bien guardado, todo lo que has vivido, y sabe bien el significado de cada cosa y de cada momento. Ella no se olvida. Y por eso, cada vez que vayas a orar, a conversar con ella, ella podrá entender más que nadie lo que le decís y

también lo que no le decís, porque ella lo puede leer en el contexto de todo lo que has vivido.

Y ella guarda también lo que hemos vivido este año, como Iglesia. Primero, por prudencia, estuvimos unas semanas todos guardados. Poco después pedí a los sacerdotes que empezaran a abrir los templos y que estuvieran disponibles para lo que la gente necesitara.

No sólo atendimos a los pobres, sino que también el que necesitaba confesarse algún lugar encontraba, el que quería comulgar algún lugar encontraba. Por eso en La Plata se decía que “el que busca encuentra”. A veces no era fácil tomar decisiones, porque unos querían tener cerrado y otros querían celebrar la Misa con toda normalidad. Optamos por la prudencia, aunque sin dejar al pueblo de Dios abandonado. Fueron volviendo las Misas, las comuniones, las confirmaciones, y en las últimas semanas nos preocupamos más por los bautismos.

Ahora tenemos que lograr que los que no están yendo a Misa vuelvan a acercarse, y por eso les pido a todos un esfuerzo misionero. Una llamadita, una pregunta: “hace mucho que no te veo”. Y si ustedes piensan que en algún horario podría ir más gente, propónganle al cura que agregue algún horario de Misa. Porque ustedes saben que a los buenos hábitos es más fácil perderlos que recuperarlos, pero entre todos tenemos que acercar más gente al Señor. Hoy ponemos todo esto en las manos de la Virgen y seguro que ella nos ayudará. Hagamos ahora una oración que sea expresión de nuestro amor a María.

***“María, hoy, en tu fiesta, quiero ponerme ante tu mirada.
Mirá mi interior, donde hay tanta debilidad y desconfianza e incredulidad,
y pedile al Señor que aumente mi fe y mi esperanza.
Rogá por mí, Madre, para que aprenda a levantar los ojos al Padre
y a dejar todo en sus manos.***

Te quiero Madre.

*Mírame María,
porque a veces tengo un corazón complicado, lleno de quejas y lamentos,
tan encerrado en mí mismo, que no reconozco el amor de Jesús.
Quiero tener un corazón sencillo, capaz de alegrarse con las cosas simples,
de encontrar a Dios en lo más pequeño,
un corazón dócil, que se deje llevar por el Espíritu Santo.
Madre, enseñame a mirar a Jesús con tus ojos llenos de asombro y ternura.
Mírame con esos ojos de Madre, que guardaron cada
detalle de la vida de Jesús.*

Te quiero Madre

*“María, hoy, en tu fiesta, quiero ponerme ante tu mirada.
Mira mi interior, donde hay tanta debilidad y desconfianza e incredulidad,
y pedile al Señor que aumente mi fe y mi esperanza.
Rogá por mí, Madre, para que aprenda a levantar los ojos al Padre
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Mírame con esos ojos de Madre, que guardaron cada
detalle de la vida de Jesús.*

Te quiero Madre

*Mírame y observa mi vida entera para que descubra el sentido profundo
de todo lo que me pasa.
Mírame y ayudame a descubrir
lo que el Señor quiere de mí, su proyecto para mi vida.
Madre, que lo diste todo, sin guardarte nada,
quiero alegrar tu corazón con ofrendas generosas.
Con la entrega de mi vida, con mis obras de amor,
de perdón, de bondad, de servicio,*

*María, madre buena, enseñame a mirar a los demás con generosidad.
Vos que saliste sin demora para ayudar a tu prima Isabel,
no dejes que sea indiferente cuando alguien me necesite”.*
*Mírame Madre, pedile al Señor que me regale un corazón grande,
capaz de darlo todo.*
Y con tu cariño materno ayudame a crecer, Madre.
*Regalame cada día el estímulo de tu amor,
para que nunca me quede anclado, para que desee santificarme más y más.*

Te quiero Madre

*María, sos la Madre de aquellos que no tienen a nadie,
de los que no valen nada para el mundo.*
*Para tus ojos todos son importantes, porque te acuerdas de los olvidados
y acompañas a los abandonados.*
*Ayúdame a sentirme parte del pueblo humilde y sencillo,
como aquellos pastores de Belén, de ese pueblo que no se olvida de vos,
que te busca, que te ama, sin importarles lo que digan los demás.*

Te quiero Madre

*María, la más santa, la más grande, la más bendita de todas las mujeres,
la única, la privilegiada, nunca quisiste aparecer ni destacarte,
y fuiste una más de tu pueblo.*
*Ayúdame a liberarme de toda necesidad de aparecer,
y dame ese gusto de ser uno más, de perderme entre la gente, como vos en
Nazaret.*
*Dejame alegrarme contigo, Madre, dejame contemplar contigo al
Resucitado.*
Pero también te pido que mires mi vida, Madre.
*Porque en mí hay algunas cosas que no tienen luz,
que necesitan el resplandor del Mesías.*

Te quiero Madre

María, Madre, depositá tus ojos buenos en nuestras comunidades.
Míranos e intercedé por nosotros, Madre,
*para que nuestras comunidades se entreguen con todas las fuerzas
a anunciar a Jesús resucitado. Pedile a Jesús que abra su corazón hermoso*

*y derrame en cada comunidad cristiana el Espíritu Santo,
con toda la fuerza, la alegría y la valentía que él puede dar.*

Te quiero Madre

*María, somos muchos tus hijos, los que nacimos en la cruz
y te recibimos como madre. Y cada uno es sagrado para vos,
cada uno vale más que el oro para tu corazón materno.*

Gracias Madre,

*porque sé que nunca estaré solo, abandonado ni olvidado,
porque estarás conmigo en cada alegría y en cada angustia,
hasta llevarme en tus brazos al cielo hasta la presencia del Padre amado.
Amén”.*

*Víctor Manuel Fernández is an Argentine prelate and theologian, serving as
Archbishop of La Plata since 2018. On July 1, 2023, Pope Francis named
Fernández prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Holy Father
has since announced he plans to make Fernández a cardinal at a consistory
scheduled for September 30, 2023.*

In Defense of the Legitimacy of the Title of Our Lady Co-redemptrix

MARY MOORE

When Jesus appeared to St. Faustina in the 1930s, he told her to “prepare for great battles. Know that you are now on a great stage where all heaven and earth are watching you.”¹

Such a statement warrants feelings of consternation. Yet we see St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Anthony of the Desert and St. Ignatius of Loyola allude to the same point: that “we are in the midst of a spiritual battle, whether we acknowledge it or not. And perhaps the most dangerous of all places is to be in the midst of a spiritual battle and not to know it.”² Yet, Jesus reminds Faustina, that even in the midst of such terrible combat: “Fight like a knight, so that I can reward you. Do not be unduly fearful, because you are not alone.”³ Who, then, will be our ally? Who, then, has God presented to us by which the victory is to be won? It must be none other than His very own Mother, the ‘Woman’ of Revelation 12 who battles the deadly dragon on behalf of her children. The Lady. *Our Lady*: the Co-redemptrix.

Revelation 12:15 says, “The serpent vomited water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood.”⁴ This water, according to His Eminence Alfons Cardinal Stickler interprets that the water that threatens to drown Our Lady represents the incorrect theological theories that attempt to undermine her crucial role in salvation history. As she said at Akita, “I alone am able to save you from the calamities that approach. Those who place their confidence in me will be saved.”⁵ Our Lady, because of her role as Co-

¹ Faustina Kowalska, *Diary* (Stockbridge: Marians of the Immaculate Conception, 1999), 626.

² Mark Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights on a Fifth Marian Dogma*, (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2000), 42.

³ Faustina Kowalska, *Diary*, 626.

⁴ Revelation 12:15

⁵ Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights*, 48.

redemptrix is the one through whom all graces are mediated to Earth and “the more we acknowledge her, the more she can mediate the grace of Redemption, peace and mitigation for our troubled world.”⁶ It is vital then, for the Church to officially recognize her role so that she can unleash the flood of graces into those souls dying of thirst. It is “only when our Holy Father, in his freedom as Vicar of Christ, proclaims this Marian doctrine on the highest level of revealed dogmatic truth, will Our Lady then be released to mediate the special graces necessary for our present human situation.”⁷ She will not force herself upon us, so it is up to us to decide if we will give her free range as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of All Graces and help us in the most important battle we will ever fight.

This title of Mary as Co-redemptrix is one of the most heavily-disputed theological doctrines the Church has ever seen, but what is it about this title that causes so much controversy? Mostly it comes from those who assume that it means Mary was an equal collaborator with Jesus in the Redemption of the world at Calvary. However, this assumption is totally and altogether incorrect, and has been set straight by thousands of years of Sacred Tradition and, within the last two centuries, Magisterial teaching. Their cultivation of this doctrine over the centuries instructs that the word ‘Redemptrix’ means ‘to buy back’, and the suffix ‘-trix’ signifies a female involvement. When the prefix ‘co-’, meaning ‘with’ (not ‘equal’ as some would assume) is added, the word Co-redemptrix is defined as a ‘woman who buys back with’. In this case, it is obvious that the woman in question can be no other than the ‘Woman’ who stood strong by Jesus’ side throughout His entire life, His Mother, the Mother of God and the Mother of all peoples. Therefore, it can be said in total confidence and without doubt that this term refers to Mary who ‘buys back with’ Jesus in the work of Redemption.

But how, exactly, did the Blessed Mother redeem humanity alongside Jesus, and in what manner? In Catholic teaching, it is explained that

⁶ *Ibid*, 48.

⁷ *Ibid*.

Christ Jesus earns what is called a condign merit, or *meritum de condigno*, which is an obligation of the Father to reward the work of the Son by His own virtue in the order of justice; while Mary's merit is what is called congruent merit, or *meritum de congruo*, which is "based on the appropriateness of recompense for her joint suffering with Jesus, coupled with the generosity of the Eternal Father for the Virgin Daughter's sacrifice of love and obedience offered to Him for the world's salvation."⁸ While Jesus paid the full price of Redemption through His physical and spiritual offering to the Father to redeem humanity, the Blessed Mother participated in a subordinate, secondary manner through her spiritual suffering. "In essence, Mary merited in the order of fittingness that which Jesus merited in the order of justice and equality between himself and the Father."⁹ Mary, though subordinate in the Redemptive merit, does not mean that she was simply an accessory, but rather "had an exceptional worth beyond the human mind to conceive..." and marked "a quasi-participation in the infinite worth of the Savior's merits."¹⁰ For God has willed that all men participate in the Redemption of the Cross in a remote and subordinate manner by uniting their own sufferings to His. While Jesus is the One, True Mediator between God and humanity, all Christians are called to cooperate collaterally in His mediation through redemptive suffering. In this we are reminded that any participation in the Redemption by a creature is only possible because of the goodness and the openness of God to allow human collaboration, so that, as Pius X taught, "the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful."¹¹ That being said, it is only because of God's initial stirring in the heart of men that Christians can even make the choice to offer up their little crosses alongside the One at Calvary. With Mary, it is the same; she owes everything to God, as all humans do, and it is only because He first moves, that she can follow. Yet, God desired that she participate in the work of Redemption in a special way so that she

⁸ *Ibid*, 155.

⁹ *Ibid*, 119.

¹⁰ Mark Miravalle, *Mariology: A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians and Consecrated Persons* (Goleta, Queenship Publishing, 2007). Kindle Edition. 8150.

¹¹ Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights*, 154.

would have the right to distribute those graces that she worked so intimately in obtaining. It is because she is first Co-redemptrix that she is able to operate as Mediatrix of all graces.

Genesis 3:15

Mary's role as Co-redemptrix is one of the most heavily supported doctrines in Scripture. Mary is first introduced as the 'Woman' in Genesis 3:15. Though Mary is not explicitly named, it has been well established in the Catholic Tradition that she is the woman whose seed shall crush the head of the serpent. The verse reads, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; she will crush your head, and you will bruise her heel."¹² In this verse, God is addressing the serpent who just entered into the Garden of Eden, paradise on earth, and tempted Adam and Eve with enough cunning and deceit to bring about the downfall of humanity in one catastrophic moment. Yet, despite the disappointment, God immediately promises to send a savior. He doesn't specify who the savior will be or when the savior will come, but what God does make sure to mention is that he will be born of a woman who will be united with him in complete and total enmity of the serpent.

This woman must be something extraordinary; someone who is radically antithetical to the serpent. If the serpent is prideful, the woman must be humble; if the serpent is disobedient and self-serving, the woman must be obedient and self-sacrificing; if the serpent is full of sin, the woman must be full of grace; and if the serpent is instrumental in the ruination of humanity, the woman must be instrumental in the redemption of humanity. This enmity between the serpent and the woman is crucial to the Church's understanding of Mary's role in the saving work of Christ. She participates with her offspring in the crushing of the head of Satan in the work of Redemption. For as she is antithetical with the serpent, so too are the seeds of the woman and the serpent. For the woman, the Magisterium interprets that her offspring is Christ the Savior, whereas for the

¹² Genesis 3:15.

serpent, his offspring is sin and death. It is clear that from the beginning of Scripture, at the dawn of time, God the Father prophecies about the woman and her seed, and within this prophecy lies the mariological truth that “the Woman was to intimately share in the complete redemptive triumph over Satan.”¹³

Isaiah 7:14

In the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, the ‘Woman’ from Genesis 3:15 is identified further: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.”¹⁴ Isaiah reveals two things regarding the woman and her seed. First, in using the word ‘*almah*’ in Hebrew and the word ‘*parthenos*’ in Greek, this mother will remain an intact virgin. Secondly, the son born to her will be called Emmanuel, ‘God with us’. If we look further into the prophecies of Isaiah concerning this Emmanuel, it is evident that this savior will be a suffering servant. Isaiah 53:5 says, “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.”¹⁵ From this it is clear that not only will the seed of the woman, Emmanuel, suffer on behalf of humanity, but that “the mother of the Suffering Servant was also, by nature of her maternal relation, destined to suffer.”¹⁶

Luke 1:38

In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel greets Mary as “full of grace”.¹⁷ In the Greek, it is the word ‘*kecharitomene*’, a perfect participle that is used, indicating that Mary has already been made immaculate in the past and is identifying her present state.¹⁸ This is

¹³ Mark Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate* (Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing, 1993), 2.

¹⁴ Isaiah 7:14.

¹⁵ Isaiah 53:5

¹⁶ Miravalle, *Mary*, 3.

¹⁷ Luke 1:28

¹⁸ Miravalle, *Mary*, 4.

important to Mary's role as Co-redemptrix because, as John Paul II says, "The fullness of grace allowed her to fulfill perfectly her mission of collaboration with the work of salvation: it gave the maximum value to her cooperation in the sacrifice."¹⁹ When Gabriel asks Mary to be the mother of God, she gives her 'yes' or her 'fiat'. Mary's consent to the Will of God gives Jesus the instrument by which the saving work of Redemption is completed. Her cooperation in this alone makes her unique and worthy of the title 'Co-redemptrix'. For it is by Christ's body, the flesh and blood given to him by Mary, that the human race was redeemed. As Hebrews 10:10 says, "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."²⁰ Mary gave her flesh to the 'Word made flesh' and therefore "constitutes an inner participation in the work of Redemption that no other creature in heaven or on earth could ever reach"²¹ Lumen Gentium 58 confirms that the "Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered with her Son unto the Cross."²² Mary's 'yes' was not a blind 'yes', for, as John Tauler, the German mystic of the tenth century says, her 'yes' "tells us of Mary's foreknowledge of her co-suffering with Jesus, in which she would share in all his Redemptive merits and afflictions."²³ In other words, Mary accepted everything, the joys and the sorrows of Christ's mission, and it is precisely because Mary was preserved from sin that she was "capable of co-operating in the Redemption."²⁴

Luke 2:35

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Mary Immaculate the First Marvel of Redemption*, Papal Address at General Audience, 7 December 1983, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Issue n. 50, 1983, p. 1, quoted in Miravalle, *Mary*, 4.

²⁰ Hebrews 10:10.

²¹ Miravalle, *Mary*, 8.

²² *Ibid*, 8.

²³ John Tauler, *Sermo pro festo Purificat B.M. Virginis; Oeuvres completes*, ed. E.P. Noel, Paris, vol. 5, 1911, p.61, Quoted in Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus": *The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix* (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 97.

²⁴ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, November 1, 1995, p.11, Quoted in Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 203.

The prophet Simeon, at the Presentation of Our Lord Jesus at the Temple, prophecies about Jesus causing the rise and fall of many and that he will be a sign of contradiction. In this, he tells Mary that “a sword will pierce through your own heart too.”²⁵ This is a sign that she will participate in the sufferings of Jesus’ life, confirming the Suffering Servant narrative prophesied by Isaiah. Redemption was bought with a price; the price of suffering. When Mary gave her fiat, she opened her arms to everything that God was planning: the good and the difficult. Mary is ever at the side of her Son, bearing and “pondering in her heart”²⁶ everything that he endures. In this, Mary has a tendency to precede her Son in things. “Just as Mary preceded her Son’s stainless entry into the human family by her Immaculate Conception, so too did the Mother go before her Son in the order of suffering that would lead to the climax of the Redemption on the Cross.”²⁷ It is her maternal right to accompany her Son through all the moments of his life, from his birth, to his public ministry and even through the brutality of his passion and death. Mary suffered with Jesus all her life, as is laid out in her seven sorrows. She is no stranger to suffering and it is important to understand that she suffers in the way that all Catholics understand it: redemptively.

John 19:25-27

In Jesus’ final moments as he hung in agony on the cross, about to expire, he volitionally says to his mother: “Woman, behold your son.”²⁸ Again, the ‘Woman’ of Genesis 3:15 is recalled as Mary, the ‘Woman’ at the foot of the cross, is given to John the Beloved, the representative of humanity, as the Mother of all peoples. *Lumen Gentium* comments that “Mary shared the intensity of the suffering of Christ in her heart and that she shared in the immolation of that of the victim born to

²⁵ Luke 2:35.

²⁶ Luke 2:19.

²⁷ Miravalle, *Mary*, 10.

²⁸ John 19:26.

her.”²⁹ She is not passive, but is, as John Paul II claimed, “spiritually crucified at Calvary” along with her Son. Her role as a willing participant in the spiritual suffering at Calvary is willed by God the Father because of its “mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful” merit.³⁰ She becomes mediatrix of all graces because she first participated in the winning of graces during the redemption of humanity as Co-redemptrix.

Sacred Tradition

Mary’s role as Co-redemptrix as evidenced in Sacred Scripture has flourished in the Sacred Tradition of the Church by bishops, saints and Church Fathers who have uncovered the seeds of this marian truth and have enriched them over the centuries with the soil of Tradition in order for it to blossom into what we know today.

According to the patristics, there are two principles of Redemption that must first be mentioned in order to understand the standpoint of these saints, bishops, mystics and Doctors of the Church. The first principle is that of Recapitulation, meaning that Christ came to ‘go over’ the first creation by uniting within Himself all of the aspects from the original state so as to put forth a new creation in order to redeem the debts of the world to the Father.³¹ In this model, Jesus Christ becomes a New Adam, come to do what Adam could not. The second patristic principle of Redemption is Recirculation which teaches that Jesus as the New Adam must recirculate, or imitate that which was done by Adam but in an antithetical way.³² It is in the principles of Recapitulation and Recirculation that the patristics found purpose to name Mary as the New Eve. “It was a natural and logical development for the sub-Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr (+c.165), Irenaeus of

²⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican. Accessed August 5, 2020.

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, 58.

³⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, n. 25.

³¹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 97.

³² *Ibid*, 65.

Lyons (+c.202) and Tertullian (+c.220), to see Mary as the ‘New Eve’, the God-given helpmate of the ‘New Adam’.”³³

In the second century, St. Justin Martyr was the first to compare Mary antithetically with Eve: “For Eve, being a virgin and undefiled conceiving the word from the serpent, gave birth to disobedience and to death. The Virgin Mary, however...of her He was born... through whom God overthrows the serpent and angels and men like to the serpent.”³⁴

St. Irenaus, Bishop of Lyons and first mariologist, in the beginning of the third century said:

Just as she... having disobeyed, became the cause of death for herself and for the entire human race, so Mary...being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the entire human race...thus the knot of Eve’s disobedience received unloosing through the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve bound by unbelief, the virgin Mary unfastened by belief.³⁵

Irenaus proposes that Mary was not the “essential or ‘formal’ cause of salvation but as an instrumental cause anti-parallel to Eve’s instrumental causality in Adam’s formal loss of grace for humanity.”³⁶ “With Irenaeus, the Eve-Mary parallel is not simply a literary effect nor a gratuitous improvisation, but an integral part of his theology of salvation.”³⁷

In the latter part of the fourth century, St. Ephraem, Doctor of the Church, wrote that “Eve wrote a bill of death, and the Virgin paid the

³³ Miravalle, *Mariology*, Kindle Edition. 7777.

³⁴ St. Justin, *Dialogues cum Tryphone*, ch. 100; PG 6, 709-712, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 66.

³⁵ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, vol. 3, ch. 22, n. 4, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 67.

³⁶ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 67.

³⁷ Miravalle, *Mariology*, Kindle Edition. 7786.

debt.”³⁸ He continued on, describing that the Virgin Mary was chosen by God to be the “instrument of our salvation” and that she is the “price of redemption for captives”.³⁹ St Ambrose, another Doctor of the Church and mentor to St. Augustine, taught that Mary “brought forth Redemption for the human race,” and “bore in her womb the remission of sins”.⁴⁰

Saint Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, kicked off the fifth century by writing rather eloquently that “since Eve brought the cause of death to the human race, through which death entered the world, Mary furnished the Cause of life, through whom life was produced for us.”⁴¹ In the middle of the fifth century St Peter Chrysologus said that “all men merited life through a woman.”⁴² Proclus of Constantinople also addressed Mary: “you who alone carry the Redemption of the world.”⁴³ Later on in the fifth century, St. Augustine, one of the most prominent Doctors of the Church, formed a lot of his teachings about Mary around the model of her as the second Eve. He said:

It is a great sacrament that, as death came to us by a woman, life was born to us by a woman; so that in both sexes, feminine and masculine, the devil, being conquered, might be tormented, as you are glorified in the downfall of both. He would not have been adequately punished had both sexes been freed, but we

³⁸ St. Ephraem, *On the Institution of the Church*, n. 11, J.T. ed. Lamy, Mechliniae, 1889, t. 3, 978, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 70.

³⁹ St. Ephraem, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Assemani, vol. 3, Rome, 1832, p. 528, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 70.

⁴⁰ St. Ambrose, *De institutione virginum*, ch. 13, n. 81, *PL* 16, 339, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 71.

⁴¹ St. Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses*, 1. 3, t. 2; *PG* 42, 729, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 71.

⁴² St. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* 142; *PL* 52, 580, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 71.

⁴³ Proclus of Constantinople, *Sermo* 5, art. 3; *PG* 65, 720 C, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 72.

have not been freed by both.”⁴⁴ He further writes, “a woman handed the poison to the man who was to be deceived. A woman hands salvation to the man to be restored. A Woman, by bringing forth Christ, compensates for the sin of the man deceived by a woman.”⁴⁵

The first five centuries brought about a very strong mariological tradition within the Church concerning Mary’s Co-redemptive role in the salvation of humankind: “the Father’s proclaim that Mary is always central, always instrumental, always an essential part of God’s plan “with Jesus” to reverse the sin of Adam and Eve.”⁴⁶ This is found in the ancient Christian liturgy where “there is evidence that the Coptic, Ethiopian, and Mozarabic liturgies ‘pray the doctrine of Mary in salvation’ and in the Armenian liturgy they specifically addressed Mary as ‘salvatrrix’ and ‘liberatrix’.”⁴⁷ As St. Jerome put it simply, “death through Eve; life through Mary”.⁴⁸

Moving on into the 6th century, an Eastern akathist hymn addresses Mary: “Hail, Redemption of the tears of Eve.”⁴⁹

In the seventh century we get the first instance in which Mary is referred to as one who redeems with the one Redeemer. St. Modestus of Jerusalem said that through Mary, we have been “redeemed from the tyranny of the devil.”⁵⁰

⁴⁴ St. Augustine, *De agone christ.*, ch. 22; PL XL, 303, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 71.

⁴⁵ St. Augustine, *Sermo 51 de concord, Matth. Et Luc.*, n.2; PL 38, 335, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 72.

⁴⁶ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 73.

⁴⁷ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 70.

⁴⁸ St. Jerome, *Epist. 22, 21*; PL 22, 408, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 73.

⁴⁹ *Akathist Hymn*, Strophe 1; PG 92, 1337 A, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 77.

⁵⁰ *Enconium in B. Virginem*, VII; PG 86, 3293 B, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”: *The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix* (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 79.

In the eighth century, St Andrew of Crete said, “in you, we have been redeemed from corruption,” and that “all of us have obtained salvation through her.”⁵¹ In the same century St. John Damascene, Doctor of the Church, said that it is Mary “through whom we were redeemed from the curse.”⁵²

In the ninth century, Alcuin, the Abbot of Tours, tells Mary that “the whole world rejoices that it has been redeemed through you.”⁵³ Saint Theodore the Studite, said in like fashion that Mary is the “Ransom of the world.”⁵⁴

John the Geometer, a Byzantine monk, in the 10th century taught that Mary was close to Jesus throughout his entire work of redemption: “...she even suffered with him... terribly sundered, she would have wished a thousand times to suffer the evil she saw her Son suffering.”⁵⁵ In the same century, the word “Redemptrix” was used in reference to Mary in a French Psalter in a petition which implored, “Holy Redemptrix of the world, pray for us.”⁵⁶ It's important to note that this title of ‘Redemptrix’, even without the ‘co-’ has always been used contextually in subordination to the One Redeemer, and is justified as a legitimate title of the Mother of God.

St. Peter Damian in the eleventh century articulates the attitude of the Church in saying that “... we are debtors to the Most Blessed Mother of God, and... after God we should thank her for our Redemption.”⁵⁷

⁵¹ St. Andrew of Crete, *Canon in B. Annae conceptionem*, PG 97, 1307, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 79.

⁵² St. John Damascene, *Homilia in Annuntiationem B.V. Mariae*, PG 96, 657, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 79.

⁵³ Alcuin, *s. de Nativ.*; PL 101, 1300 D, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 79.

⁵⁴ St. Theodore the Studite, *Triodium Dominicae abstinentiae*, ode y, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 80.

⁵⁵ John the Geometer, *Life of Mary*, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 81.

⁵⁶ *Litanies des saintes*, in a Psalter of French origin, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 82.

⁵⁷ St. Peter Damian, *Sermo 45 in Nativitate Beatissimae Virginis Mariae*; PL 144, 743, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 84.

The twelfth century was dominated by the one of the greatest mariologists the Church has ever seen, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. The Marian title of Co-redemptrix was further developed by him when he taught that Mary offered Jesus as a victim to the Father in recompense for the sins of the world. Bernard was also the first to say that Mary underwent a “co-suffering” with Jesus. Bernard's disciple St. Arnold of Chartres went on to use the very important term “Co-crucified” in reference to Mary’s sacrifice at Calvary and that she “Co-died” with him, not in a physical way, but, “what they did in the flesh of Christ with nail and lance, this is the co-suffering in her soul.”⁵⁸

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, many theologians, saints and mystics came forward to defend and promote Mary as Co-redemptrix.⁵⁹ St. Bridget of Sweden received a series of visions from Jesus and Mary in which Mary's role as Co-redemptrix had been supernaturally affirmed and revealed.⁶⁰ St. Bridget received a vision of Our Lady of Sorrows who said that “My Son and I redeemed the world as with one heart.”⁶¹ Jesus later came to St. Bridget to confirm this in saying, “My Mother and I saved man as with one heart only, I by suffering in my heart and my flesh, she by the sorrow and love of her heart.”⁶² Given the wide acceptance of Saint Bridget’s private revelations, these statements from Jesus and Mary catapulted Mary's role as Co-redemptrix forward into the teachings and doctrines of the Church. St. Bonaventure, another great saint from the thirteenth century, articulates that “that woman (namely Eve) drove us out of paradise and sold us; but this one (Mary) brought us back again and bought us.”⁶³ St. Albert the Great confirms Bonaventure's teachings by saying that Mary “participated in all of his same acts.”⁶⁴ John Tauler in the fourteenth century said that “God accepted her oblation as a

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”: 93.

⁶⁰ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 96.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ St. Bonaventure, *de don. Sp.* 6; 14, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 95..

⁶⁴ St. Albert the Great, *Comment. In Matt. I*, 18; *Opera Omnia*, vol. 37, p. 97, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 95.

pleasing sacrifice, for the utility and salvation of the whole human race... So that, through the merits of her sorrows, she might change God's anger into Mercy.”⁶⁵ To close those two great mariological centuries. St. Catherine of Siena calls Mary the “Redemptrix of the human race because, by providing your flesh in the Word, you redeem the world. Christ redeemed with His passion and you with your sorrow of body and mind.”⁶⁶

In the sixteenth century, Jesuit priest Alphonsus Salmaron, heroic theologian of the Council of Trent, became a champion of the title. He says that Mary was created Immaculate so that “she would be Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Cooperatrix of the salvation of mankind.”⁶⁷ Salmaron reflects the theological disposition at the time that the term ‘Redemptrix’ was slowly giving way to the term ‘Co-redemptrix’.

By the 1600s, references in Sacred Tradition of Our Lady’s participation in the work of Redemption with her Son had reached well over three hundred instances, but it wasn’t until the seventeenth century that the Golden Age of Mary Co-redemptrix came about and the foundations were laid for this title to become an official doctrinal teaching of the Church.⁶⁸ St. Lawrence of Brindisi took a rather soteriological route referring to the “spiritual priesthood” of Mary:

The spirit of Mary was a spiritual priest, as the cross was the altar and Christ the sacrifice; although the spirit of Christ was the principal priest, the spirit of Mary was there together with the spirit of Christ; indeed it was one spirit with him as one soul in two bodies. Hence the spirit of Mary together with the spirit of Christ performed the Priestly office at the altar of the Cross

⁶⁵ John Tauler, *Sermo pro festo Purificat. B. M. Virginis; Oeuvres completes*, ed. E.P. Noel, Paris, vol. 5, 1911, p. 61, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 97.

⁶⁶ St. Catherine of Siena, *Oratio XI*, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 98.

⁶⁷ Alphonsus Salmeron, *Comentarii in Evangel.* Tr. 5, Opera, Cologne. Ed. Hierat, 1604, t. III, pp. 37b-38a, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 107.

⁶⁸ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 113.

and offered the sacrifice of the cross for the Salvation of the world to the Eternal God.⁶⁹

St. Robert Bellarmine continues in this Golden Age to develop this titular seed by saying: “She alone cooperated in the mystery of the Incarnation; she alone cooperated in the mystery of the passion, standing before the Cross, and offering her Son to the salvation of the world.”⁷⁰ Another aspect of this Golden Age of Mary Co-redemptrix is the idea of Marian ransoming, which comes about in two ways: the first in that Mary paid the same price as her Son in a subordinate, spiritual manner to appease the justice of God, and secondly that Mary sacrifices her own merit in union with that of her Son’s on the cross on behalf of Humanity.⁷¹

By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the title Co-redemptrix became the most popular title used in reference to Mary’s participation in the Redemption of humanity, and is used hundreds of times by theologians, saints and mystics.⁷² St. Louis De Montfort in the beginning of the eighteenth century emphasized that Jesus Christ chose to depend on Mary throughout his entire life from his conception to his death, “in order that He might make with her but one sacrifice, and be emulated to the Eternal Father by her consent, just as Isaac of old was offered by Abraham’s consent to the will of God. It is she who nursed him, supported him, brought him up, and then sacrificed him for us.”⁷³ St. Alphonsus Ligouri continues this tradition of calling Mary Co-redemptrix and teaches that it is because of her co-redemption that she becomes the spiritual “mother of our souls”.⁷⁴ Father Faber teaches three reasons why Mary should be called

⁶⁹ St. Lawrence of Brindisi, *Mariale; Opera Omnia*, Patavii, 1928, vol. 1, pp. 183-184, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 115.

⁷⁰ St. Robert Bellarmine, *Cod. Vat. Lat. Ottob.* 2424, f. 193, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 116.

⁷¹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 117.

⁷² Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 131.

⁷³ De Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, n.18, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 132.

⁷⁴ St. Alphonsus Ligouri, *La Glorie di Marie, discorso sulla Salve Regina*, ch. 1, *Opera Ascetiche*, Rome, 1937, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 133.

the Co-redemptrix above all co-redemptive Christians: the first is because of her cooperation with the Lord “in a singular and superlative degree”, the second is because of “the indispensable cooperation of her maternity,” and lastly because of the intensity of her “dolors”.⁷⁵

Magisterium

It was the popes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that propelled the title of Mary Co-redemptrix into the realm of Magisterial teaching as a legitimate and deserved title of Our Lady.⁷⁶ It is important to understand that even when a pope does not speak *ex cathedra*, the faithful are still required to lend a “loyal submission of will and intellect”.⁷⁷ *Lumen Gentium* makes it clear when it is especially important to recognize when a pope is exercising teaching authority by “the character of the documents...the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which a certain document is formulated.”⁷⁸ With this in mind, the popes in the last two centuries have exercised all three of these easily identifiable requirements for papal instruction. The manner of the ‘documents in question’ have been manifested to the faithful through encyclicals, Apostolic letters, exhortations and general addresses.⁷⁹ In addition to this, the title has been used frequently by the recent petrine successors so that by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, “all the conciliar criteria for the ordinary teachings of the papal Magisterium are fulfilled.”⁸⁰

The first pope to refer to the Co-redemption of Mary was Pius IX, who, in his 1854 bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, defining the Immaculate Conception as dogma, he refers to Mary as a Reparatrix. He says: “Also did they declare that the most glorious Virgin was the Reparatrix of

⁷⁵ Faber, *The Foot of the Cross or the Sorrows of Mary*, Peter Reilly, 1956, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 136.

⁷⁶ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 149.

⁷⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, 25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 150.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

her first parents, the giver of life to posterity, that she was chosen before the ages, prepared for Himself by the Most High...that she has crushed the poisonous head of the Serpent.”⁸¹

In the last part of the nineteenth century, Pope Leo XIII called Mary the “cooperatrix in the sacrament of man’s Redemption,” and “would be likewise cooperatrix in the dispensation of the graces deriving from it.”⁸² In his encyclical, *Jucunda Semper*, Leo instructs about Mary’s role as Co-redemptrix without using the official title:

When Mary offered herself completely to God together with her Son in the temple, she was already sharing with him the painful atonement on behalf of the human race... [at the foot of the Cross] she willingly offers Him up to Divine Justice, dying with Him in her heart, pierced by the sword of sorrow.⁸³

Leo XIII became the first pope to give official approval to the title Co-redemptrix for Mary. On July 18, 1885, he approved a series of praises (*laudes*) to Jesus and Mary with an indulgence of 100 days granted by the Congregation for Indulgences and Sacred Relics. Mary is referred to as “co-redemptrix of the world” (*corredentrice del mondo*) in the Italian version of the praises. In the Latin version, she is referred to as the “*mundo redimendo coadiutrix*”). Leo XIII, however, approved both the Italian and Latin versions of the prayer (*Acta Sanctae Sedis* [ASS] 18 [1885] p. 93).

St. Pius X imitated his predecessors in teaching the doctrine of Mary Co-redemptrix without actually using the title publicly. In his 1904 encyclical, *Ad Diem Illum*, Pius refers to the “union of suffering and purpose existing between Christ and Mary” as what earns her the

⁸¹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 151.

⁸² Leo XIII, ASS 28, 1895-1896, pp. 130-131, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*Jesus*”, 151.

⁸³ Leo XIII, Encyclical *Jucunda Semper*, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 152.

worthy title “reparatrix of the lost world”.⁸⁴ He also goes on to say that “she was chosen by Christ to be His partner in the work of human salvation”.⁸⁵

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). These approvals show “the appropriateness of the title as part of authentic Catholic devotion.”⁸⁶ As Cardinal Lepicier said, “after the Mother of God, the title of Co-redemptrix is the most glorious that can be granted to the Virgin”.⁸⁷

Pius X’s successor, Benedict XV wasted no time in propelling the Co-redemptrix title further when he taught that Mary “redeemed the human race together with Christ.”⁸⁸ He also articulated rather eloquently that:

To such extent did [Mary] suffer and almost die with her suffering and dying Son; to such extent did she surrender her maternal rights over her Son for man’s salvation, and immolated Him-insofar as she could- in order to appease the justice of God, that we rightly say she redeemed the human race together with Christ.⁸⁹

After Benedict XV, the doctrine of Mary as Co-redemptrix became more understood, so that by the time Pius XI ascended to the Holy See, the faithful were ready for him to become the first pope to

⁸⁴ St. Pius X, Encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*; *ASS* 36, p. 453, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 153.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter *Inter Sodalicia*; *AAS* 10, pp. 181-182, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 157.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

officially use the title in a papal address.⁹⁰ On November 30, 1933, Pius XI addressed the pilgrims of Vicenza: “By necessity, the Redeemer could not but associate His Mother in His work. For this reason we invoke her under the title of Co-redemptrix.”⁹¹ Pius also implores that all people are called to be co-redeemers in Christ when he addressed the youth of the Spanish pilgrims that “they too must make a great effort to be co-redeemers”.⁹²

Pius XII never officially used the title, but taught the doctrine nevertheless. He makes use of the ancient models of Recapitulation and Recirculation when he said, “It was she who, always most intimately united with her Son, like a New Eve, offered Him up on Golgotha to the Eternal Father, together with the sacrifice of her maternal rights and love, on behalf of all the children of Adam, stained by the latter’s shameful fall.”⁹³ He opens up the point of Mary’s ‘maternal right’, something every mother has the right to in protecting their child from harm, and Mary willingly gives this up, as tortuous as it was, for humanity’s Redemption. This is one of the reasons why her offerings gained so much merit.

Vatican II

By the time the Second Vatican Council convened in 1962, there had been an influx of petitions from among the faithful and clergy alike in the hopes that the fifth Marian dogma of Mary as Co-redemptrix would be defined. However, John XXIII, the convener of the council and reigning pontiff at the time, made it clear that this was to be a pastoral council, not a defining one. Thus hopes for the definition of the final Marian dogma were crushed; but not completely. The Council, though not explicit in its terminology of Mary as Co-

⁹⁰ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 158.

⁹¹ Pius XI, *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 1, 1933, p.1, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 158.

⁹² Pius XI, *L’Osservatore Romano*, March 25, 1934, p.1, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 159.

⁹³ Ven. Pius XII, *Encyclical Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943; *AAS* 35, 1943, p. 247, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 160.

redemptrix, put forth an extraordinary amount of synthesized content of the doctrine of Mary as Co-redemptrix.⁹⁴ In fact, the first schema, or draft for the Marian chapter contained in *Lumen Gentium* did use “Co-redemptrix”, as well as “Mediatrice” and “Dispensatrix of all graces”, but were not included in the final draft.⁹⁵ Many have questioned why this would be so, considering how much historical, Scriptural, Traditional and Magisterial support the title, among others, had. The subcommission wrote a *praenotanda*, or an explanatory note, revealed that when the schema was distributed among those present at the Council, “certain expressions and words used by Supreme Pontiffs have been omitted, which, in themselves are absolutely true, but which may be understood with difficulty by separated brethren (in this case, Protestants).”⁹⁶ Yet hope remained as a result of the disclaimer put in chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*: “this chapter on the Blessed Virgin in no way constitutes a complete doctrine on Mary.”⁹⁷ With this, it continues to say that “those opinions therefore may be lawfully retained which are propounded in Catholic schools concerning her...”⁹⁸ In other words, the Council recognized and encourages theologians around the world to continue studying and teaching mariological truths concerning Our Lady’s spiritual maternity, and considering the fact that the dominant marian topic at the time was Mary as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrice, it is safe to say that the Council in no way condemns these titles, nor the promotion of them in schools around the world. “This is why any idea that the Second Vatican Council sought to put an end to the doctrinal development of Mary Co-redemptrix is simply an erroneous contradiction of the Council’s own words and teachings.”⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the Marian chapter in *Lumen Gentium* was brimming with doctrinal evidence for the confirmation of Mary as Co-redemptrix. *Lumen Gentium* 56 states: “The Father of mercies willed that the

⁹⁴ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 168.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 170.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 171.

⁹⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, ch. 8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹⁹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 173.

Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in bringing about death, so also a woman should contribute to life”.¹⁰⁰ Paragraph 56 continues: “...the Fathers see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating in the work of man’s salvation through faith and obedience.”¹⁰¹ The Council is very clear that Mary was completely dedicated to the work of Redemption during her entire life, as most of the Fathers of the Church have taught. In this, they share Traditional evidence for Mary as a sharer in the work of Redemption.

Perhaps the most profound statements regarding Mary’s role at Calvary come from paragraph 58:

Thus 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, enduring with her only-begotten Son the intensity of His suffering, associated herself with His sacrifice in her mother’s heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her.¹⁰²

Here it is evident that the Council confirms just about everything the title stands for without using the explicit terminology. The document continues: “[Mary] shared her Son’s sufferings as He died on the Cross. Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior”.¹⁰³ The Council then further clarifies: “This, however, is so understood that it neither takes away anything from, nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ as the One Mediator.”¹⁰⁴ In a word, the Council teaches

¹⁰⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 56.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁰³ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 179.

¹⁰⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, 62.

virtually every aspect of what the title of Mary as Co-redemptrix means, but without the title.

Pope St. John Paul II: The Pope of Mary Co-redemptrix

If there was one pope who could have made up for the lack of usage of the Co-redemptrix title during the Second Vatican Council, it could be none other than the 'Pope of Mary Co-redemptrix' himself, Pope St. John Paul II. He used the title very frequently in official documents more so than any other pope, affirming that the title is legitimate and cannot be overlooked.¹⁰⁵ The first instance in which John Paul used the title was in his address to the sick on September 8, 1982. He says that Mary "participated in a marvelous way in the sufferings of her divine Son, in order to be Co-redemptrix of humanity."¹⁰⁶ The next instance happens two years later during a general audience. "To Our Lady - the Co-redemptrix," he begins, continuing with the words of St. Charles Borromeo, "You will endure much greater sorrows, O Blessed Mother and you will continue to live; but life will be a thousand times more bitter than death. You will see your innocent Son handed over into the hands of sinners...you will see the blood that you gave him spilling. And nevertheless you will not be able to die!"¹⁰⁷ These haunting words provide a visual spectacle for what Our Lady endured at the foot of the Cross. It is evident that John Paul II "affirms the authenticity of the Co-redemptrix title within the Church, both in the context of doctrinal treatments and in the order of prayerful invocation by the Church."¹⁰⁸ John Paul said that "Redemption was the work of her Son. Mary was associated with it on a subordinate level. Nevertheless, her participation was real and demanding."¹⁰⁹ In his Apostolic letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, John Paul explains that Mary's place at

¹⁰⁵ Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 189.

¹⁰⁶ John Paul II, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1978-, V/3, 1982, 404, quoted in Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 190.

¹⁰⁷ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, November 12, 1984, p. 1, Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 191.

¹⁰⁸ Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 194.

¹⁰⁹ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, May 9, 1983, p. 1, Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 195.

the foot of the Cross is “not only proof of her unshakeable faith but also a contribution to the Redemption of all.”¹¹⁰ Perhaps the most striking comment John Paul makes concerning Mary in this role is when he addressed the crowd at Vicenza that Mary’s “very self, her heart, her motherhood” were “crucified” in the greatest “dark night” in history.¹¹¹ In 1997, John Paul again revisited the important concept of redemptive suffering for all Christians when he called Mary a “type of the Church”.¹¹² He compares her cooperation with the rest of humanity by saying, “The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to spread by prayer and sacrifice. Mary instead cooperated during the event itself and in the role of mother.”¹¹³

Support from Apparitions

Our Lady appeared in Akita, Japan to Sr. Agnes Sasagawa starting in 1974. Numerous mystical experiences were witnessed in Akita over the course of many years. One of the most extraordinary instances occurred when a wooden statue of Our Lady, sculpted after the likeness of Our Lady of All Nations, wept 101 times consecutively. It was revealed to Sr. Agnes by an angel that the number 101 signified that “sin entered the world through a woman and it is also through a woman that the grace of salvation came to the world” and the zero represents “God who exists from all eternity until eternity.”¹¹⁴ On another occasion, the angel presented Sr. Agnes with a Bible that was opened to Genesis 3:15. The angel then described the relationship between the ‘Woman’ who crushes the head of the serpent and the weeping, wooden statue of Mary. This apparition has proved to be critical in the moving forward of this doctrine as the apparitions at Lourdes were helpful in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

¹¹⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Dolores*, 25, John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, April 9, 1985, p. 12, Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 197.

¹¹¹ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, September 16, 1991, p. 4, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 198.

¹¹² *Lumen Gentium*, 63.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights*, 241.

The apparitions in which Our Lady has revealed herself as Co-redemptrix are the apparitions known as ‘The Lady of All Nations’.* These messages, though not approved by the Church, contain a wellspring of information about her role as Co-redemptrix, evidenced by the many instances in which she calls herself by that very title. She speaks about an era of peace that will accompany this, the fifth and final Marian dogma to be proclaimed. This makes theological sense considering the first four pertained to her earthly life, while the fifth would pertain to her role that continues even after her Assumption. She affirms that she was chosen to be Co-redemptrix from the moment of her *fiat* at the Annunciation by the Father and the Son, and that it is their wish that she ushers in a revitalization of Catholic spirituality in these modern times, imploring humanity to return to God before disaster strikes.¹¹⁵ Whether these messages are of supernatural origin or not, the heart of the messages remain true, that it would please Our Lady very much to recognize her title officially so as to give her permission to distribute the graces of the Redemption to the world which so desperately needs it.

This title of Co-redemptrix is not newly revealed but is as ancient as the work of Redemption itself and has been uncovered by the Tradition of the Church in the last two millennia; it is now up to the leaders of the Church to give humanity the opportunity it so desperately needs to receive the unprecedented graces promised by declaring the fifth Marian dogma. “With every battle there is loss of more than life; there is the loss of grace, the loss of souls. This is the battle Our Lady Co-redemptrix wages for us, not just historically at Calvary but right now. And the question remains for each one of us: are we willing to put on our battle array with her?”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Ida Peerdeman, *The Messages of the Lady of All Nations*, ed., Josef Kunzli (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 1996), 58.

¹¹⁶ Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights*, 42.

Our Lady of America: An Appeal to the Bishops of the United States of America

BERNARD STREISSELBERGER

Introduction

As an international student from Austria I am studying Theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville after having finished a master's degree in Psychotherapy-Science at the Sigmund Freud University of Vienna. With this background I looked with great interest at the alleged apparitions of Our Lady of America, since I firmly believe that Our Lady's key message of "purity of heart" can have astounding mental health benefits not only for individuals but for entire nations.

For many years, the whole world has looked at America as a great exemplar of freedom, peace, and justice. The American dream is something even non-Americans dream of. The United States is the country of unimagined possibilities. One can easily imagine that even heaven has a special vocation for the USA, since everything that Americans do, the whole world tries to imitate.

Sadly enough, the concept of the American dream, freedom, peace, and justice have recently seemed to slowly fade away even for the Americans themselves. One makes a grave error if one looks to big political actions and decisions as reasons for the slow decay of a good, humanitarian and dignified society. Evil starts from within each individual heart, and it contaminates families, societies, states, countries, and, in the end, the whole world.

If one contemplates the goodness of the God who loves humanity, one can easily understand that God is going to send help and a remedy for the degeneration, disaster and war the world is currently facing. Undoubtedly, the United States of America is going to play a crucial role in the restoration of peace to the world, in a way differently than most men would imagine.

For centuries, Jesus has revealed himself to the world through Mary, often by sending her to many different apparition sites throughout the world to prepare for an era of peace. How can someone not imagine that God is also going to send Mary to the USA as a crucial missionary cornerstone in establishing peace to the world?

This phenomenon is exactly what one witnesses through studying the Marian apparitions of Rome City, Indiana, in which Mary appeared to Sr. Mary Ephrem Neuzil in 1954-1959. There, she revealed herself with the title, “Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin,” and with her special mission of promoting purity of heart as a precondition to the indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity, the sanctification of families and the conversion of America in order to restore peace to the world.

After studying the apparitions of Our Lady of America it might be reasonable to believe that God has great plans for the Church of the United States of America and for all its citizens in general. It is possible that heaven might offer a remedy to the disasters, errors and heresies of our times, not only to the American’s but also to the whole world. It is possible that America plays a crucial role in restoring peace to the world. After a thorough study of the alleged messages it might be reasonable to believe that it is necessary to ask the Bishops of the United States of America to re-evaluate the Marian Apparitions of “Our Lady of America – Our Lady, The Immaculate Virgin, Patroness of America.”

Historical Background

“The devotion to Our Lady of America has its source in private revelations to Sister Mary Ephrem (baptized Mildred) Neuzil, who was born in 1916 and was professed, in 1933, in the Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, which has its generalate

in Dayton, Ohio. She later became part of a contemplative branch of the same congregation.”¹

In 1938, Sister Mary Ephrem started having mystical experiences. She thought that they were typical to all religious and therefore, these experiences did not confuse or over-impress her. In 1948, her mystical encounters became more vivid. She experienced a mystical espousal with Christ. Her confessor suggested that she be cautious, even though there was no external hint that she would be different from any of the other religious sisters. In 1954, her supernatural experiences took on a specific program consisting of Marian apparitions and messages in which Mary presented herself as Our Lady of America – Our Lady, The Immaculate Virgin, Patroness of America. She also received visions from St. Joseph, St. Michael, St. Gabriel and Jesus himself. Sister Mary Ephrem (Mildred Neuzil) died in 2000.²

Her spiritual director was Monsignor Paul F. Leibold, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, later Bishop of Evansville and Archbishop of Cincinnati. He approved the apparitions and the devotion as he also had a medal struck with the image of Our Lady of America, since Our Lady had wished this medal for the purity of heart and Christian families.³

The booklet version with the contents of the private revelation by Sister Mary Ephrem received the Nihil Obstat by Daniel Pilarczyk, S.T.D. and the Imprimatur of Archbishop Paul F. Leibold in 1963.⁴ Archbishop Raymond L. Burke, now Cardinal Burke issued a letter to the Bishops of the United States Conference in 2007, supporting the apparition with the following words: “What can be concluded canonically is that the devotion was both approved by Archbishop

¹ Raymond L. Burke, “Regarding Our Lady of America,” accessed April 14, 2022, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/regarding-our-lady-of-america-3661>.

² Sister Mary Ephrem, “Booklet of messages of Our Lady of America,” downloaded April 14, 2022, <https://www.ourladyofamerica.org/wordpress/devotionals/diary-of-messages>. 1.

³ Raymond L. Burke, “Regarding Our Lady of America.”

⁴ Sister Mary Ephrem, “Booklet of messages of Our Lady of America.” 1.

Leibold and, what is more, was actively promoted by him. In addition, over the years, other Bishops have approved the devotion and have participated in public devotion to the Mother of God, under the title of Our Lady of America.”⁵

In other words, even though Archbishop Leibold did not make a formal public statement, he nonetheless approved and promoted the apparitions. Other Bishops approved the authenticity of the Devotion to Our Lady of America with him. Public devotion was clearly permitted, which is also testified by their own participation.

On May 7th, 2020, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of the Diocese of Fort Wayne – South Bend, Indiana, where some of the apparitions took place, issued a statement regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America together with five other Bishops. They appointed a commission consisting of theological and canonical experts who were instructed to evaluate the alleged apparitions. In their statement, the Bishops outline five key findings. These key findings are as follows:

(1) Sister Neuzil is described as an honest, psychologically sound, morally upright, devout and virtuous religious. Despite her imperfections, her being the perpetrator of a hoax is unlikely given her good character. (2) The commission describes numerous spiritual fruits, conversions, spiritual refreshment and even physical healing at the apparition site in Rome City. (3) In the messages, St. Joseph is called a co-redeemer. The commission explains that this has never been expressed as Catholic doctrine and therefore has to be called an error. (4) Sister Neuzil’s mystical experiences are described as subjective inner religious experiences rather than objective external visions. (5) Therefore, the commission does not want to talk about an objective private revelation, since Sister Neuzil’s own imagination and intellect seem to have been constitutively involved. The commission does not want to classify the apparitions of Our Lady of America of the same type as Guadalupe, Fatima and Lourdes.⁶

⁵ Raymond L. Burke, “Regarding Our Lady of America.”

⁶ “Statement Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America,” Diocese of Fort Wayne – South Bend, downloaded April 1, 2022,

“Based on these findings, Bishop Rhoades came to the conclusion that ‘the visions and revelations themselves cannot be said to be of supernatural origin in the sense of objective occurrences (*non constat de supernaturalitate*); thus further, I cannot approve or support public devotion or cult.’ The bishops of the other five dioceses have read and also accept these findings and conclusions.”⁷

The Bishops also explain, that: “while Our Lady of Guadalupe is recognized as the Patroness of North, Central, and South America, Our Lady is the specific Patroness of the United States of America under her title as the Immaculate Virgin. As such, the faithful may indeed pray to Our Lady, the Immaculate Virgin, as the Patroness of America. At the same time, such private devotion should in no way imply approval or acceptance of purported revelations, visions, or locutions to attributed to Sister Mary Ephrem (Mildred) Neuzil other than as her own subjective inner religious experiences.”⁸

These are the latest official Church statements regarding Our Lady of America. The Bishops statement does not prohibit private devotion among the faithful. This means that the faithful can pray to Our Lady of America and visit the apparition site in Rome City, Indiana on their own accord as long as this private devotion does in no way imply approval or acceptance of Sister Mary Ephrem Neuzil’s mystical experiences and alleged messages.

Non constat de supernaturalitate means that the devotion is neither approved nor condemned by the Church – the supernatural character of the apparitions cannot be affirmed at this moment. *Non constat* leaves open the possibility of further investigation so that the Church may fully approve or condemn the Devotion to Our Lady of America.

To the faithful, the decision of the Bishops may seem confusing, since an official public devotion is not permitted but a private devotion is.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/499742124/Statement-of-Pertinent-Ordinaries-Regarding-Our-Lady-of-America-May-7-2020-pdf>.

⁷ “Statement Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America 3.

⁸ *Ibid.* 5.

That is why the persons responsible in Rome City are frequently asked: “What does it mean to be a Private Devotion of the Faithful?”⁹ There seems to be a theological confusion since the status “non constat de supernaturalitate” is given and on the other hand private devotion is encouraged. Saying that one can have a private devotion based on heavenly messages to a religious Sister and at the same time declaring that these messages as not approved and not accepted is confusing.

Jesus’ words, “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit” (Mt 7:18) are a major criterion for discerning the validity of an alleged apparition. The Bishops confirm many good fruits at the apparition site in Rome City, including even some physical healings. If the messages are wrong and the tree is bad, why then permit private devotion? From the viewpoint of theological consistency and clarity the confusion of the faithful is very understandable.

In the following pages, I intend to go through some of the key points of the alleged messages to Sister Mary Ephrem and discuss them in view of the Bishops’ Commission’s key findings.

St. Joseph the Co-Redeemer

The Bishop’s commission statement asserts that “much of what is expressed [in the messages of Our Lady of America] does not contain any doctrinal error. However, there is a claim regarding Saint Joseph which has never been expressed as Catholic doctrine and must be seen as an error, namely, that he was a ‘co-redeemer’ with Christ for the salvation of the world.”¹⁰

With all respect to the Bishop’s commission, the statement about the alleged erroneous messages on St. Joseph must be declared as itself erroneous. The concept of co-redemption is official Church doctrine with its basis in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

⁹ “Canonical History and Current Status,” Our Lady of America, accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.ourladyofamerica.org/wordpress/canonical-history-and-current-status>.

¹⁰ “Statement Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America.” 3.

St. Paul writes in Colossians 1:24: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church.” What does St. Paul mean when he states that there is something lacking in the afflictions of Christ? Objectively, Christ’s work of redemption was absolutely perfect, efficacious, and complete. His death on the Cross would have been able to save the world a million times if men would accept it. Jesus acquired graces for humanity through His death in an absolute generous and unimaginable gratuitous way. So, then, what is lacking? St. Paul also says that he is “filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church.” ‘On behalf of the Church’ indicates that there is still something lacking in regard to the distribution of graces to the Church, but not in the acquisition of graces.

The Church distinguishes between objective and subjective redemption. Objective redemption refers to the acquisition of grace for all humanity. Subjective redemption refers to the distribution of graces obtained by objective redemption. The Church participates only in subjective redemption that is to say in the distribution of grace.¹¹

Pope Benedict XVI incorporates this doctrine of salvific suffering in a homily he delivered in Fatima on May 13th, 2010, in which he said to the sick, “You will be redeemers with the Redeemer, just as you are sons in the Son.”¹² If one can be a “redeemer with the Redeemer” as Pope Benedict XVI teaches, then clearly all suffering Christians who unite their sufferings with Christ’s can be called co-redeemers. If an average Christian can be called a redeemer with the Redeemer, then it

¹¹ Bertrand de Margerie, “Mary Co-redemptrix in the Light of Patristics,” accessed April 21, 2022, <https://www.motherofallpeoples.com/post/mary-co-redemptrix-in-the-light-of-patristics>

¹² Benedict XVI, Homily of his Holiness in Esplanade of the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima (May 13, 2010), accessed April 21, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100513_fatima.html.

is more than appropriate to call Mary the redemptrix with the Redeemer and to call St. Joseph a co-redeemer as well.

Pope Benedict XVI is absolutely consistent with the Church's Magisterium of previous popes especially when it comes to the Church's doctrine on Mary's co-redemptive role in salvation history. If one takes away Mary's co-redemption, one takes it away from all Saints and Christians in general. That is to say that nobody would be capable of helping Jesus in His main mission of saving souls. That is why the latest Church's Magisterium on the Co-Redemptrix shall be presented briefly:

Pope Pius IX more generally begins the papal references to Mary's Coredemptive role in *Ineffabilis Deus* (1854), when he refers to Mary as the 'parentum Reparatricem' ("Reparatrix [secondary restorer] of parents") in reference to Adam and Eve in the teachings of the Church Fathers.¹³

Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) later teaches in his Encyclical Letter *Jucunda Semper Expectatione* about the co-suffering of Mary, stating that Mary died with Jesus in her heart.¹⁴

The term "Co-redemptrix" itself appeared on a magisterial level during the papacy of St. Pius X (1903-1914) and was since used by succeeding Popes.¹⁵

¹³ Mark Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix Mediatrix Advocate* (Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing, 1993), 14.

¹⁴ Leo XIII, encyclical *Jucunda Semper Expectatione* on the Rosary (September 8, 1894), par. 3, accessed April 21, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_1-xiii_enc_08091894_jucunda-semper-expectatione.html.

¹⁵ Arthur Burton Calkins, "The Mystery of Mary Coredemptrix in the Papal Magisterium," in *Mary Co-redemptrix Doctrinal Issues Today*, ed. Mark Miravalle (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2002), 31.

Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) again confirms the doctrine on Mary's coredemptive role and adds to it a new greater clarity.¹⁶

Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) again continues to refer to Mary on various occasions under the title Co-redemptrix and clearly establishes the just invocation of her under this title.¹⁷

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) made many contributions in distributing Marian truth around the globe. Not only did he define the dogma of Mary's assumption into heaven, but he also promoted much study and discussion of Mary's role in salvation history, especially regarding her roles as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix.¹⁸

“The Second Vatican Council, under the pontificates of *John XXIII* (1958-1962) and *Paul VI* (1963-1978) gave conciliar strength and confirmation to the consistent ordinary Magisterial teachings of the modern popes regarding the co-redemptive role of Mary.”¹⁹

In the Dogmatic Constitution of the Second Vatican Council *Lumen Gentium*, chapter 8 is dedicated to Mary. Paragraph 58 clearly teaches the doctrine on Mary's Co-Redemption even though the term “Co-Redemptrix” was omitted for ecumenical reasons.²⁰

Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) used the term Co-redemptrix at least six times in published statements and his public references to Mary's role as Co-redemptrix are far more numerous.²¹

The Catholic Church's doctrine on Co-redemption is clearly represented in this list of Papal magisterial teachings. To demonstrate the evidence of Co-redemption from Scripture, the Church Fathers, Liturgy, the Saints and Mystics would exceed the scope of this essay.

¹⁶ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix Mediatrix Advocate*, 16.

¹⁷ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix Mediatrix Advocate*, 18.

¹⁸ Calkins, “The Mystery of Mary Coredemptrix in the Papal Magisterium,” 35-36.

¹⁹ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix Mediatrix Advocate*, 19.

²⁰ Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* on the Church (November 21, 1964), §58, Vatican Web Archive, accessed April 21, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

²¹ Calkins, “The Mystery of Mary Coredemptrix in the Papal Magisterium,” 41.

One could still object that this does not prove that St. Joseph's role as a co-redeemer was ever expressed as Catholic doctrine. The Bishop's commission statement on Our Lady of America claims that "St. Joseph the co-redeemer" was never a Catholic doctrine and must be seen as an error.

Once again, if all suffering Christians can be called "redeemers with the Redeemer," than more so St. Joseph. Nevertheless, there is more to that. Pope Pius XI writes about St. Joseph: "Where the mystery is deepest it is there precisely that the mission is highest and that a more brilliant cortège of virtues is required with their corresponding echo of merits. It was a unique and sublime mission, that of guarding the Son of God, the King of the world, that of protecting the virginity of Mary, that of entering into participation in the mystery hidden from the eyes of ages and so to cooperate in the Incarnation and the Redemption."²²

Pope Pius XI makes it very clear to call St. Joseph a cooperator in the incarnation and redemption. How Saints cooperate in the redemption of souls was laid out above, but how is it possible that St. Joseph even cooperated in the incarnation of Christ?

Msgr. Calkins explains in an interview, that since Mary was legally married to Joseph when the Annunciation happened, Jesus was the fruit of their spiritual union. Mary gave Jesus his body and therefore belongs to the hypostatic order. She played a specific role so that the hypostatic union could take place – Jesus being true man and true God. Since the spiritual union between Mary and Joseph was so profound and the sacred base in which Jesus could incarnate, also Joseph participates in the hypostatic order and therefore cooperates in the incarnation.²³ In other words, this wonderful teaching explains that St. Joseph has a mission in the mystery of the hypostatic union and in the

²² Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the saviour and our interior life* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1949), 333.

²³ Arthur Burton Calkins, "Mariology Without Apology - 17. Our Lady of America: Present Status Analysis," interview by Dr. Mark Miravalle. *Mariology without Apology*, accessed April 22, 2022, video 27:00, <https://www.mothersofallpeoples.com/mariology-without-apology>.

mystery of Christ's incarnation and redemption. It is very clear however that St. Joseph plays an absolutely secondary role in relation to Mary and an absolutely tertiary role in relation to Jesus. Nonetheless, Jesus the God-man and Mary the Queen of heaven owed obedience to St. Joseph, the head of the holy family, reflecting the outstanding and exceptional role St. Joseph plays in salvation history.

Citing the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Calkins writes about John Paul II that he "did not explicitly teach that Saint Joseph was a co-redeemer, [nonetheless] he certainly laid the groundwork for such an understanding. Even more, of all the popes, he was the first to make the most definite declarations in this regard by stating that Joseph was involved with Mary in the same salvific event; indeed, the Latin can even be translated that he was 'inserted' into this event. Thus, by virtue of his being the head of the Holy Family Joseph was inserted into the hypostatic order."²⁴

Calkins continues to show how Prosper Lambertini (who later became Pope Benedict XIV (1675-1758)) recognized Joseph belonging to the hypostatic order. Lambertini himself got this teaching from the great Jesuit theologian Francisco Suarez (1548-1617).²⁵ Also "Leo XIII, Pius XI and John Paul II clearly speak of Saint Joseph's participation in the Redemption of the human race, even if they do not employ the term 'Co-Redeemer.'"²⁶

St. Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868) writes the following about St. Joseph's sorrows: "From the day the aged Simeon had predicted Christ's Passion, never a moment elapsed when that Passion was not present to the mind of Saint Joseph. The Scriptures showed it to him in figure, while Jesus spoke to him of it continually. For Jesus loved

²⁴ Arthur Burton Calkins, "Some Comments on the Statement Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America of May 7, 2020 By Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and Five Other Ordinaries," downloaded April 1, 2022, <https://www.scribd.com/document/499744810/Monsignor-Arthur-Calkins-Response-to-the-Bishops-Concerning-Our-Lady-of-America>. 11.

²⁵ Ibid. 12.

²⁶ Ibid. 13.

His father too much to deprive him of the grace of suffering the Passion with Him and of sharing beforehand in its merits. [...] Further, Saint Joseph foresaw Mary's tears and misery. He would have desired to stay by her side, and he must have begged Jesus to be allowed to remain on earth that he might climb Calvary and sustain Mary. Poor Saint Joseph! He had to submit to death and leave behind him Jesus and Mary: Jesus to be crucified and abandoned by His people; Mary to suffer alone, unassisted. How his love for them was crucified! All this is very true. It was only right that Saint Joseph should not be deprived of suffering, a grace granted to all the saints. He was to have a fuller chalice of pain than all the rest because our Lord loved him more than all of them except Mary."²⁷

Clearly, if, after Mary, St. Joseph participated most in the Passion of Christ, he rightfully deserves to be called a co-redeemer.

Cardinal Alexis Henry Lépiciér, O.S.M. (1863-1936) is another great figure in the field of Josephology. In his major work "Tractatus de Sancto Ioseph" he thoroughly explains the co-redemptive mission of St. Joseph. Lépiciér dedicated this work to Pope Saint Pius X, who endorsed the book with his apostolic blessing.²⁸

Cardinal Lépiciér's position on Saint Joseph's active collaboration in the work of Redemption, namely his role as Co-redeemer, was subsequently upheld by other authors. The most sustained and carefully argued treatment of this topic was done by the late Opus Dei numerary, Don Joaquín Ferrer Arellano. [...] In these works he follows the indications of Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer (1902-1975).²⁹

²⁷ Saint Peter Julian Eymard, *Month of St. Joseph* (New York: Eymard League, 1948) 82-85.

²⁸ Alexio Henrico M. Lepicier, *Tractatus de Sancto Ioseph, Sponso Beatissimae Virginis Mariae* (Romae: Buona Stampa, 1933).

²⁹ Calkins, "Some Comments on the Statement Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America of May 7, 2020 By Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and Five Other Ordinaries." 17.

One should note that aside from the remarks made by St. John Paul II, all of these sources are dated prior to the apparitions of St. Joseph to Sister Mary Ephrem Neuzil. It must be noted also that Sister Neuzil did not have any higher education in theology or specifically in Josephology. This is a fact that can contribute to the authenticity of the alleged messages to Sister Neuzil. The Bishop's commission statement claims that the co-redemptive mission of St. Joseph is not a part of Catholic doctrine. With all respect, the Bishops are incorrect. They did not consider the numerous magisterial discussions on St. Joseph, nor did they take into account the last 150 years of development in the field of Josephology.

Mary's Immaculate Conception and the Call for Purity of Heart

One of the main messages of Our Lady of America to Sister Mary Ephrem is the call for purity of heart. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 6:8). One reason, if not the most evident reason for so many heresies and falsehoods in this world is an unclean heart. One cannot arrive at truth and see God (who is truth) if one does not progress in purifying one's heart.

Through Hollywood and the film and music industry, America plays a big role in the sexualization of the world. Therefore, the call for pure hearts needs to be strongly emphasized throughout the whole country, and the call for conversion and penance must focus primarily on the purification of the heart. This truth is why Our Lady is anxiously concerned with the inner life of man. With her Immaculate Conception she is the perfect teacher of a pure heart.

The official visits of Our Lady to Sister Mary Ephrem began on the eve of the feast of the North American Martyrs, September 25th, 1956. She gave Sister Mary Ephrem the following message: "I am pleased, my child, with the love and honor my children in America give to me, especially through my glorious and unique privilege of the Immaculate Conception. I promise to reward their love by working through the power of my Son's Heart and my Immaculate Heart miracles of grace

among them. I do not promise miracles of the body, but of the soul. I am Our Lady of America. I desire that my children honor me, especially by the purity of their lives. I wish it [America] to be the country dedicated to my purity. The wonders I will work will be the wonders of the Soul. They must have faith and believe firmly in my love for them. I desire that they be children of my Pure Heart.”³⁰

Our Lady is offering her Immaculate Heart as a last resort and remedy for the tribulations and disasters that are about to come, as she has done in the Lourdes and Fatima apparitions. The message of Our Lady of America stands in line with this tradition. In a message given on September 27th, 1956, she says: “I come to you, O children of America, as a last resort. I plead with you to listen to my voice. Cleanse your souls in the Precious Blood of My Son. Live in His Heart, and take me in that I may teach you to live great purity of heart which is so pleasing to God. Be my army of chaste soldiers, ready to fight to the death to preserve the purity of your souls. I am the Immaculate One, Patroness of your land. Be my faithful children as I have been your faithful Mother.”³¹

Every authentic Marian apparition utters warnings to mankind if her pleadings are not taken seriously. As a good Mother, Mary always wants to avert the worst, and help mankind to establish peace in order to save as many souls as possible. In January 1957, she speaks in a serious but motherly manner: “The hour grows late. My Son’s patience will not last forever. Help me hold back His anger, which is about to descend on sinful and ungrateful men. Suffering and anguish, such as never before experienced, is about to overtake mankind. It is the darkest hour. But if men will come to me, my Immaculate Heart will make it bright again with mercy which my Son will rain down through my hands. Help me save those who will not save themselves. Help me bring once again the sunshine of God’s peace upon the world. My daughter, will my children in America listen to my pleadings and

³⁰ Sister Mary Ephrem, “Booklet of messages of Our Lady of America.” 5-7.

³¹ Sister Mary Ephrem, “Booklet of messages of Our Lady of America.” 8.

console my Immaculate Heart? Will my loyal sons carry out my desires and thus help me bring the peace of Christ once again to mankind?”³²

This message stands perfectly in line with the great Marian apparition in Fatima 1917, in which Our Lady promises the Triumph of her Immaculate Heart and a period of peace to the world. The Catholic doctrine of Mary as Mediatrix of all Graces and as Co-Redemptrix is clear in this message. She speaks of “mercy which her Son will rain down through her hands” (Mediatrix of all Graces) and she requests “help to save those who will not save themselves” which is a clear remark to our co-redemptive role in salvation history but in specific to her own role as Co-Redemptrix. As in the Fatima messages one can clearly see how God has appointed Mary in bringing about Christ’s peace to the world. Because of America’s central role in world economics, politics, and in many public and social trends, the proclamation of this message of world peace is crucial to the children of America.

The message from January 1957 also lines up perfectly with the Protoevangelium in Gen 3:15 which is the basis for the dogma on Mary’s Immaculate Conception and leads to the Church’s doctrines on Mediatrix of all Graces and Co-Redemptrix. The Protoevangelium proclaims Our Lady’s Triumph: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel” (Gen3:15). God places enmity between the woman and the serpent. The Hebrew word for enmity is *'êbâ* and means absolute opposition. This absolute opposition is only possible if Mary was immaculately conceived and never even venially cooperated with the serpent. This is also the reason why “the woman” in Gen 3:15 cannot refer to Eve, as she did cooperate with the serpent. The enmity between the woman and the serpent is a parallel enmity between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent. The seed of the woman is Jesus, and the seed of the serpent is sin. Immediately after God establishes this enmity, the first thing that happens in Gen 3:15 is that the woman participates in crushing the

³² Ibid. 9-10.

head of the serpent. It follows that baptized Christians who love Mary and consecrate themselves to her also become her offspring and cooperator (co-redeemer) in crushing the serpent's head. This shows how Mary's Immaculate Conception leads to her role as Co-Redemptrix. Together with her Son and absolutely depending on Him and absolutely secondary to Him, she crushes the head of the Serpent and brings about the Triumph and Peace to the world.

In the context of Gen 3:15 one can easily understand why Our Lady of America in her message to Sister Mary Ephrem in January 1957 pleads with the children of America to help her bring about peace to the world. From a political perspective, as well as from a biblical and magisterial perspective, it makes absolute sense to call America to conversion, purification of heart and a participation in Mary's co-redeeming mission.

In a vision Our Lady wished that a medal for purity may be produced. Archbishop Leibold followed Our Lady's desire and decreed the manufacturing of this Medallion. "The one side bears the image of Our Lady of America and around it the words, 'By your Holy and Immaculate Conception, O Mary, deliver us from evil.' The Coat of Arms of the Christian Family is on the other side of the medal. The Divine Indwelling is represented by the Triangle and the Eye on the red shield of the Precious Blood, through which sanctifying grace was made possible to fallen man. The sanctification of the family through imitation of the Holy Family is represented by the Cross and the two lilies, on each of which is depicted a burning heart. The flaming sword is a symbol of Divine Love so necessary to attain union with God, while the rosary indicates a most profitable means of drawing closer to the Holy Family, through devout meditation on the various Mysteries. The scroll above bears the inscription, 'Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritu Sancto' and the one below, 'Jesus, Maria, Joseph.' These aspirations are simply explanations of the whole theme and are also acts of praise to the Trinity and the Holy Family. This medallion is to be worn with great faith and fervent devotion to Our Lady for the grace of intense

purity of heart and the particular love of the Holy Virgin and her Divine Son.”³³

“My Immaculate Heart desires with great desire to see the kingdom of Jesus my Son established in all hearts. Now I have pleaded with my children to open their hearts to Him, but most are cold and indifferent.”³⁴

The Indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity

It is a logical consequence that if one purifies one own’s heart that God delights in descending into that heart. Scripture makes this fact clear. “Jesus answered and said to him, whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (Jn 14:23). “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy” (1 Cor 3:16-17).

If one studies the messages of Our Lady of America one can see how Mary deeply desires that God may dwell in the hearts and souls of man. This stands in continuity with the Church’s mystical tradition on the teachings on union with God. The Church Fathers and Doctors have expounded this field as well as many Saints and Mystics. Mary wants to refresh these teachings in the minds of her children since it has the potential to renew the face of the Church and the whole world. It is a profound call to holiness of life.

Our Lady spoke again to Sister Mary Ephrem Neuzil on November 8th, 1954, saying, “It is the wish of my Son that fathers and mothers strive to imitate me and my chaste spouse in our holy life at Nazareth. We practiced the simple virtues of family life, Jesus our Son being the center of all our love and activity. The Holy Trinity dwelt with us in a manner far surpassing anything that can ever be imagined. [...] The Divine Trinity will dwell in your midst only if you are faithful in

³³ Sister Mary Ephrem, “Booklet of messages of Our Lady of America.” 23.

³⁴ Ibid. 11.

practicing the virtues of our life at Nazareth. Then, you also, my children, you also will become another paradise.”³⁵

On the days of November 22nd and 23rd, Sister Mary Ephrem experienced a corporeal apparition so vivid that she was able to describe the appearance of Our Lady in great detail. Our Lady showed herself as the Immaculate Tabernacle of the Indwelling God. This reveals the true identity of Mary, full of grace through a perfect union with God. “Then above her head appeared a scroll on which were written letters of gold the words: ‘All the glory of the King’s daughter is within.’ Though it did not appear that her lips moved, yet I heard these words quite plainly: ‘I am Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling, handmaid of Him Who dwells within.’ She seemed suffused in a soft glow of light that appeared to come from within her.”³⁶

This vision suggests that Mary wants humanity to imitate her profound union with the Holy Trinity. The journey of entering into a full union with God started at baptism and is progressed with every reception of a holy sacrament, with a good prayer-life and by practicing the virtues of the holy family. Mary shows the way of sanctification and how the world can become a place of divine peace.

In a message given on February 11th, 1958, Our Lady revealed, “My Immaculate Heart will win in the end, and the Spirit of Christ will dwell in the hearts of men.”³⁷ This sounds very much like the apparitions in Fatima (1917) and additionally explains how the prophesied period of peace is going to be realized. It is the Spirit of Christ who will dwell in the hearts of men. Humanity will experience life as being permeated by a strong eucharistic atmosphere since the great majority of people will live in union with God which will establish divine peace that is coming from within each heart. It is the divine presence within the soul that will sanctify an individual, families, societies, nations and the whole world.

³⁵ Sister Mary Ephrem, “Booklet of messages of Our Lady of America.” 5.

³⁶ Sister Mary Ephrem, “Booklet of messages of Our Lady of America.” 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 15.

The vision of Our Lady as the Immaculate Tabernacle of the Indwelling God is clearly an objective, external and corporeal apparition. Therefore, the Bishops commission in regard to point 4 and 5 of their statement should investigate how it is possible that a visionary's imagination and intellect could not be constitutively involved in an apparition. Did God not constitutively use the imagination and intellect of Juan Diego (Guadalupe), Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco (Fatima), and Bernadette (Lourdes)? How can someone experience a vision without one's imagination and intellect?

What is received is always received according to the capacity of the receiver. It begs the question of which criteria the Bishops commission judged Sister Neuzil's visions as not objective and external? Since when is the type of a vision constitutive for the validity of a private revelation?³⁸

Conclusion

According to Sister Neuzil, "Our Lady promised that greater miracles than those granted at Lourdes and Fatima would be granted here in America, the United States in particular, if we would do as she desires. Our Lady, moreover, often emphasized her desire that the Shrine in Washington, D.C., be made a place of special pilgrimage. She wishes to be honored there as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin."³⁹ On November 15th, 1956, Our Lady made her desire more specific. She requested that her statue be solemnly carried in procession to the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.⁴⁰ In this way, America shall honor her as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin, and new graces would be released to the United States, thereby blessing the rest of the world.

The Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., already houses 80 Marian statues from all over the world: Our Lady of Antipolo (Philippines); Our Lady of Bistrica (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Our Lady of Brezje (Slovenia); Our Lady of Hungary;

³⁸ Calkins, "Some Comments on the Statement Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America of May 7, 2020 By Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and Five Other Ordinaries." 18.

³⁹ Sister Mary Ephrem, "Booklet of messages of Our Lady of America." 6-7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 9.

Our Lady of La Vang (Vietnam); Our Lady of Lebanon; Our Lady of Marizell (Austria); Our Mother of Africa, and many more.⁴¹

Adding the statue of Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin, to this great collection should not be viewed as a practical or theological hurdle, because her Immaculate Conception and perpetual virginity are already established Church Dogma. The Church of America would lose nothing in following Mary's desire by placing the statue of Our Lady of America in Washington D.C.'s Shrine. The worst that could happen is nothing. The best that could happen are miracles of the soul and of purity of heart, greater than those granted at Lourdes and Fatima.

When the commander, Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1-19 was asked by the prophet Elisha to wash himself seven times in the Jordan river to be healed from leprosy, he initially refused to obey the prophet by saying: "Are not the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleansed?" (2 Kings 5:12). His servants then came and reasoned, "My father, if the prophet told you to do something extraordinary, would you not do it? All the more since he told you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" (2 Kings 5:13).

Something similar could be reasoned with the Church of America: "If Our Lady told you to do something extraordinary, would you not do it? All the more since she only told you, 'Honor me in a special way as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin at the Shrine in Washington, D.C.?'"

I urgently request the Bishops of the United States of America, for the sake of peace – peace within souls, peace within families, peace in societies throughout the world, and for the sake of intense purity of hearts – to begin a re-investigation of the devotion to Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin.

⁴¹ "Marian Statues," National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://www.nationalshrine.org/interactive-map>.

Ecce Mater Tua

Articles

The Problem of Our Lady's Knowledge from the Perspective of the Theology of St. John Henry Newman (1801–1890)

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A Brief Review of the Complex Question of Our Lady's Knowledge

One of the Marian themes that theologians explored with great interest until the Second Vatican Council was the nature and extent of the knowledge of the Mother of Jesus during her earthly life. As there is no explicit information on this subject in Sacred Scripture or in patristic tradition, and no official decree of the Church has commented on it, since the Middle Ages various theses on Mary's exceptional knowledge have been deduced mostly from reasons of convenience, which were usually based on her other privileges, such as the divine maternity, the fullness of grace, or the Immaculate Conception. In particular, theologians made use of the well-known axiom expressing the fundamental Mariological principle of scholastic theology, formulated by St. Bernard († 1153): „It would certainly not be right to suspect that what was granted even to a few mortals was denied to that great Virgin through whom all mortals were brought to life.“¹ In virtue of this principle, Hugh of Saint Victor († 1141) was thus able to impute to Mary a comprehensive knowledge as one of her special privileges: „Fourth [privilege] is that she knows everything completely and perfectly.“ And the reason for his argument was precisely Mary's motherhood towards the Son of God: “For how could she be ignorant of anything, who knew him who knew all things, in whom dwelt bodily all the fullness of divinity?”²

¹ Bernard, *Epistola* 174, PL 182,334 C. A similar principle was put forward by St. Thomas Aquinas († 1274) in his *Summa Theologica*, where he writes: “For it is reasonable to believe that she, who brought forth the Only-Begotten of the Father full of grace and truth, received greater privileges of grace than all others” (Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 27, a. 1). For more information on the issue, see Edward D. O'Connor, “The Fundamental Principle of Mariology in Scholastic Theology,” *Marian Studies* 10 (1959): 69–103.

² Hugh of Saint Victor, *De assumptione et decem praeconiis Mariae semper Virginis*; PL 177,808.

A major influence on the development of this doctrine had the pseudo-Albertine *Mariale*, in which 17 questions (qq. 95–111) were devoted to the problem of Mary's knowledge. This treatise was later repeatedly referred to by Francisco Suárez (1548–1617), who gave an exhaustive presentation of the whole issue in his first great manuscript on Mary, *De Deipara et Christo ut eius Filio* (dated to 1584–1585), where he discusses it in q. 19 under the title: *Quam perfectionem consecuta fuerit Beata Virgo in cognitione et scientia Dei?* In the conviction that Mary possessed the so-called *scientia infusa*, Suárez responds that she knew perfectly “the mystery of the Trinity and of the Incarnation” and attained “a knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures and of the things of theology which no viator possessed.”³ For this reason, he considered the view of Erasmus of Rotterdam († 1536), who claimed that at the birth of Christ Mary did not yet have full knowledge of the true divinity of Jesus, to be “impious and heretical” (*impia et haeretica*).⁴ According to the Jesuit theologian, Mary was also exempt from the possibility of error and from the so-called “privative ignorance” (which indicates the lack of knowledge a person is expected to possess), but not from the so-called “negative ignorance” (which in turn indicates the lack of knowledge a person is not expected to have). Thus, Mary did not know before the Incarnation that she would become the Mother of God, nor how the conception of Christ would take place, which of course opened up the possibility for the growth (*augmentum*) of her knowledge.⁵ Around the same time, Christopher de Vega († 1672) even held that from the first moment of her existence Mary possessed full philosophical and scientific knowledge and was acquainted with the intrinsic nature of all material things.⁶ This view, however, did not receive much sympathy from the majority of theologians.

³ Francisco Suárez, *De Deipara et Christo ut eius Filio*, q. 19. See Stefano de Fiores, “Suárez Francisco,” in *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario. Testimoni e Maestri*, vol. 3 (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2008), 787.

⁴ See Anton Bodem, “Wissen Marias,” in *Marienlexikon*, vol. 6 (St. Ottilien: Verlag Erzabtei St. Ottilien, 1994), 747.

⁵ See Bodem, “Wissen Marias,” 747.

⁶ See Christopher de Vega, *Theologia Mariana*, vol. 1, Naples, 1866, 405–12.

A more complex explanation of the issue was offered by Matthias Joseph Scheeben († 1888). If from the remark in Lk 2:50 (“And they understood not the word He spoke to them”) it is evident that a relatively imperfect knowledge could exist in her prior to this time, nevertheless he warns that in respect to the perfection of Mary’s knowledge we should not apply too low a standard and this for one reason: there is a correlation between the perfection of knowledge and the perfection of holiness. So he can argue that especially after Christ’s conception, the highest forms of contemplation, granted to some saints only in passing and in ecstasies, was in Mary’s case her habitual state. Surprisingly, against the position of St. Thomas Aquinas, he even admits as not too improbable the opinion that already in the womb of her mother she was endowed supernaturally with the use of her intellect.⁷

A great number of Mariological manuals of the pre-conciliar period advanced the theory that Mary, in analogy with her divine Son, possessed three distinct types of knowledge: *scientia acquisita*, which referred to the knowledge that Mary acquired through the reasoning processes of the intellect or from her own experience; *scientia infusa*, which denoted the knowledge that she received by the direct action of God; *visio beatifica* or a direct perception of God as He is in Himself. It was specified that this third type of cognition proper to the saints in heaven she, as a wayfarer, did not possess permanently, but only at certain significant events in her life. Yet, it was considered inconvenient to deny her the grace which was apparently enjoyed by Moses when he spoke to God “face to face” (Ex 33:11) or by St. Paul, who was caught up into paradise (2 Cor 12:4).⁸

⁷ See Matthias J. Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, vol. 5/2 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1954) 1650–54. For Thomas Aquinas’s position on this question, see *ST III*, q. 27, a. 3.

⁸ See Gabriele M. Roschini, *Mariologia*, vol. 2 (Romae, 1948), 185–87; Alexius Martinelli, *De primo instanti conceptionis B. V. Mariae. Disquisitio de usu rationis* (Romae, 1950), 81–83; Juniper B. Carol, *Fundamentals of Mariology* (New York: Benzinger Brothers, Inc., 1956), 159–60.

However, since the Second Vatican Council explicitly emphasized Mary's "pilgrimage of faith" (LG 58), new orientations in Mariology have not only abandoned altogether the scholastic approach to the question of her knowledge, but where the theme still arises, theologians generally speak of the historical character and gradual development of Mary's knowledge, not infrequently pointing out that Mary was in fact an ordinary and ignorant woman. This new approach was initiated to a great extent by a small volume, *Die Mutter des Herrn* (The Mother of the Lord), written in 1955 by Romano Guardini († 1968), where he does not propose an abstract meditation on Mary, but seeks to enter into her concrete religious experience of faith with regard to the mystery of her Son. He clarifies that if in living with her Son Mary experienced all that a mother experiences, at the same time Jesus as the Son of God transcended any merely human possibility of comprehension. This means that Mary could not understand his mystery in its actual meaning, as it is explicitly shown by the passage in Lk 2,41–52, and, therefore, she needed to experience Pentecost, as well. On the basis of this premise he makes the following statement: "Thus, in her relationship with her Son, in the midst of the deepest intimacy, there must have been a distance, a lack of understanding, which is also evident in the reports [of the Gospels]."⁹

A rather bolder thesis was put forward by Jean Galot († 2008) who argued that Mary, shaped by strict Jewish monotheism, could not have grasped the doctrine of God in three persons at the Annunciation, and therefore she did not know about the divine identity of her Son until it was revealed to her on the occasion of the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple: "The episode of the twelve-year-old boy found in the temple confirms that she did not know the divine identity of Jesus."¹⁰ The main reason is that as a young mother, she would not be able to cope psychologically with this fact: "First, it would have been an inconvenience for Mary to learn this shocking truth, that of not

⁹ Romano Guardini, *Die Mutter des Herrn. Ein Brief und darin ein Entwurf* (Würzburg: Werkbund-Verlag, 1955), 48.

¹⁰ Jean Galot, *Maria. La donna nell'opera della salvezza* (Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1991), 70.

being able to give her son, in the most natural way, all the motherly manifestations of affection and solicitude.”¹¹

In this context, it may be noted that two popes have recently raised even the subject of Mary’s experience of the darkness of faith and her exposure to possible doubts about Jesus’s mission. In the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, John Paul II admits that the mystery of Jesus’s divine sonship was revealed to Mary, but at the same time he explains, applying the expression of St. John of the Cross to her, that from the very beginning of their life together there was “a particular heaviness of heart, linked with a sort of night of faith”.¹² Pope Francis went a little further, causing something of a stir when, in his homily on 20 December 2013, he spoke of Our Lady’s silence at the foot of the cross, imagining how, at this pivotal moment in salvation history, she was confronted with various questions and doubts:

The Gospel tells us nothing: if she said a word or not.... She was quiet, but in her heart – how much she said to the Lord! “You told me then – that’s what we have read – that He will be great. You told me that You would give him the throne of his father David, that he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And now I see Him there!” The Blessed Mother was human! And perhaps she would have wanted to say: “Lies! I have been cheated!” John Paul II said this when he spoke of the Mother of God at one point. But she was overshadowed with the silence of the mystery that she did not understand, and with this silence, she accepted that this mystery can grow and flourish in the hope.¹³

¹¹ Galot, *Maria. La donna nell’opera della salvezza*, 71. However, even before Galot, a similar view was held by some Catholic scholars, especially by Edmund F. Sutcliffe, “Our Lady and the Divinity of Christ,” *The Month*, 180 (1944): 347–50; “Our Lady’s Knowledge of the Divinity of Christ,” *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 66 (1945): 427–32.

¹² John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, I, §17.

¹³ Francis, “Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae.” Friday, 20 December 2013; retrieved from: <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican->

In light of these divergent approaches this study focuses on whether and how St. John Henry Newman addressed the problem of Our Lady's knowledge. To inquire how Newman dealt with this question does not seem at all inappropriate, not only because he always sought a kind of middle way (*Via Media*) between extreme positions,¹⁴ but also because throughout his long academic career he was particularly concerned with questions of both epistemology and Mariology.

The Knowledge of the Virgin Mary in the Context of Newman's Epistemology and Mariology

Before entering into how Newman viewed the issue of Our Lady's knowledge, it is necessary to make some preliminary observations. First of all, it should be mentioned that the doctrine of Mary's special knowledge, which in pre-conciliar theological manuals was considered to be an exceptional privilege of the Virgin Mary, seems to be quite problematic for many contemporary theologians today because of their tendency to regard Marian privileges as such with a certain amount of suspicion.¹⁵ Newman is also known to have been critical of some statements made by Catholic writers about the Mother of the Lord, which seemed to him exaggerated, but at the same time he had no difficulty to proclaim her privileges, which he justified in line with the aforementioned scholastic principle when he wrote: „Mary must surpass all the saints; the very fact that certain privileges are known to have been theirs persuades us, almost from the necessity of the case, that she had the same and higher.“¹⁶ And like some of the scholastic

insider.it/2013/12/20/news/il-papa-cerchiamo-il-silenzio-che-custodisce-il-rapporto-con-dio-1.35948633/

¹⁴ See Andrej M. Čaja, “Via Media ako ekleziologický model a teologická metóda Johna Henryho Newmana (1801–1890) [Via Media as an Ecclesiological Model and Theological Method of John Henry Newman],” *Verba Theologica* 21/1 (2022): 45–64.

¹⁵ On the objections to the so-called “Mariology of privileges”, see Francesco Scanziani, “Il Manuale di Mariologia dagli inizi dell’ottocento al Vaticano II,” in *Storia della mariologia*, vol. 2, ed. Emanuele Boaga, Luigi Gambero (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2012), 783–816.

¹⁶ John H. Newman, “On the Fitness of the Glories of Mary,” in *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), 393.

authors, Newman also saw in Mary's privileges a consequence of her motherhood towards the Son of God:

So stands the case with Mary; she gave birth to the Creator, and what recompense shall be made her? what shall be done to her, who had this relationship to the Most High? what shall be the fit accompaniment of one whom the Almighty has deigned to make, not His servant, not His friend, not His intimate, but His superior, the source of His second being, the nurse of His helpless infancy, the teacher of His opening years? ... Nothing is too high for her to whom God owes His human life; no exuberance of grace, no excess of glory, but is becoming, but is to be expected there, where God has lodged Himself, whence God has issued.¹⁷

In addition, it is worth noting that though Newman did not write a treatise on the question of Mary's knowledge, he left a number of texts on the subject in various writings, whether philosophical, doctrinal, homiletical or devotional. In this connection, the following works may be mentioned in particular: the 15th University Sermon preached before the University of Oxford: *The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine*¹⁸; two of Newman's sermons from the Catholic period: *The Glories of Mary for the Sake of her Son*¹⁹ and *On the Fitness of the Glories of Mary*;²⁰ Newman's major Mariological work: *A Letter to the Rev. E.B. Pusey, D.D. on his Recent Eirenicon*,²¹ and his extraordinary meditation on

¹⁷ Newman, "On the Fitness of the Glories of Mary," 384.

¹⁸ John H. Newman, "The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine," in *Fifteen Sermons preached before the University of Oxford* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. and New York, 1892), 312–51.

¹⁹ John H. Newman, "The Glories of Mary for the Sake of her Son," in *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), 362–80.

²⁰ Newman, "On the Fitness of the Glories of Mary," 381–402.

²¹ John H. Newman, *A Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D. on his recent Eirenicon* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866).

Mary as the Seat of Wisdom in his commentary on the Litany of Loreto.²²

Finally, it must be stressed that Newman did not explicitly speak of the traditional three kinds of Mary's knowledge (acquired and infused knowledge, beatific vision), but used subtly different terminology, which can be explained by the fact that he drew on his own particular theory of epistemology, in which, however, he also distinguished analogical kinds of cognition. His texts on the subject reveal, as we are going to see in the following pages, that he not only applied these specific cognitive processes to Our Lady, but illustrated her precisely as a unique paradigm of each one of them.

1. Mary as a Paradigm of *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*

For many years Newman was intensely concerned with the relationship between faith and reason, trying to show that the process of faith treads a middle way between two extremes: sentimentalism, which identifies faith exclusively with religious feeling, and rationalism, which inappropriately applies logical proof to matters of religion and revealed truth.

Initially, Newman himself was influenced by this “emotional religion”, which, inspired to a great extent by the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher († 1834), gradually penetrated into England forming a movement that attracted many Christians dissatisfied with the Established Church. However, he soon acquired a great distaste for it: not only was it too vague and shallow for him, but he realized that its main danger lay in ignoring the objective facts of the Christian religion, especially its dogmas, thus leading to the proliferation of liberal views. He thematized this form of religiosity repeatedly during his Anglican period. In his sermon *Religious Emotions*, he explains that “a violent impulse is not the same as a firm determination, – that men have their religious feelings roused, without being on that account at all the more

²² John H. Newman, “Sedes Sapientiae,” in *Meditations and Devotions of the Late Cardinal Newman* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. and New York, 1893), 47–50.

likely to obey God in practice, rather, the less likely.”²³ As an example, he mentions the Gospel accounts of the Passion, which contain a striking contrast between the Lord’s inner peace and the agitated emotions of the disciples and the people. Certainly, it is no sin to be passionate on the subject of religion, but it is a rule that the more religious men become, the calmer and more serene they become. Faith is not the same thing as emotion; if it were, it would soon cease, for emotion is not a permanent but a transitory state, which quickly wears off.²⁴ To regard faith as something merely emotional, he adds in another sermon, even gives other people an excuse to ridicule the Christian faith:

There are serious men who are in the habit of describing Christian Faith as a feeling... And thus they lead others, who wish an excuse for their own religious lives, to speak of Christian Faith as extravagant and irrational, as if it were a mere fancy or feeling, which some persons had and others had not; and which, accordingly, could only, and would necessarily, be felt by those who were disposed that certain way.²⁵

²³ John H. Newman, “Religious Emotions,” in *Parochial Sermons*, vol. 1 (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1837), 205.

²⁴ See Newman, “Religious Emotions,” 210–11.

²⁵ John H. Newman, “Religious Faith Rational,” in *Parochial Sermons*, vol. 1, 219–20. Even as a Catholic, Newman spared no criticism of the widespread tendency to focus attention in religious life only on the experience of exalted emotions and in *The Idea of a University* he condemned this attitude in very harsh terms: “The religious world, as it is styled, holds, generally speaking, that religion consists, not in knowledge, but in feeling or sentiment. The old Catholic notion, which still lingers in the Established Church, was, that Faith was an intellectual act, its object truth, and its result knowledge ... but in proportion as the Lutheran leaven spread, it became fashionable to say that Faith was, not an acceptance of revealed doctrine, not an act of the intellect, but a feeling, an emotion, an affection, an appetency; and, as this view of Faith obtained, so was the connexion of Faith with Truth and Knowledge more and more either forgotten or denied. At length the identity of this (so-called) spirituality of heart and the virtue of Faith was acknowledged on all hands. Some men indeed disapproved the pietism in question, others admired it; but whether they admired or disapproved, both the one party and the other found themselves in agreement on the main point, viz.—in considering that this really was in substance Religion, and

At the same time, Newman vigorously opposed the introduction of rationalistic principles into religion.²⁶ His position in this regard is expressed very clearly in his university lectures delivered before the University of Oxford in 1826–1843, where he emphasized the fundamental difference between purely rational or logical evidence and the process of faith, which requires the active participation not only of reason but of all the faculties of man. Newman enters the heart of the subject in Lecture 4 on *The Usurpations of Reason*, when he points out that following reason alone in religion is no guarantee that we will arrive at the truth. Certainly, reason has its place in the process of faith,

nothing else; that Religion was based, not on argument, but on taste and sentiment, that nothing was objective, every thing subjective, in doctrine. I say, even those who saw through the affectation in which the religious school of which I am speaking clad itself, still came to think that Religion, as such, consisted in something short of intellectual exercises, viz., in the affections, in the imagination, in inward persuasions and consolations, in pleasurable sensations, sudden changes, and sublime fancies. They learned to believe and to take it for granted, that Religion was nothing beyond a *supply* of the wants of human nature, not an external fact and a work of God.” (John H. Newman, *The Idea of a University* [Longmans, Green, and Co. and New York: 1889], 27–28).

²⁶ Certainly, as Newman was not an enemy of human emotion as such, neither was he an enemy of logic. This is already indicated by his great interest in the study of mathematics at the university of Oxford, through which he acquired his clear and logical mind. In a letter from 1822 Newman briefly summarized his relationship to mathematics as follows: “I lay great strength on the attention I have given to Mathematics on account of the general strength it imparts to the mind” (*Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman*, ed. Anne Mozley, vol. 1 [London: Longmans, Green, and Co. and New York, 1891], 69). For this theme, see Gillian R. Evans, “Science and Mathematics in Newman’s Thought,” *Downside Review* 96 (1978): 325, 247–66. Rather, it should be said that Newman recognized a dangerous enemy in rationalism, which he defined in Tract 73 thus: “To Rationalize is to ask for reasons out of place; to ask improperly how we are to account for certain things, to be unwilling to believe them unless they can be accounted for, i.e. referred to something else as a cause, to some existing system as harmonizing with them or taking them up into itself.... Thus it is characterized by two peculiarities; its loves of systematizing, and its basing its system upon personal experience, on the evidence of sense. In both respects it stands opposed to what is commonly understood by the word Faith, or belief in Testimony” (John H. Newman, “Tract 73: On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Religion,” in *Tracts for the Times* [Leominster – Notre Dame: Gracewing and University of Notre Dame Press, 2013], 181).

but the rational evidences themselves serve as answers to objections rather than as direct arguments in favor of revelation. Drawing on concrete experience, Newman asks: “In matter of fact, how many men do we suppose, in a century, out of the whole body of Christians, have been primarily brought to belief, or retained in it, by an intimate and lively perception of the force of what are technically called the Evidences?”²⁷ Belief is also a form of knowledge, but it is exercised in such a way that it does not rely on logical evidence, but is primarily based on the so-called “antecedent probabilities,” i.e., habits, forms of behavior, previously entertained principles, views and wishes.²⁸ Therefore, belief is not merely a kind of conclusion of the reasoning process or the result of calculation, but is closely linked to a certain moral attitude, which is not required in argumentative thinking. Faith, then, is properly a moral principle, for the antecedent probabilities that precede it depend to a large degree on the moral foundation of the person, from which it follows that “a man is responsible for his faith, because he is responsible for his likings and dislikings, his hopes and his opinions.”²⁹ Therefore it is also a fatal error for the world to think that it can judge religious truth without the preparation of the heart, and to approach it as one approaches any secular matter. Newman’s explanation is almost reminiscent of the noetic approach of the spirituality of the Russian *starecestvo*, which sees in the purification of the heart a necessary condition for the comprehension of Christian mysteries:

For is not this the error, the common and fatal error, of the world, to think itself a judge of Religious Truth without preparation of heart? ... Men consider that they have as full a right to discuss religious subjects, as if they were themselves religious. They will enter upon the most sacred points of Faith at the moment, at their

²⁷ John H. Newman, “The Usurpations of Reason,” in *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, 66.

²⁸ See John H. Newman, “Faith and Reason contrasted as Habits of Mind,” in *Fifteen Sermons preached before the University of Oxford*, 187–89.

²⁹ Newman, “Faith and Reason contrasted as Habits of Mind,” 192.

pleasure, – if it so happen, in a careless frame of mind,
in their hours of recreation, over the wine cup.³⁰

Even though the antecedent probabilities of belief do not extend so far as to touch the conclusion – which makes belief imply a certain risk and venture – they nevertheless continually move towards the conclusion and asymptotically approach it. Moreover, Newman reminds us that pure and bare evidence leads only to the passive acceptance of knowledge, whereas anticipations, presuppositions, and probabilities are creations of the mind and make the act of believing an eminently active act.³¹

All these reflections eventually culminate in the 15th sermon, where Newman presents Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as a pattern and example of faith and reason to his listeners. Above all, Mary is a pattern of faith because, unlike Zechariah, she believed the angel's message, for which she earned the praise of Elizabeth: "And blessed is she who believed that what the Lord has said to her will be fulfilled" (Lk 1:45). Subsequently, in connection with Luke's remark that Mary "treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart" (Lk 2:19), Newman presents the Mother of the Lord in a masterful passage also as an example of the use of reason in its investigation of the contents of faith and thus as a paradigm of the scholastic motto *fides quaerens intellectum*.

Thus St. Mary is our pattern of Faith, both in the reception and in the study of Divine Truth. She does not think it enough to accept, she dwells upon it; not enough to possess, she uses it; not enough to assent, she develops it; not enough to submit the Reason, she reasons upon it; not indeed reasoning first, and believing afterwards, with Zacharias, yet first believing without reasoning, next from love and reverence, reasoning after believing. And thus she symbolizes to us, not only the faith of the unlearned, but of the

³⁰ Newman, "Faith and Reason contrasted as Habits of Mind," 198–99.

³¹ See John H. Newman, "Love the Safeguard of Faith Against Superstition," in *Fifteen Sermons preached before the University of Oxford*, 224–26.

doctors of the Church also, who have to investigate, and weigh, and define, as well as to profess the Gospel; to draw the line between truth and heresy; to anticipate or remedy the various aberrations of wrong reason; to combat pride and recklessness with their own arms; and thus to triumph over the sophist and the innovator.³²

It is no coincidence that this final lecture is entitled “The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine”, since the theme of doctrinal development was soon to become one of Newman’s dominant themes. Its significance lies in the fact that he understood this development not as acquisition or sudden discovery of new doctrines that the Church had never before professed or even possessed. For Newman, authentic development is a gradual and often very complex deepening of an identical deposit of faith that can be likened to the growth of a living organism, and so it represents a transition from implicit to explicit knowledge. The absence of an explicit profession of faith or dogmatic formulation of a doctrine does not, therefore, preclude the Church’s inward and implicit knowledge of it.³³ And if this is true of the Church’s knowledge with respect to the deposit of faith, *a fortiori* is it true of Mary, whom Newman singled out as the one who develops and deepens paradigmatically the knowledge received in faith.

2. Mary as a Paradigm of Divine Illumination

However, the use of reason, as we have outlined it, does not constitute the only *modus cognoscendi*, according to Newman, because in the life of grace the possibility of another kind of cognition opens up, which has its origin in the divine illumination. It is important to note that in this context Newman does not use the scholastic term of *scientia infusa*, but

³² Newman, “The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine,” 313–14.

³³ See Newman, “The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine,” 323. Newman develops the same idea in his main work on the theme: *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Leominster – Notre Dame: Gracewing and University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 124–25.

rather the biblical term of “light” and the patristic concept of “illumination,” which was specifically elaborated by St. Augustine.³⁴

It is quite likely that Newman learnt to appreciate the doctrine of illumination by his own experience of faith. This is suggested by the account of his first conversion in 1816, when, during an illness and through an extraordinary grace, he fell under the influence of a definite Creed and received into his intellect impressions of dogma, which, through God’s mercy, were never effaced or obscured. This led him at the same time to the idea that there are “two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator”.³⁵ Years later, he poetically expressed his longing for God’s light in the hymn *Lead, Kindly Light*, which he composed after overcoming illness and a near-death experience during a trip to Sicily.

From a theological point of view, he addressed this theme in the Catholic sermon *Illuminating Grace*, where, after pointing to some texts from the Old and New Testament, he laid down a principle according to which one of the consequences of sin is ignorance and error, and therefore one of the consequences of redemption is the gift of knowledge and light:

Now, one of the defects which man incurred on the fall was ignorance, or spiritual blindness; and one of the gifts received on his restoration is a perception of things spiritual; so that, before he is brought under the grace of Christ, he can but inquire, reason, argue, and conclude, about religious truth; but afterwards he sees it.³⁶

³⁴ See Rudolph Allers, “St. Augustin’s Doctrine on Illumination,” *Franciscan Studies*, 12/1 (1952): 27–46

³⁵ John H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. and New York: 1890), 4.

³⁶ John H. Newman, “Illuminating Grace,” in *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations*, 180.

It follows for Newman that without God's light one cannot see spiritual realities, just as without natural light one cannot see sensible realities:

You ask, what it is you need, besides eyes, in order to see the truths of revelation: I will tell you at once; you need light. Not the keenest eyes can see in the dark. Now, though your mind be the eye, the grace of God is the light; and you will as easily exercise your eyes in this sensible world without the sun, as you will be able to exercise your mind in the spiritual world without a parallel gift from without.³⁷

Now, it is noteworthy that Newman also applies this form of supernatural knowledge directly to the Mother of the Lord when, in his meditation on the Marian title *Sedes Sapientiae* in the Litany of Loreto, he explains that by the enlightenment she received through the intimate communion of her life with Jesus she was introduced into the knowledge of God's plan and the mysteries of the faith that the Church defined and solemnly proclaimed during the centuries that followed:

What was the grand theme of conversation between her and her Son but the nature, the attributes, the providence, and the works of Almighty God? Would not our Lord be ever glorifying the Father who sent Him? Would He not unfold to her the solemn eternal decrees, and the purposes and will of God? Would He not from time to time enlighten her in all those points of doctrine which have been first discussed and then settled in the Church from the time of the Apostles till now, and all that shall be till the end – nay, these, and far more than these? All that is obscure, all that is fragmentary in revelation, would, so far as the knowledge is possible to man, be brought out to her in clearness and simplicity by Him who is the Light of the World.³⁸

³⁷ Newman, "Illuminating Grace," 181–82.

³⁸ Newman, "Sedes Sapientiae," 48–49.

This Meditation is part of a reflection on the mystery of the Annunciation, and so at this point it is appropriate to ask whether Newman considered Mary to have received a special form of illumination about the divine identity of her Son at the Incarnation. In fact, some of his statements may help us to form a more or less probable idea of his view on this matter.

In his sermon from the Anglican period *Christ Manifested in Remembrance* he highlights the principle that “God’s Presence is not discerned at the time when it is upon us, but afterwards, when we look back upon what is gone and over.”³⁹ This is specifically shown in the case of the revelation of the divine identity of Jesus: though he was professed as the Son of God by Peter or the centurion, who was present at his crucifixion, still the apostles “did not understand that our Lord, as being the Son of God, was not the creature of God, but the Eternal Word, the Only-begotten Son of the Father.”⁴⁰ This was fully manifested to them only through the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost. Although Newman does not explicitly state it in this sermon, it is clear that this principle applies to the Virgin Mary as well, with the sole difference that she received the Holy Spirit in an anticipatory way at the moment of the Incarnation. This thesis, which has been endorsed by some contemporary scholars who saw in the events of the Annunciation and the Visitation a kind of Mary’s “Proto-Pentecost,”⁴¹ seems to have been sustained by Newman himself. If in the homily *The Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Reverence Due to Her* he first claims that Mary felt “ignorance” with regard to the mystery of the Incarnation,⁴² he immediately proceeds to make the following statement:

³⁹ John H. Newman, “Christ Manifested in Remembrance,” in *Parochial Sermons*, vol. 4 (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1842), 291.

⁴⁰ Newman, “Christ Manifested in Remembrance,” 290.

⁴¹ See René Laurentin, *I Vangeli dell’infanzia di Cristo* (Torino: Edizioni Paoline, 1985), 139; Stefano de Fiores, “Spirito Santo,” in *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 2 (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane), 1497–98, 1501.

⁴² John H. Newman, “The Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Reverence Due to Her,” in *Parochial Sermons*, vol. 2 (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1840), 143.

If to him that hath, more is given, and holiness and Divine favour go together (and this we are expressly told), what must have been the transcendent purity of her, whom the Creator Spirit condescended to overshadow with His miraculous presence? What must have been her gifts, who was chosen to be the only near earthly relative of the Son of God, the only one whom He was bound by nature to revere and look up to; the one appointed to train and educate Him, to instruct Him day by day, as He grew in wisdom and in stature?⁴³

Newman's conviction that Mary must have been sufficiently informed about Jesus's divine identity is later expressed in his meditation on the Annunciation and the invocation *Regina Angelorum*, where he writes in all simplicity but also clarity: "St. Gabriel hailed her as 'Full of grace,' and as 'Blessed among women,' and announced to her that the Holy Ghost would come down upon her, and that she would bear a Son who would be the Son of the Highest."⁴⁴

The fact that Mary represents a paradigm of the singular and anticipated illumination by the Holy Spirit at the Incarnation eventually emerges from the Mariological rudimentary teaching of the Church Fathers about Mary as the New Eve, from which Newman derived several Marian Catholic doctrines. Similarly, in this case, he shows that the first parents in Paradise were "created in the image, and after the likeness of God" and as such were "supported and exalted by an indwelling of Divine grace." Consequently, as in them "ignorance was dissipated by the clear light of the Spirit,"⁴⁵ so in Mary, as the New Eve, ignorance must have been overcome not only by reasoning, but especially by the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit, which allows Newman to declare categorically:

⁴³ Newman, "The Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary," 147.

⁴⁴ John H. Newman, "Regina Angelorum," in *Meditations and Devotions of the Late Cardinal Newman*, 42.

⁴⁵ Newman, "The Glories of Mary for the Sake of Her Son," 373.

As grace was infused into Adam from the first moment of his creation, so that he never had experience of his natural poverty, till sin reduced him to it; so was grace given in still ampler measure to Mary, and she was a stranger to Adam's deprivation. She began where others end, whether in knowledge or in love. She was from the first clothed in sanctity, sealed for perseverance, luminous and glorious in God's sight, and incessantly employed in meritorious acts, which continued till her last breath.⁴⁶

This text leads us directly to Newman's opinion of the thesis of some of the Eastern Church Fathers (namely St. Basil, St. Chrysostom and St. Cyril of Alexandria) who attributed to the Mother of God certain moral imperfections such as vanity, love of honor, inconstancy in faith and even the sin of doubt to which she succumbed at the sight of her crucified Son. This thesis, which has its source in Origen's exegesis of the sword in Simeon's prophecy to Mary,⁴⁷ is dealt with at length by Newman in his Mariological work *A Letter to the Rev. E.B. Pusey*, where he presents the following arguments: 1. This thesis is not a representation of the universal Tradition of the Church, but a private and personal opinion of these writers; 2. Certainly the image of the sword may have denoted "the presence of temptation and darkness of spirit" to which Mary was subjected during the Passion; 3. However, there is nothing in Simeon's words about the sword to suggest an idea of sin or doubt, but rather, according to Newman, they express the painful separation of the Son from the Mother, which began with his public ministry and ended with the accomplishment of his salvific mission at Calvary.⁴⁸ As a result, in his *Sermon Notes* for the month of

⁴⁶ Newman, "The Glories of Mary for the Sake of Her Son," 375.

⁴⁷ See Origen, *In Lucam*, 17,6-7; PG 13,1845.

⁴⁸ See Newman, *A Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey*, 131-146. It should be noted, however, that in the Anglican sermon dedicated to the Virgin Mary, Newman clarifies that Mary's suffering is not to be understood as despair, but rather as a form of blessed suffering: "And when sorrow came upon her afterwards, it was but the blessed participation of her Son's sacred sorrows, not the sorrow of those who suffer for their sins" ("The Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary," 153).

May, Newman can claim that Mary, as the New Eve, was distinguished by indefectibility, i.e., by the inability to lapse in faith and morals:

And thus she is a better Eve. Eve, too, in the beginning may be called the May of the year. She was the first-fruits of God's beautiful creation. She was the type of all beauty; but alas! she represented the world also in its fragility. She stayed not in her original creation. Mary comes as a second and holier Eve, having the grace of indefectibility and the gift of perseverance from the first, and teaching us how to use God's gifts without abusing them.⁴⁹

3. Mary as a Paradigm of the Beatific Contemplation of Christ

A favorite theme of Newman's eschatology is the beatific vision of God experienced by the saints in heaven, where they finally see him face to face after the hardships of this life. His statements to this effect are found scattered in a number of his works, such as the novel *Callista*, the poetic composition *The Dream of Gerontius*, as well as his Anglican sermons. Their main feature is Newman's conviction that the beatific vision is possible only after death, as he expressed it in his sermon *Peace in Believing*:

After the fever of life; after weariness and sickness; fightings and despondings; languor and fretfulness; struggling and failing, struggling and succeeding; after all the changes and chances of this troubled unhealthy state, at length comes death, at length the White Throne of God, at length the Beatific Vision. After restlessness comes rest, peace, joy; – our eternal portion, if we be worthy; – the sight of the Blessed Three, the Holy One.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ John H. Newman, "On Mary as the Pattern of the Natural World," in *Sermon Notes of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913), 79.

⁵⁰ John H. Newman, "Peace in Believing," in *Parochial Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1842), 400–401.

As an Anglican, Newman initially seems to have held that even Jesus, being subject to the laws of learning, was ignorant in his human nature.⁵¹ However, by studying the history of the early Church, he gradually comes to believe that his apparent ignorance – implied in the Gospel, for example, by the *logion* that the Son does not know the hour of the end of all things (cf. Mt 24:36) – is to be understood rather economically, i.e., in relation to us and for our sake. Thus, in his *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius*, Newman explains that if some of the early Fathers made contradictory affirmations about Jesus’s human knowledge and seem to have attributed ignorance to his human nature, this changed significantly after Athanasius, when it became a common teaching that “though He took on Him a soul which left to itself would have been partially ignorant, as other human souls, yet as ever enjoying the Beatific Vision from its oneness with the Word, it never was ignorant in fact, but knew all things which human soul can know.”⁵²

It would seem, then, that the beatific vision of Jesus during his earthly life constitutes a unique case and a singular exception, and this because of the hypostatic union of his human soul with the Word of God. That is why Newman does not ascribe the same privilege to Mary, and yet there are some of his texts in which Mary’s knowledge on earth is described almost in direct analogy to the privilege of the beatific vision. In the meditation *Sedes Sapientiae*, for example, he ventures to assert that thanks to Mary’s unique and unparalleled intimacy with her Son, her knowledge surpassed that of all the philosophers, saints and prophets:

For if such close and continued intimacy with her Son created in her a sanctity inconceivably great, must not also the knowledge which she gained during those many years from His conversation of present, past, and

⁵¹ John H. Newman, “Affliction, A School of Comfort,” in *Parochial Sermons*, vol. 5 (London: Rivingtons, 1857), 346: “Even He Himself, when He came on earth, condescended to gain knowledge by experience.”

⁵² John H. Newman, “Ignorance Assumed Economically by Our Lord,” in *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius in Controversy with the Arians*, vol. 2 (London: Pickering and Co., 1881), 162.

future, have been so large, and so profound, and so diversified, and so thorough, that, though she was a poor woman without human advantages, she must in her knowledge of creation, of the universe, and of history, have excelled the greatest of philosophers, and in her theological knowledge the greatest of theologians, and in her prophetic discernment the most favoured of prophets?⁵³

Thereupon he contrasts Mary with Moses to show that while Moses was allowed to converse with God occasionally “face to face,” which some Mariologists in the past explained precisely as a sign of the beatific vision of God, Mary enjoyed this privilege continually during the thirty years she spent with Christ:

God spoke to the Prophets: we have His communications to them in Scripture. But He spoke to them in figure and parable. There was one, viz., Moses, to whom He vouchsafed to speak face to face.... This was the great privilege of the inspired Lawgiver of the Jews; but how much was it below that of Mary! Moses had the privilege only now and then, from time to time; but Mary for thirty continuous years saw and heard Him, being all through that time face to face with Him, and being able to ask Him any question which she wished explained, and knowing that the answers she received were from the Eternal God, who neither deceives nor can be deceived.⁵⁴

Besides, as in the *Letter to Pusey* Newman puts forward the idea that Mary, as “a creature has been brought so close to the Divine Essence” because she “bore, nursed, and handled the Eternal in the form of a child,”⁵⁵ so in the meditation *Regina Angelorum* he stresses the fact that by virtue of her motherhood she was closer to Christ than the angels:

⁵³ Newman, “Sedes Sapientiae,” 48.

⁵⁴ Newman, “Sedes Sapientiae,” 49–50.

⁵⁵ Newman, *A Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey*, 88.

“She, as the Mother of our Lord, comes nearer to Him than any angel; nearer even than the Seraphim who surround Him, and cry continually, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy.’”⁵⁶

What are we to make of these texts and how are we to interpret them? Admittedly, they are not easy to explain, because in purely terminological terms Newman does not explicitly speak here of Mary’s beatific vision. However, it does not seem entirely unreasonable to attempt to interpret his statements in the sense that Mary’s face-to-face communication with Christ, her intimate communion with the incarnate Word of God, and her incomparable access to God were a kind of earthly equivalent of the beatific vision. In other words, for Newman, Mary’s life with Christ on earth was already an anticipation and even a prototype of the rapturous and beatifying vision that the saints experience in heaven, and at the same time a source of extraordinary knowledge and insight.

4. Mary as Seat of Wisdom

Before looking at the last aspect of Newman’s reflection on the knowledge of the Virgin Mary, we must briefly mention Sophiology, which undoubtedly represents the most original and speculative aspect of modern Russian Mariology, and whose main exponents were Vladimir Solov’ev († 1900), Sergej Bulgakov († 1944) and Pavel Florensky († 1937). They refer Wisdom-Sophia to God, insofar as he carries within himself the idea of creation, as well as to creation and history, in which the purest manifestations or realizations of Sophia are Christ, Mary and the Church.⁵⁷ If for Solov’ev the link between Sophiology and Mariology has as one of its foundations the Church’s ancient liturgical practice to apply to the Blessed Virgin the Old Testament texts that speak of the Wisdom,⁵⁸ for Bulgakov the link has

⁵⁶ Newman, “Regina Angelorum,” 41.

⁵⁷ See Bernard Schultze, “La mariologie sophianique russe,” in *Maria. Études sur la Sainte Vierge*, vol. 6, ed. Hubert du Manoir (Paris: Beauchesne et ses fils, 1961), 215.

⁵⁸ Vladimir Solov’ev, *La Russia e la Chiesa universale e altri scritti* (Milano: La Casa di Matriona, 1989), 200: “For if by substantial Wisdom of God one were to understand only and exclusively the person of Jesus Christ, how could one apply to the Blessed

almost an ontological necessity, since Christ and Mary represent two perfect concretizations of Wisdom, one theanthropic and the other created: “The Virgin is the personal manifestation of divine Wisdom, of Sophia, who in a different sense is Christ, the power and wisdom of God. There are thus two personal images of the Sophia: one created, the other theanthropic; and there are two images of man in the heavens: the God-Man and the Mother of God.”⁵⁹ Similarly, according to Florensky, the Divine Sophia is realized in history in concentric circles, reaching her unique perfection and center in the figure of the Mother of God.⁶⁰

It may sound surprising at first, but Newman could also be classified to some extent as a representative and even as a precursor of Mariological Sophiology for several reasons. It is already noteworthy that in his theological writings he put forward the thesis that the Old Testament texts on the creation of Wisdom (Sir 1:4, 9; 24:14; Prov 8:22–23) were fittingly referred by the Church to the mystery of the election and creation of the Virgin Mary especially after the Arians used them in derogation of Our Lord’s divinity.⁶¹

Virgin all the texts of the sapiential books that speak of this Wisdom? Now, this very application, which was practiced from the earliest times both in the offices of the Latin Church and in those of the Greek Church, has received doctrinal sanction in our day in the bull of Pius IX on the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.” On this question, see also Jeremy Pilch, *“Breathing the Spirit with Both Lungs”: Deification in the Work of Vladimir Solov’ev* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 150–52.

⁵⁹ Sergej Bulgakov, *Il rovelo ardente* (Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo, 1998), 126–127. On his distinction between the uncreated Wisdom and the created Wisdom, see Sergej Bulgakov, *Sophia. The Wisdom of God* (Lindisfarne Books, 1993), 54–81.

⁶⁰ Pavel Florensky, *Stĺp a opora pravdy* [The Pillar and Ground of the Truth] (Velehrad: Refugium, 2003), 304: “If the whole creation is Sophia, then humanity, which is the soul and consciousness of creation, is first of all Sophia. If all humanity is Sophia, then Sophia is first of all the Church, which is the soul and consciousness of humanity. If Sophia is the Church, then Sophia is first of all the Church of the Saints, which is the soul and consciousness of the Church. If Sophia is the Church of the Saints, then Sophia is first of all Mary, who is the soul and consciousness of the Church of the Saints, the Advocate and Protectress of creation before the Word of God, the Mother of God, the Purification of the world.”

⁶¹ See Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 174–75; *A Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey*, 64–65.

In addition, interpreting St. Athanasius's theology of the Incarnation, Newman argued that since God and man meet in Mary, she can in this sense be designated as the "centre of all things."⁶² Most remarkable, however, is the fact that long before Bulgakov, Newman, in his homily *On the Fitness of the Glories of Mary*, described the Mother of the Lord precisely as "created wisdom":

Thus His Mother is the first of Prophets, for of her came the Word bodily; she is the sole oracle of Truth, for the Way, the Truth, and the Life, vouchsafed to be her Son; she is the one mould of Divine Wisdom, and in that mould it was indelibly cast.... if she bore the Eternal Wisdom, she should be that created wisdom in whom "is all the grace of the Way and the Truth"; that if she was the Mother of "fair love, and fear, and knowledge, and holy hope," "she should give an odour like cinnamon and balm, and sweetness like to choice myrrh." Can we set bounds to the holiness of her who was the Mother of the Holiest?⁶³

Yet, there is also a profound difference between the Russian Sophiologists and Newman: while they base their reflections on ontological and controversial speculations about Wisdom, for

⁶² Newman, *A Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey*, 93.

⁶³ Newman, *On the Fitness of the Glories of Mary*, 391–92. It is interesting to note, however, that this original version of the sermon, published in 1849, was altered and shortened in later editions. Newman here no longer calls Mary "created wisdom" but "Seat of Wisdom," perhaps to avoid the controversial implications that might somehow arise from this terminology. Thus in the 1886 edition we find the following refurbishment: "He is the Wisdom of God, she therefore is the Seat of Wisdom; His Presence is Heaven, she therefore is the Gate of Heaven; He is infinite Mercy, she then is the Mother of Mercy. She is the Mother of 'fair love and fear, and knowledge and holy hope'; is it wonderful then that she has left behind her in the Church below 'an odour like cinnamon and balm, and sweetness like to choice myrrh'? Such, then, is the truth ever cherished in the deep heart of the Church, and witnessed by the keen apprehension of her children, that no limits but those proper to a creature can be assigned to the sanctity of Mary" (*On the Fitness of the Glories of Mary* [London: Burns and Oates, 1886], 369).

Newman Christian wisdom is first and foremost a gift of the Holy Spirit, which becomes in man “a habit” that enlarges the mind and the heart. However, this enlargement does not primarily consist in the acquisition or gathering of new knowledge, but “in the comparison of the subjects of knowledge one with another” and thus wisdom represents “a comprehensive mind“ which „implies a connected view of the old with the new; an insight into the bearing and influence of each part upon every other.“⁶⁴

It may be observed that this understanding of wisdom as a “connected view” and as an apprehension of the intrinsic and mutual relations of individual mysteries finds its biblical basis precisely in the sapiential attitude of the Virgin Mary, who “treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart” (Lk 2:19). As biblical scholar and Mariologist Aristide Serra pointed out,⁶⁵ this text does not refer to mere pondering, but to the form of wisdom as Newman outlined it. In fact, the use of the Greek verb *συμβάλλω*, which literally means “to unite,” “to confront,” “to compare,” or “to do exegesis”, suggests that Mary as a uniquely sophianic person and Seat of Wisdom confronted and compared in a paradigmatic way the words and events concerning Jesus in order to arrive at a fuller and more complete understanding of them.

Conclusion

In general, scholarship on Newman’s epistemology focuses on the important distinction between “notional knowledge” and “real knowledge” (or “notional assent” and “real assent”), which is also quite understandable, since this is the most prominent part of his theory of knowledge. Nevertheless, the analysis of the connection between Newman’s epistemology and Mariology highlighted in this study has

⁶⁴ John H. Newman, “Wisdom, as Contrasted with Faith and with Bigotry,“ in *Fifteen Sermons preached before the University of Oxford*, 287.

⁶⁵ See Aristide Serra, “Maria nell’AT,” in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Biblica*, ed. Piero Rossano, Gianfranco Ravasi, Antonio Giralda, (Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni paoline 1988), 902; *Maria nelle sacre Scritture* (Milano: Gruppo Editoriale Viator, 2016), 191–226.

shown that the English theologian was well aware of different forms and shades of knowledge, which he in turn illustrated in the figure of the Virgin Mary.

True to his method of oscillating between various extreme positions, Newman also takes a middle path (*Via Media*) with regard to the question of Our Lady's knowledge, presenting her as neither completely ignorant nor completely omniscient. Throughout her life Mary was *in statu viatoris*: she learned, reflected on the content of the faith and deepened it, sought to understand the mutual relations between the various mysteries, but at the same time she was singularly favored and enlightened, and so by this unique collaboration of nature and grace she came to a knowledge surpassing that of all the saints becoming for us the very Seat of Wisdom.

Why did Newman address the subject of Mary's knowledge at all in his theology? One possible motive is that Our Lady's extraordinary knowledge, being the result of the synergy of God's grace and human cooperation, represents what Newman so strongly emphasized against Pusey by pointing out how, in the optics of patristic protomariology, Mary as the New Eve "co-operated in our salvation, not merely by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon her body, but by specific holy acts."⁶⁶ For this reason, Newman did not hesitate to ascribe to Mary even the title of "Co-redemptress," which seemed to him but "a poor compensation" for the lofty and rhetorical Marian terminology of the Fathers.⁶⁷

Yet, there is also a second possible motive. Did not Newman extol the importance of Mary's knowledge because he saw in her the concrete realization of what he identified as the main goals of education to be

⁶⁶ Newman, *A Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey*, 38.

⁶⁷ Newman, *A Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey*, 83: "When they found you with the Fathers calling her Mother of God, Second Eve, and Mother of all Living, the Mother of Life, the Morning Star, the Mystical New Heaven, the Sceptre of Orthodoxy, the All-undefiled Mother of Holiness, and the like, they would have deemed it a poor compensation for such language, that you protested against her being called a Co-redemptress or a Priestess."

pursued by the university? It is indeed quite remarkable how in *The Idea of a University* he explains, as if contemplating St. Mary, that the university is not a foundry, mint or treadmill producing machines capable of accumulating and assimilating as many facts and information as possible, but is an *Alma Mater* who knows her children, educates them in a family atmosphere and forms them according to specific principles.⁶⁸ Therefore, the intellect formed by the university “is one which takes a connected view of old and new, past and present, far and near” and is capable to attain “the knowledge, not only of things, but also of their mutual and true relations.”⁶⁹ And at the same time, in analogy to Mary, in whom extraordinary knowledge is unified with extraordinary holiness, Newman wishes the university premises to be at once “oracles of philosophy and shrines of devotion,” and, like the *Alma Mater*, to unite science and religion under one roof, so that the intellectual layman may become religious, and the devout ecclesiastic may become intellectual.⁷⁰

In conclusion, it can be argued that when Newman speaks of the university and education, it is as if he sees therein a re-presentation and continuation of Mary, which also explains why he entrusted the newly founded Catholic University of Dublin to the protection of the Virgin Mary as *Sedes Sapientiae* and wished that the central decoration of the university church he had built should also depict the Mother of the Lord under that title.

⁶⁸ See Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 144–45.

⁶⁹ Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 134.

⁷⁰ John H. Newman, “Intellect, the Instrument of Religious Training,” in *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions* (London: Burns and Lambert, 1857), 15.

Rejoice O Unwedded Bride!

Romanos the Melodist and His Hymns of the Virgin Mary

PETER COELHO-KOSTOLNY

Introduction

Our discussion will center upon the major extant Marian *kontakia* of Romanos the Melodist as well as the *Akathist* hymn which has been attributed to him. We will endeavor to present an account of Romanos' Marian spirituality as seen through the lens of these hymns, and we will also provide some context for their continued use in the modern day. Finally, we will discuss the hymn *Agni Parthene*. This hymn was written in the modern era, and it aligns closely with the style and performative nature of the *Akathist* hymn.

We will begin with a short summary of the tradition surrounding Romanos' identity, and we will also discuss the context within which the most well-known of his *kontakia*—the first *kontakion* of the Nativity—was written and performed. After this we will move on to discussions of the first *kontakion* of the Annunciation and the two *kontakia* of the Nativity. These will be listed according to their order within the life of Mary.

Then we will discuss the *Akathist* hymn and its modern-day counterpart, the *Agni Parthene*, which we have mentioned above. We will conclude with a general account of the spirituality which is evinced by the *kontakia* and the *Akathist*.

Romanos' Identity and Origin:

According to most sources Romanos was alive from the late 5th century until the middle of the 6th century A.D. Anecdotes from various sources identify him as a deacon of the Church in Constantinople who was regarded for his personal piety but not for his vocal talent. What is agreed upon is that he was assigned the responsibility for singing during the vigil liturgy of the Nativity in the church of Blachernae in

spite of his mediocre voice. The story goes that he stayed in the Church, implored the *Theotokos* to aid him, and fell asleep in the Church. While asleep he had a dream of the Blessed Virgin in which she came to him and handed him a scroll which she told him to eat. After this he awoke and proceeded to the liturgy. He received the blessing of the patriarch, vested in the proper garb of the principal cantor, and ascended the ambo to sing. The legend says that when he began to sing it was with a completely new and beautiful voice. The account also says that this is when he sang his most famous hymn on the Nativity. According to the legend the *kontakion* was directly inspired by the *Theotokos* through the dream and scroll which she gave Romanos to eat.

After this Romanos was said to have written a great number of *kontakia* on various scripture passages and subjects; there is disagreement between sources—and within them—concerning the exact number.¹ The most common claim is that Romanos wrote about a thousand hymns, but the veracity of this claim is difficult to verify as there are only between sixty and ninety which are still extant, and these cover the major events of the lives of Christ and Mary.²

As is mentioned by Mellas, the account of Romanos' dream and the eating of the scroll closely mirrors the story of the prophet Ezekiel in the third chapter of the eponymous book, as well as that of John the Evangelist in Revelations 10:8-9.³ This gives Romanos' preaching through song a pseudo-prophetic nature and provides a call narrative which echoes those of the Old Testament prophets. While the analogy of Romanos as the prophet of the *Theotokos* could conceivably be taken too far by an overzealous devotee—see the *Collyridian* heresy, for example—there seems to be no reason for excluding this identity in

¹ For instance, the Orthodox Wiki article on Roman the Melodist lists both 1000 and 8000 consecutively: https://orthodoxwiki.org/Roman_the_Melodist.

² Andrew Mellas. *Liturgy and the Emotions in Byzantium: Compunction and Hymnody*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 72.

³ *Ibid.*

our understanding of Romanos. After all, if the vocation of the prophet is to communicate the will of God, then one whose prophetic vocation came about through the intercession of Mary would be carrying this out *par excellence*.

If we understand Mary as both Mediatrix and Advocate with her spouse the Spirit, there is every reason to expect that she both could and would act according to the divine will in these matters. Therefore, the one who is called the “prophet of the *Theotokos*,” is not properly prophet of the *Theotokos*, but rather of her son as mediated through the Virgin.

The *Kontakia*

1. What is a *Kontakion*?

The *Kontakion* was originally a long hymn of up to thirty stanzas in which the Scriptures were elaborated upon in creative manner. The performance of these works occupied a similar place as the homily, and Romanos’ *kontakia* were often coupled with a refrain which the people would respond with, thereby engaging the congregation in the didactic action. Romanos’ first and most famous *kontakion* was the first *kontakion* of the Nativity, and its refrain was the phrase, “an infant now, yet God before all ages.” Thus, the singer is able to engage his audience with a central theme and message which they themselves learn through repeated singing. The antiphonal nature of the *kontakion* is also suited to that period in time when there was no such thing as a pew missal, and when it is entirely possible that a large portion of the congregation would have been illiterate.⁴

Today the *kontakion* has taken on a different role in the liturgy. Instead of being sung in its entirety as a type of homiletic performance, it has

⁴ For a discussion on the place of the *kontakion* during the time of Romanos, see Mellas’ ‘Romanos the Melodist,’ in *Liturgy and the Emotions in Byzantium: Compunction and Hymnody*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020) 71-77.

been abbreviated to one or two stanzas which serve as a type of antiphon within the context of the Divine Liturgy and the various Offices of the Byzantine Churches. The *kontakion* of the Nativity has been reduced in practice to only the *prooimion* which is the introductory verse to the entire hymn. We will see this reproduced when we discuss the individual *kontakia* later in this section.

Worthy of cursory note is the hymn known as a *kanon*. This is similar to the *kontakion* in some ways, but it is comprised of multiple types of antiphons and prayers in addition to the repetitive antiphonal structure by which the *kontakion* may be recognized. The *kanon* is still used today in its full form, and it may be seen in the performance of the Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete which occurs during Great Lent in the Eastern Churches.⁵

2. The Annunciation

Though there are two *kontakia* of the Annunciation we will focus only on the first for the purposes of this discussion. In the first *Kontakion* of the Annunciation we see Mary meeting the angel Gabriel in her house at Nazareth. Romanos has added details to the scene such as the inner thoughts of Gabriel regarding the virgin as well as providing context for the mission with which he has been entrusted. He sings, "...it is not only fitting for the general to salute the queen, but it is also possible for the humble to see her and address her."⁶ This echoes the concept of the queen mother which we find in the Old Testament, and it also brings the mother of God into a realm which the people of Constantinople could understand. At this time there was still an emperor, and it was a readily accessible concept that a queen—or in this case empress—could be lofty, though the concept of one who was also approachable would add to the motherly dimension of the Virgin.

⁵ For a more full treatment of this see Orthodox Wiki's article, "Canon (hymn)," [https://orthodoxwiki.org/Canon_\(hymn\)](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Canon_(hymn)).

⁶ Marjorie Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*. Vol. 2, *On Christian Life*. (Columbia, Missouri: University of Columbia Press, 1973) 9.

As it is impractical to reproduce the *kontakion* in full in this context, we will comment on three further points before moving on to the *kontakia* of the nativity: first, it is worthy of note that the refrain of this hymn is the phrase, “hail, virgin wife.”⁷ This juxtaposition of virginity with marriage is unusual to any ear, and it demonstrates what was foremost on Romanos’ mind when teaching of the Annunciation. The controversies regarding Christ’s divinity and humanity were fresh in the minds of everyone, and it was fitting that in addition to Mary’s role as *Theotokos* there should be emphasized her perpetual virginity and her miraculous maternity. Other hymns use a similar phrase—rejoice, o unwedded bride—which we shall later see is used in the *Akathist* hymn and which continues to be used by hymnographers into the modern age.

Our second observation regards Romanos’ use of the title, “Lover of man,” in the second strophe of the hymn. The full context of this is the line, “when the archangel of the heavenly host received the command of the Lover of man, he hastened to appear to the Virgin, as is written.”⁸ This title of our Lord appears today in the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in multiple doxologies throughout the Liturgy, and many would recognize it as referring to Our Lord: however, we will see in the *kontakion* of the Nativity that Mary is also referred to by this title.

Thirdly, we would be remiss if we did not note the words of Joseph in the fifteenth strophe where he says to the Virgin, “protect me and do not consume me!”⁹ Joseph is seeing the Virgin for the first time after her conception of Christ, and she is described by Romanos as shining with an otherworldly brilliance. In the presence of this great flame of purity and holiness Joseph petitions the Virgin to protect him and in so doing the concept of Mary as Advocate and Mediatrix shines

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Marjorie Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*. Vol. 2, *On Christian Life*. (Columbia, Missouri: University of Columbia Press, 1973) 15.

through Romanos' preaching. Even at this early stage in the Church's life there was an understanding of Mary as one whose role is to protect and who holds the power to do so through her divine maternity and espousal.

3. The *Kontakia* of the Nativity

A. On the Nativity I

In the first of these two *Kontakia* the refrain is the phrase, "an infant now, yet God before all ages."¹⁰ This is apropos as the first *kontakion* tells of the birth of Christ, the visit of the Magi, and the decision to flee to Egypt. According to the legend of Romanos this is the hymn which the Blessed Virgin inspired on that night when Romanos first received his gift of song. While this is not a guarantor of its total orthodoxy or accuracy, it in some way lends the voice of the Virgin to its narrative. The introductory verse of the hymn is that which is still sung in the liturgy of the Nativity, and its full text is as follows:

Today the Virgin gives birth to the supersubstantial
one.

Earth offers a cave to the unapproachable one.

Angels and shepherds join in a hymn of glory,

As the Magi are guided on their trek by a star.

On our behalf there has been born

An infant now, yet God before all ages.¹¹

Included in the themes of the hymn are Edenic redemption and Davidic covenant fulfillment, but more than that we see several themes regarding the Virgin and her role. First among these themes is that of the Virgin Mother. The second stanza of the hymn begins with the dramatic pronouncement, "the Father of his mother willingly became

¹⁰ R.J. Schork. *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995) 51.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

her Son.”¹² Mary is the *Theotokos*. This is not open for doubt or debate, and Romanos is not shy about teaching all people about this truth. The dialogue in this same stanza between Mother and Son further cements this:

My Son, how was your seed sown in me, how did it
grow within me?

I gaze at you, Lord of mercy, and I am thunderstruck;
Though never a bride, I have become your nurse.

...

I know that the seal of my virginity is still unbroken.
You protected it, cherished it, and were born...¹³

As she prays to her infant Son we see an affirmation of her maternity but also of her perpetual virginity. Christ himself is said to have guarded it and preserved it. These few lines manage to communicate a threefold reality: Mary is the Mother of God; Mary is not herself God, but has given birth to God; and, finally, Mary was a virgin before and after her conception of Christ, and she remains so even after his birth. Over and above these three, the repeated refrain reminds us that God indeed became man according to the flesh while remaining, “God before all ages.” Worthy of remark as well is the humility shown in the next stanza when the Virgin recalls that even though she is the Mother of the Redeemer she “does not even own this stable.” Christ has been born into utter humility, and his Mother is of the poorest.

With the arrival of the Magi in the next few stanzas we see this poverty come to a miraculous end, and we see another role of Mary come forth: that of the Queen Mother who mediates between the people and her Son the king. The Magi have come to the stable asking after the newborn king, and Mary receives them while in dialogue with her Son. The infant Christ tells Mary, “welcome those whom I have guided with my word; my word has shone on those who search for me...the star

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid

escorted the Magi here, acting as my deacon.”¹⁴ Later in the same stanza Christ says that he is in the Magi just as he is in the arms of the Virgin. In this we see a foreshadowing of the maternity of the Virgin as it applies to the Church. Mary is the Mother of the brothers of her Son, and inasmuch as they have been incorporated into his Mystical Body they are in him and he is in them.

Mary’s queenship is further evinced when the Magi question the presence of Joseph in the same house as Mary, since she is said to have virginally conceived Christ. Her response is telling, for she says that she keeps Joseph in *her house* in order to refute would-be slanderers, for Joseph can attest to the divine and virginal conception of her Son. It is her house, not Joseph’s.

Furthermore, Mary is said to “ratify” the words of the Magi as they tell her of their journey to find the newborn king, and she accepts gifts on behalf of her Son when the Magi present them. The words of the Magi to the infant Christ regarding the gifts that they have brought are eloquent. They say, “do not reject them as you did the offerings of Cain, but take them in your arms like the sacrifice of Abel, through the intercession of your Mother, who bore you for us, an infant now, yet God before all ages.”¹⁵

Here Mary’s role as mediator to Christ is clear. What the wise men desire to offer to her Son they place into the hands of Mary to convey it to the one who is indeed, “God before all ages.” What is no less wondrous is Romanos’ portrayal of the Mother’s own prayer to the Son who lies in her arms. She makes a petition that Christ may be reconciled to the whole of creation through her. What greater display of Mary’s role as mediatrix than that could be had? Mary asks that the Son be reconciled to the world through her who bore him.

¹⁴ Ibid, 53

¹⁵ R.J. Schork. *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995) 58.

The rest of the Virgin's prayer spans two stanzas and, though long, is worth reproducing in its fullness, so we will do so below:

I am not merely your mother, most merciful Savior,
nor by chance do I nurse the one who supplies my
milk; but I beg on behalf of every man.

You made me the watchword and the boast of the
human race,

The entire universe has me as a mighty fortress, its
rampart, its foundation.

Those who have been exiled from the pleasures of
Paradise look to me, because I direct them how to
comprehend all things through me, the Mother of **an
infant now, yet God before all ages.**

Savior, save the world. This is why you came here.
Establish your kingdom.

This is why you have shed your light on me and the
Magi and all your creatures.

See, those kings to whom you showed the light of your
face fall before you and offer gifts, magnificent,
beautiful, avidly desired.

I shall use these gifts, since I am destined to flee to
Egypt with you, because of you.

Guide me, my Son, my Creator, my Redeemer, **an
infant now, yet God before all ages.**¹⁶

The titles of Mary which are applied by Romanos are enough to make the more Mariologically squeamish squirm: watchword and boast of the human race; mighty fortress; rampart and foundation. These are not the attributions of a Marian minimalist. Finally, the attribution that all fallen man looks to her for understanding echoes the title Seat of Wisdom. Mary is Queen, Mother, Virgin, Mediatrix, and Advocate in this *Kontakion*. A more evocative account of Mary's relationship with

¹⁶ Ibid, 58-59

her Son could not be hoped for in such a brief account, save for the Gospels themselves.

B. On the Nativity II

The second Nativity *kontakion* is somewhat different in that it enters into an inner prayerful dialogue between the virgin and the infant Christ. In this hymn great emphasis is placed upon the intercessory power of Mary in her role as Advocate as well as her mediative action as Mediatrix. The scene described is that of Mary kneeling beside the manger and engaging in interior dialogue with the persons of Adam and Eve while they languish.

Mary acknowledges her own quality of virginity, and she also recognizes her impeccability in being “full of grace.” In fact, the phrase “Mary, full of grace,” is the refrain for this *kontakion*. Her plenitude of grace becomes the watchword of the entire dialogue and the reason for the effectiveness of her prayers.

Further, she then acknowledges her position as queen saying, “...I rule over the whole world, since, bearing Thy power in my womb, I am sovereign over all. Thou hast transformed my worthlessness by Thy condescension.”¹⁷ This self-acknowledgement is paired with the words of Eve when she says, “[Mary’s] voice alone has released me from my torment. Her childbirth has wounded the one who wounded me.”¹⁸ Mary has become for Eve the cause of her salvation, though this was accomplished solely through her divine maternity.

After Eve awakes she attempts to rouse Adam, announcing to him the salvific work which the Virgin has accomplished through her offspring. Eve petitions Adam saying, “come, follow me to Mary and with me cling to her immaculate feet, and she will at once be moved to pity.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Marjorie Carpenter. *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*. Vol. 1, *On the Person of Christ*. (Columbia, Missouri: University of Columbia Press, 1970) 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 17.

Adam's final reply is long, but his final statement is striking, for he says, "I advance to her who causes the fruit of our life to grow."²⁰ As the first woman gave the fruit to Adam which caused the downfall of humanity, so the first woman of the new creation wrought in Christ causes the saving food of Christ to grow in her womb by her *fiat*. Mary is indeed Cause of Joy for our first parents, and she is also Advocate, interceding for them as she kneels beside the infant Christ. Moreover, she is the Mediatrix between man and Christ for the sake of the brothers of her Son.

Mary's mediation is made inescapably present when she says, "I shall become mediator for you in the presence of my Son,"²¹ and again, "accept me as your mediator in the presence of my son."²² What is said next is extraordinary, and it bespeaks an honor for the Virgin which is heretofore unparalleled in our discussion. Romanos narrates the approach of Mary to the manger of her Son saying, "with these words, Mary as *lover of mankind* cheers Eve and her husband."²³ As we mentioned earlier, the phrase, "lover of mankind," regularly appears in reference to Our Lord during the Divine Liturgy and in other places, and its use to describe the Virgin is exceptional. While many centuries before Saint John Eudes and his work on the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, this may be seen as an early precursor to that theology and indicative of the union between Mary and her Son which was understood even from this very early age of the Church.

Lastly, we would be completely remiss if we did not call attention to the exchange between the infant Christ and his Mother:

As soon as the immaculate one brought these petitions
to the God Lying in the cradle, at once he received
them

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Marjorie Carpenter. *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*. Vol. 1, *On the Person of Christ*. (Columbia, Missouri: University of Columbia Press, 1970) 18.

²² Ibid, 19.

²³ Ibid.

and subscribed to the writings of the prophets;
He says: “O mother, I save them because of thee and
through thee.
Had I not willed to save them, I should not have dwelt
in thee,
I should not have allowed my light to shine from thee,
And thou wouldst not have heard thyself called my
mother.²⁴

It does not seem too much to say that Mary’s actions reveal the will of the Father and of her Son. If we take as granted that Mary’s will is in complete union with that of her Son, then we must come to the conclusion that the actions of Mary are indicative of that which Christ desires to happen. Indeed, the above short exchange reveals this as a principle of the Virgin’s actions in the thought and preaching of Romanos.

The final cementing of this principle may be drawn from the sixteenth strophe of the hymn, when Christ says to his mother, “I shall let thee know, O Mary, what I intend to do.”²⁵ What follows this declaration is a complete accounting of his destiny as suffering savior. He tells her of his coming passion and death, and when she entreats him not to allow himself to be crushed, he simply replies that his death ought to be considered a sleep from which he will wake after three days. The implication that Mary knew beforehand of both Christ’s death and his resurrection on the third day is powerful, and it brings to mind as well the pious tradition that Mary was the first to see Christ after his resurrection. Romanos himself supports this in his *kontakion* regarding Mary at the Cross.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Marjorie Carpenter. *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*. Vol. 1, *On the Person of Christ*. (Columbia, Missouri: University of Columbia Press, 1970) 20.

²⁶ Ibid, 201.

The *Akathist* Hymn & the *Agni Parthene*

The word *Akathist* translates as “unseated” or “standing,” and this informs the custom surrounding its usage: when an *Akathist* is prayed the congregation stands throughout the prayer service. This is similar to the practice surrounding the celebration of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete which we mentioned earlier. It should be here noted that scholars disagree on the authorship of the hymn known as the “Akathist to the Mother of God.” While it shares many similarities with the rest of Romanos’ work, there is not a definitively attributable manuscript. Though the wider community recognizes that it is likely written by him, most scholars refuse to claim his absolute authorship, and they instead note the similarities while including it in collections of Romanos’ works. For the purposes of this discussion we will attribute authorship to Romanos, and brave whatever scholarly disagreement may come as a result.²⁷

There are different *Akathist* hymns, though the most well-known is the *Akathist* of Romanos which was written to honor the *Theotokos*. Similar hymns exist which are directed to various other persons, both saintly and divine, and there are even other *Akathist* hymns to the Virgin.

Although the *Akathist* hymn of Romanos is itself considered a *kontakion* in style, it seemed appropriate to consider it separately from the preceding *kontakia* on account of its petitionary character. In many respects the structure of the hymn mirrors the rhythm of a western litany, with its repeated “hail” acclamation and its multitude of titles. Indeed, in that respect it aligns closely with the Litany of Loreto as a praise of Our Lady.

In its original Greek the hymn of Romanos follows an acrostic pattern with the capital of each of the twenty-four stanzas. Thus, the Greek

²⁷ For a more full discussion of this, see R.J. Schork. *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), and Marjorie Carpenter. *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*. Vol. 2, *On Christian Life*. (Columbia, Missouri: University of Columbia Press, 1973).

alphabet of Alpha through Omega is represented in order across the hymn. Schork notes that the litany-like praises of the hymn earned it an earlier title of “the Salutations (*chairestismoι*) of the Mother of God.”²⁸ He notes in the same place that the *akathistos* title is a latter derivation based upon the liturgical practice of standing, hence our earlier commentary. He further notes that this *Akathist* is still chanted today on the fifth Saturday of Great Lent which is its own special feast day.²⁹

As the entire hymn is twenty-four stanzas it is far too long to perform a detailed analysis within the context of this discussion. We will instead focus on a select number of the “hail” acclamations which are made throughout the hymn. It is also worthwhile to note two of the stanzas: the second introductory stanza in its entirety, as it is understood to be a late interpolation, and the twenty-fourth stanza since it is reminiscent of the *Sub Tuum* in its petitions. In light of this similarity we will produce all three below in parallel.

<i>Koukoulion II</i>	<i>Akathist</i> Hymn, 24 th stanza	<i>Sub Tuum Praesidium</i>
Mother of God, Constantinople chants its thanks to you in a victory paean. You are my champion, my commander. You have rescued me from the terrors of the siege. Now since you possess unassailable power, free me from every sort of peril, so that I can cry out to you: “Hail, unwedded bride!” ³⁰	O Mother praised in every hymn, you gave birth to the Word who dwells in every Holy of Holies. Receive this offering of our song, Rescue us from every misfortune, and save from punishment to come those who cry to you “Alleluia!”	We fly to thy protection, O Holy Mother of God; Do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.

²⁸ R.J. Schork *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995) 207.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 208.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 209-210.

The second introductory stanza—referred to by Schork as *koukoulion II*—was added in commemoration of the miraculous deliverance of Constantinople from the siege of 626, and it evokes much the same confidence in the power of the Virgin as do Romanos’ earlier hymns. The last stanza of the hymn is similarly confident, with trust that the virgin can and will save her children from whatever danger assails them. The *Sub Tuum* is the most concise of the three petitions, yet it still manages to convey the same confidence and trust. What is singularly fascinating is that the three prayers become progressively longer and more elaborate in order of the time in which they were written. The *Sub Tuum* is widely recognized as being from the 3rd century A.D. at the latest,³¹ and the scholarly agreement that *koukoulion II* was a later addition shows that the final stanza of the hymn was written in between the other two prayers. This gradual lengthening of the prayers is not simply a case of using more words to communicate nothing more, but it shows an increasing devotion to the Virgin under ever-increasing titles and patronages.

Finally, let us consider several of the titles which are applied to the Virgin throughout the hymn. Many are reminiscent of the Litanies of the Western Church, as has been noted above, and they show again the same depth of trust in, and love for, the *Theotokos* which has been evident throughout our exploration of Romanos’ work. The titles are:

- Compendium of the teachings of the Lord; fold open to all the human flock;
- woman who unlocked the gates of paradise;
- silent voice of all God’s messengers;
- invincible courage of all God’s champions;
- unshaken pillar of our faith;
- undimmed beacon of our charity;
- hope of eternal happiness;
- you enlighten many with knowledge;
- harbor of those who have finished life’s voyage;

³¹ Henri de Villiers. “The Sub Tuum Praesidium.” *New Liturgical Movement* (blog). (February 3, 2011).

-true bastion of all virgins, Virgin Mother of God, you protect everyone who comes to you;
-supplier of divine goodness;
-you link all the faithful to God; -just as she kindled the immaterial light, so she guides everyone to God-like understanding.³²

Needless to say, there is nothing shy or retiring about the vision of the Mother of God which the author had.

The Virgin is here portrayed as a conquering army set in terrible array and as a firm foundation upon which may rest all of the trust of the people of God. There is no mistaking the underlying faith in Christ which the author had: no case of Mariolotry has occurred here. Rather, Romanos is telling forth the place of honor which the Virgin occupies as the Mother of God and Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

While the *Agni Parthene* is neither of the same scope nor in the same style as the *Akathist* of Romanos, it shares a common element: the petition at the end of every line is the same as that which closes each stanza of the *Akathist*: Rejoice, O unwedded bride! Furthermore, the *Agni Parthene* as a hymn is almost exactly in parallel with the litanies of the Western Church, with each couplet of praises being followed by the acclamation, whereas the *Akathist* has stanzas comprised of several praises which end with the acclamation “rejoice...” Finally, the closing petition of the *Agni Parthene* is not a contiguous prayer, but is broken up by the repeated ejaculation, “rejoice...” If we take the final prayer as a unit without the acclamations, we see this petition:

I supplicate Thee, Lady, I humbly call upon Thee;
O Queen of all, I beg Thee to grant me Thy favor.
O spotless and most honored Maid; O Lady all-holy,
I call upon Thee fervently, Thou temple most holy.
O Thou my help, deliver me from harm and all
adversity,
And by Thy prayers show me to be an heir of
immortality.

³² R.J. Schork *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995) 211-218.

Although this is greatly similar to the prayers which we looked at above, and it follows the manner of Romanos, this hymn was written approximately 1300 years after the death of Romanos. There is an obvious continuity in the hymnography, yet there is a crucial difference: the *Agni Parthene* is not a liturgical hymn, but rather a devotional one, and it is therefore not for use within the context of Divine Liturgy. Regardless of this difference, we can clearly see that the faith which was fired in the heart of Romanos over a thousand years ago is still burning brightly within the hearts and minds of those who have received his patrimony.

Conclusion

It is perhaps an understatement to say that Romanos the Melodist was simply devoted to the Mother of God. If the legend is true as it has been passed down to us, then he occupied a privileged place among the ranks of those who have received direct locutions from the Virgin and who have been hand-selected by her to further her will in the world. By extension, this furthers the will of the Only Begotten, for there is nothing that the Mother wills which was not first willed by her Son.

The *Kontakia* are clearly the works of a man who is totally in love with Mary. Mary gave him the gift of song, and he used that gift to proclaim the salvation wrought by her Son, which includes understanding and communicating the place of Mary herself in this economy. While not every one of the *kontakia* is about the Virgin and her life, those which are show the deep trusting devotion which he proclaimed for her.

His words recognize her as mother, mediator, advocate, boast of our race, the one through whom salvation has come, helper in distress, sovereign queen, and others which we have discussed above.

Augustine is famously quoted as saying that he who sings well prays twice, and it seems that such an attitude is apt here, but so is the analogy of a lover who writes poetry for his beloved. Romanos certainly did that for our Lady. Likewise we should recognize that the

Virgin's gift of song to Romanos was itself the beginning of a love poem by Mary for all of her children.

It is the author's opinion that we ought to understand the spirituality present in Romanos' work as one which seeks to interpret Mary's gift of song as love poem for her Son, about her Son, and in proof of her love for us.

The Blessed Virgin Mary & God the Father

MAXWELL OSWALT

Introduction

The Blessed Virgin Mary is often said to have a particular relationship with each member of the Holy Trinity: she is the mother of the Son, the spouse of the Spirit, and the daughter of the Father.¹ However, it would be inappropriate to call her either the Mother of the Son or the Spouse of the Spirit before the Incarnation, even though she was chosen for those roles beforehand. She was not yet mother, but would be; not yet overshadowed by the Spirit, but would be; but since her conception she was the Daughter of the Father. It is her oldest role, in a sense. As a daughter prepares for her wedding day, she is not yet spouse or mother, but she is daughter. It would be inappropriate (aberrant, really) were either of these true before the latter. Mary as Daughter of the Father has a certain primacy, then, that is not often noted. While the first two have received much laudable attention and study, little has been said of the third. It therefore begs the question - what is Mary's relationship with God the Father? That of a father to His daughter seems most immediately appropriate, naturally, though it could hardly be all. In fact, much has been left utterly undeveloped in this regard. Oftentimes it almost seems as if Mary is chalked up to being the daughter of the Father as an afterthought. I will therefore be attempting to fill this gap inasmuch as I am able; may God grant me the grace to do so well.

Before getting into these musings proper, however, two notes. Firstly, when speaking of anything Trinitarian, it is very easy to speak of things that also apply, properly or secondarily (or tertiarily, for that matter), to other persons of the Holy Trinity. There is, due to the nature of the Trinity, a necessary overlap that will take place, and this is as it should

¹ For example, Carrie Gress, *The Marian Option* (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2017), divides her book in this way.

be - nor is it surprising. Regardless, it ought to be noted. Secondly, while I of course seek to remain within the bounds of truth, I ask that the reader remember that this is very much an exploratory exercise. With that being said, I would like to put forward my preliminary assessment of the relationship between the Father and His masterpiece. It seems that the Father gives the Blessed Virgin most of her special and very unique roles in salvation history. At minimum, it would seem that He is the ‘role-giver’ of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Scripture

It is appropriate to begin with Scripture, which gives a critical insight into how Mary identifies herself in relation to the Father. Mary, in her beautiful *Fiat* in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:38)², uses the word ‘*doula*,’ or in Latin, ‘*ancilla*.’ Thus the Angelus prayer says: “*ecce ancilla domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*” This word is usually translated as ‘handmaid,’ however the Greek ‘*doula*’ translates as “female servant or slave.”³ Mary is saying that she is ‘the slave girl’ of the Lord. Of course, she says this to signify her total and perfect obedience to the will of the Father, as that of a slave to her master. This obedience is certainly the hallmark of her relationship with the Father. Would it be appropriate, then, to define their relationship as that of a Master and a slave? It does not seem right to do so considering the fact that this seems to indicate a passivity and lack of free will. Yet it is not impossible to willingly and actively be a slave, and Mary herself uses the term. The Virgin was showing her total and obedient submission to the Father - not because she was pressured or forced, but out of love for Him. So in that sense, she could be called His slave. One thing that can clearly be said - and indeed, requires little defense - is that their relationship is characterized by Mary’s obedience. Saint Irenaeus famously said that “the knot of Eve’s obedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through

² This and all other Scriptural references utilize the Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition translation unless otherwise noted.

³ Pablo Gadenz, *The Gospel of Luke*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 45.

unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith.”⁴ This also fits nicely with the ‘role-giver’ relation with the Father, showing Mary’s reception and carrying out of the roles she is given. Therefore, one might appropriately narrow ‘role-giver’ further by saying that God the Father is the Master and Mary His willing and free slave.

Moving from the Fiat to the *Magnificat*, it can be seen that Mary gives further insight into the matter. The prayer itself is to the Father — this can be seen in the terminology the Blessed Virgin uses, such as he who is mighty, (Luke 1:49) as well as in the myriad Old Testament references she makes. Among the latter, the promise to Abraham (Luke 1:55) stands out as the most overt, but the way it parallels the Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10) is also clear. This incredibly rich prayer is full of Marian truths; I wish only to consider a few sections here.

“*My soul magnifies the Lord*” (Luke 1:46) - what does it mean to magnify the Lord? To be such that the Lord can be easily seen in her? This would follow from her total obedience. A similar phenomenon can be commonly seen when someone acts as their parent would - their parent can be seen in them. This is only possible because Mary is so aligned with the will of the Father. “*My spirit rejoices in God my savior*” (v. 47) - While it seems that to be called ‘savior’ is proper to God the Son, and certainly Mary’s spirit would rejoice in Him, it is interesting to note that she did not specify her Son within her womb. She seems to be referring to the Father. In fact, the next line seems to confirm this: “*For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden,*” (v. 48) - It is no coincidence that Mary refers to herself as His handmaid once again. Already she has referenced her own words - she is the lowly ‘*doula*’ of the Father.

Here she clearly intended to show her subordinate obedience to the Lord, in giving her assent to His will and accepting the role He gave her through the Holy Spirit - to be the Mother of God. “*For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name*” (v. 50) - The roles that the Father has given the Holy Mother are ‘great things,’ and could

⁴ *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus, Trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.)
<<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103322.htm>>.

even be said to have a gift character. It is the great things that He has done for her in giving her the role of Mother of God, and all else that flows from that - including Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate - that cause her to praise God the Father. Saint Thomas Aquinas says that it is Mary's role as Mother of God that forms the foundation of all other Marian prerogatives.⁵ Consequently, it can be said that the Father gave the Blessed Virgin all of her roles and privileges.

'Daughter of the Father'

We look now to the phrase 'daughter of the Father.' While true, this assessment of her relationship with the Father has always seemed lackluster to me. She has a very particular and unique relationship with the Son and the Spirit, ought not she have such a relationship with the Father? Certainly it is not arguable that 'daughter of the Father' applies to Mary, especially when to be a child of God is understood simply as a human being and thus created by God. More still, she is the crown jewel of all of creation, so it would seem appropriate not only to refer to her as 'daughter of the Father,' but *'the Daughter of the Father.'*

Yet another way of understanding the concept of being the son or daughter of the Father is that we all become children of God upon our baptism (cf. Ephesians 1:5 - 14). One might question, however, if Mary were baptized at all - given her Immaculate Conception, it would seem unnecessary. It is a simple matter, however, to see that it is entirely possible that she would have done so. For one thing, she followed her Son in all things; certainly it was not necessary for the forgiveness of sins for Christ to be baptized by John in the Jordan, but Aquinas tells us that He did this so that we would imitate Him, and so that He would do everything that He commanded us to do: "He wished to be baptized, as Augustine says in a sermon on the Epiphany (cxxxvi), *because He wished to do what He had commanded all to do.* And this is what He means by saying: *So it becometh us to fulfill all justice* (Matt 3:15)."⁶

⁵ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fr. Laurence Shapcote, O.P. (Lander, Wyoming: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), Ia, Q. 25, a.6.

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIIa, q. 39, a. 1.

Mary always follows her Son's example. One of her few spoken lines in Scripture is "Do whatever He tells you," (John 2:5). Always she is the first to do exactly that - and always she leads us to do the same. If she is asking it of others, she doubtless has done so herself. Again, it simply seems a fitting thing that she was baptized into the Church that she and her Son brought forth on Calvary.

One could perhaps argue that the grace of the Immaculate Conception was baptismal, or that Mary was, in a way, baptized at the moment of her conception. However, this does not seem to be so - it would imply that original sin stained her, even if it were healed as it took root. To call the grace of the Immaculate Conception baptismal would seem to indicate, given the fundamental regenerative grace of baptism, that there was some lack or damage that needed to be restored. Perhaps it is possible that the sacramental graces could be applied absent this need, but it does not seem fitting to me at the time of conception.

Perhaps in adulthood, for then it could serve as an example to follow, but such a thing at the moment of conception does not give such a sign. Rather, it seems that she received a particular grace of protection from original sin, not that it was baptismal. In other words, it would seem to me that the graces of the Cross applied to Mary at her conception were not baptismal graces, but particular graces that protected her from any stain of original sin. This is relevant because it is one of Mary's particular graces - a Marian prerogative. Thus, it is rooted (in this case, not chronologically) in her role as the Mother of God. She was protected by the Father from original sin in order that she may be able to fulfill her roles that He gives her, or that she be most fitting for these roles. Due to her meriting thus, it might be said that Mary is "The *Favored* Daughter of the Father," however we will examine her merit later.

A further point on this matter is that Mary is already a daughter of the Father in a most profound way even if she were not baptized by water into the Church. By her Immaculate Conception and thus protection from the stain of original sin, she did not have to be adopted as the

rest of us were. This is so because before the Fall, Adam was clearly treated as a Son of God, which means his children would be children of God (cf. Luke 3:38). Yet the Fall fractured this, and all of us sinned through Adam, and needed to be redeemed since the stain of original sin clung to us (cf. Romans 5:12). This is why it is said that we are adopted sons and daughters of God. Mary, however, through an application of the graces of the Cross at the moment of her conception, was protected from this stain. Therefore it follows that she would not be an adopted daughter, but a legitimate daughter, in the same way that Eve was before the Fall. This, too, points to her being a particular daughter of the Father, distinct from the rest. Her preeminent role among men and her freedom from sin would accord her this dignity.

Spouse of the Father

This is an opportune time to note that there are some who have written about Mary's relationship with the Father, and one of these few is Rupert of Deutz. His assessment is not the relationship of a daughter and father, but as a bride and bridegroom. It isn't hard to see how this is true in a sense: Mary is the Mother of the Father's only-begotten Son, therefore she is the Spouse of the Father. However, he shows this in a more particular, nuanced, and beautiful way. He says this based on how God so often referred to the Israelites as His spouse in the Old Testament:

The Blessed Virgin Mary was the Bride of God the Father, and before all ages he had decided to bring about in her the reason why, in the Scriptures, he called the Church of the [Jewish] people his wife. That is, he had decided that his Word...should take flesh in the womb of this Blessed Virgin.⁷

⁷ Luigi Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 128.

In other words, Mary, as the “best part of the first [Israelite] Church,” is the spouse of the Father because all of Israel was His spouse.⁸ The best of Israel thus merited to receive the promised savior, the Son of God and God Himself. Mary therefore was spouse to the Father in a very particular way, such that no other can claim. Put in even simpler terms, Israel, the oft-unfaithful spouse of God the Father, gave birth (through the faithfulness and merit of their crown jewel, Mary) to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mary, representing Israel, is the Mother of God the Son, whose Father is God the Father. Therefore, Mary is spouse to God the Father. More than just representing all of Israel, however, Rupert of Deutz takes it a step further, saying that Mary is “the reason why” God called the Israelites His spouse - because from them would be incarnated His only Son *in the womb of Mary*.⁹ Thus, Rupert is claiming that Mary, set aside from “before all ages,” is what all of the nuptial imagery of the Old Testament between the people of Israel and God the Father is pointing towards.¹⁰ This is not an absolute — certainly one cannot attribute the infidelity of Israel to Our Lady. Yet that is exactly why she, the most faithful and greatest of Israel, is the one who is most aptly called the Spouse of the Father.

This is not contrary to the original and classic assessment of Mary as the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Rupert goes on: “the same Holy Spirit who accomplished the Incarnation of the only begotten Son of God in her womb...would accomplish the rebirth of many sons of God from the womb of the Church.”¹¹ Clearly, he does not intend to deny that Mary is the spouse of the Holy Spirit insofar as it was by the Holy Spirit that she conceived the Son, rather he is showing how God gave Mary a particular role set apart from all of the chosen people, namely to be His Spouse and so bring His Son into the world. He also notes that her task attached to this role is to “be the image of the younger [Christian] Church,” which is the Bride of her Son. She is the model of the Church, because she brought Christ into the world - what the Church is called to do. Note, too, how well this fits with Mary as the

⁸ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 129.

⁹ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 128.

¹⁰ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 128.

¹¹ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 129.

Mother of the Church and Mother of the faithful - as the Church is the Bride of Christ, so Mary, as the Mother of Christ, is Mother of her Son's bride. She serves as a motherly example for her daughter. Again, God the Father gave the Blessed Virgin this role.

Through the Role of Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate

Another aspect to look at Mary's relation to the Father is through her relation to the Son. Jesus Christ is "the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). This clearly does not exclude subordinate mediators (as Saint Thomas Aquinas shows)¹², of which the Blessed Virgin is greatest. Thus, she holds the title 'Mediatrix.' What does this have to do with the Father, specifically between Mary and the Father? It is another role given to her by the Father. "The Father elected Mary from among all women to be the Coredeptrix with the Redeemer."¹³ In giving Mary the role of *Mater Dei*, the Father also tasked her with other things, if not specifically than at least secondarily. In this case, Mary takes the role of the Mother of the King of Heaven and Earth, Christ. The mother of the king, in the history of Israel, is known as the *Gebirah*, who was held in great esteem, and had great political sway.¹⁴ This can be seen in the case of Bathsheba, the Queen Mother of Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 2:13 - 25). As seen at the Wedding at Cana, the Mother of Christ mediated a miracle on behalf of the newlyweds, His first public miracle. Thus, she also mediated the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. She mediates our needs to the Son in accordance with the will of the Father - for it is He who gave her this task when He chose her to be the Mother of God.

Saint Louis de Montfort, in his great work *True Devotion to Mary*, describes the Blessed Mother's relation to God the Father in these terms:

¹² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 26, a.1.

¹³ Mark Miravalle, *Mary: Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate* (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1993), 8.

¹⁴ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 58.

[The womb of Mary] is the throne of His glory for His Father, because it is in Mary that Jesus Christ has calmed His Father, irritated against men, and that...He has given Him more glory than ever the sacrifices of the Ancient Law could do, and He gives Him now an infinite glory, which He never could have received from man.¹⁵

He describes her as the mediatrix of God's glory, specifically God's glory in the Son. There is a further facet of this notion that relates to Calvary, where our Redemption took place. Mary, having mediated God's glory in the Son at the Incarnation, went on to play her unique role in the Redemption as Co-redemptrix. Arnold of Bonneval says that she "immolates herself to Christ in her spirit and begs God for the salvation of the world; the Son obtains the salvation of the world, and the Father refrains from punishment."¹⁶ This notion is reminiscent of how Michaelangelo sculpted the *Pieta*: the Blessed Virgin holds the Body of her Son as an offering. "It is as if there were two altars on Calvary; one in Mary's heart and the other in Christ's body."¹⁷ Mary offered Christ to the Father, in a way analogous to how priests today offer the oblation of Christ's Body and Blood every day in the mass. It is a distinctly priestly act. She offered up Christ on the Cross at Calvary along with Him, and she died in her heart alongside Him. An incredible and beautiful truth; worthy of many treatises. Yet let us here focus on how Mary offered Jesus, with Jesus, *to the Father*. Let us recall that Saint Thomas said that all of Mary's prerogatives have as their foundation her role as Mother of God - God, then, has also given her the role of Co-redemptrix, for what else can her offering be? God, when He 'chose her from before all ages' as Rupert of Deutz says, chose her not only to be His Spouse and to be the Mother of God - but in choosing her for these things, God the Father chose also for her to be Co-redemptrix with and subordinate to the Second Person of the Trinity, to which Mary willingly agreed at the Annunciation.

¹⁵ Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, trans. Fr. Frederick Faber, D.D. (Spring Grove PA: The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, 2019), 108.

¹⁶ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 150.

¹⁷ Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, 150.

Through Her Merits

Heretofore, that Mary merits her roles has been mentioned, but not explained. Considering the nature of merit, however, it is worth examining in order to glean some insight into another aspect of her relation with God the Father. Merit is not earning one's way into God's good graces or somehow buying heaven by one's acts. Merit, rather, increases our reward in heaven. God reached out to us first, we did nothing to earn it.¹⁸ This is true of the Blessed Mother, even with her Immaculate Conception. It has already been mentioned above that she was protected from original sin by the grace of the Cross applied to her conception. Salvation, then, still applies to her, though she has never been stained by sin in any way. "Merit is God giving an action a supernatural value."¹⁹ The Church can in some ways do this, as God gave her the power to do, such as with indulgences. Now Mary's merit was such that it was fitting that she receive her roles and privileges, and it was God the Father who gave these to her, but was it not also God who made her actions — especially her Fiat — meritorious? Some may object that this would impugn on Our Lady's free will, implying that her assent was somehow forced, but it is not so - even if God makes an act meritorious, He does not force it upon us. Even so with the Blessed Mother - her free will suffers no violence from her Fiat. One may also object that it would seem impossible for Mary to both be chosen from 'before all ages' and to merit her roles through her actions. I have a twofold response to this objection. First, if the graces of the Cross can be applied outside of the time of their happening, as they are all the time, but notably at Our Lady's conception, could not the same be done with merit, though in reverse? Could not Our Lady's merit have been applied from all time? Further, God did not force these roles and offices upon her; she was chosen, but she still had to accept. Therefore, Mary was shown great favor by the Father in that He chose her, but also in that, in the performance of her roles, she merited greatly in His eyes.

¹⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., (1997), n. 2007.

¹⁹ Mark Miravalle, THE 755, Mariology II, November 3, 2022.

As the Father's Masterpiece

This leads to the final aspect of Marian relation to the Father I wish to examine: Mary as the greatest creation of the Father. Mary is God the Father's masterpiece.²⁰ The only greater creation is Christ's Sacred Humanity. "In practical terms, this means that Mary experienced no internal conflict over her own will and God's will - they both are the same."²¹ The simple fact is that God the Father chose to work His will in the world through Mary, and He prepared her for this purpose not because He had to, but He desired to. "It is out of a superabundance of love that Mary was created."²² Salvation could have been done without her. It is a measure of God's love that He created her and gave her the many roles she has to the world in addition to His only begotten Son. God gave Himself *and* His greatest creation. The vessel of God's saving grace was filled with Jesus; it brimmed over with Mary.

Saint Albert the Great shows how "in strict justice, only Christ the Redeemer could pay the general debt that all humanity contracted in Adam. The saints, for their part, are able to offer only a particular collaboration on behalf of individual persons, because of their merits that are considered acceptable by God (*ex congruo*)."²³ However, Mary's merits - while being on the same level as the saints in that they are subordinate to those of Jesus - extend to "the whole process of human redemption."²⁴ This reflects Mary's role as Co-redemptrix, of course (Albert also notes that this is rooted in Mary's role as Mother of God), but it also expresses how she stands above the rest of creation.²⁵ God created her to be above the rest of humanity, then gave her to humanity to show His absolute abundance of love for man. Thus, God, out of love for man, masterfully prepared Mary to fulfill the roles that He

²⁰ Gress, *The Marian Option*, 118.

²¹ Gress, *The Marian Option*, 117.

²² Gress, *The Marian Option*, 118.

²³ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 228.

²⁴ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 229.

²⁵ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 229.

masterfully desired to give to her, and she - to the joy of all mankind - accepted these roles as only she could.

Conclusion

In summary, then, Mary's relation with the Father has many facets. Some of them, if taken too far or too literally, can easily be misconstrued by others, but each is true in such a way as to do no violence to any other. Therefore, it is possible to sum it up thusly: Mary, the most favored daughter of the Father, was prepared by the Father as His masterpiece to be His Spouse and the Mother of the Son — and so receive all of the roles, offices, and prerogatives that follow from these, including Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate — to which she gave her free and full consent as His “slave-girl” or humble servant. These are but a few of the many aspects of Mary's relation to the Father, and of each, the surface was merely scratched. The brevity of each treatment is a result of my own limitations, and certainly not due to any shallowness of the topic. It is my hope this will shed some small light on Mary's relation to the Father, as it can bring a whole new dimension to Marian understanding, one that can be very beneficial in understanding and knowing the Mother and her role in salvation.

Fatima and the Cultural Upheavals of the 1960s: the Reception of the Messages of Our Lady in the *North American Voice of Fatima*, 1962-1969

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The newspaper *North American Voice of Fatima*, from its foundation in 1962 through the end of 1969, applied the message of the Marian apparitions at Fatima to historical events occurring in the United States during this countercultural and revolutionary decade, focusing especially on three major themes in its news articles and editorials. The first theme is the anti-communist dimension of the message of Fatima, which was applied to the event of the Vietnam War. The second theme is the message of modesty from Saint Jacinta, as applied to the event of the Sexual Revolution, and the third theme is the message of the preservation of dogma, as applied to the situation of dissent and doctrinal and moral confusion in the Catholic church in the years following the Second Vatican Council. These themes are all interrelated, because they express the damage that a counterculture of secularism and moral relativism has created for the Catholic church and the attempt of its clergy, religious, and laity to live in holiness. The message of Fatima proposes reparation for this damage and promises a restoration under the reign of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Historical Context

Before exploring the three themes of this article, it is necessary to offer a brief historical description of the Marian apparitions in Fatima, and also to provide some historical background in regard to the newspaper *North American Voice of Fatima*. In the official account of the apparitions, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared six times to three shepherd children in the rural village of Fatima, Portugal, between May and October 1917. The children were the siblings Jacinta Marto (1910-1919) and Francisco Marto (1908-1919), both of whom died in childhood shortly after the apparitions concluded, and their older cousin Lucia dos Santos (1907-2005), who later entered the Discalced Carmelites as a cloistered nun. The central message of these apparitions was the urgent need for prayer for the conversion of

sinners, especially the daily recitation of the Rosary, for acts of penance in reparation for sin, and for devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.¹

The most famous of the apparitions occurred on July 13, 1917, when the Blessed Virgin Mary conveyed to the children three secrets. The first secret involved a vision of hell, which moved the children to commit themselves fully to acts of prayer and penance on behalf of sinners. In the second secret, the Blessed Virgin Mary stated that World War I was a punishment for the sins of mankind, and that the war would soon come to an end. However, she gave the dire warning that if humankind continued to sin, an even worse world war would break out, and that the nation of Russia would spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars, persecutions, the annihilation of various nations, and the martyrdom of many people. This part of the secret was widely interpreted as referring to the spread of atheistic communism by the Soviet Union, especially since the Bolshevik Revolution occurred in October 1917, the very same month as the final apparition at Fatima. The Blessed Virgin Mary also requested in the second secret that Russia should be consecrated by the pope to her Immaculate Heart, and that subsequently there would be a period of peace granted to the world. Sr. Lucia published these first two secrets in her memoirs in 1941, and as a result anti-communism became an integral part of the Fatima message, as we shall see in more detail in section one below.²

¹ For popular accounts of the apparitions of Fatima, see for example Joseph A. Pelletier, *The Sun Danced at Fatima* (New York: Doubleday, 1983) and John de Marchi, *The True Story of Fatima: a complete account of the Fatima apparitions* (Constable NY: The Fatima Center, 2009). Jacinta and Francisco Marto were officially canonized as saints in the Catholic Church by Pope Francis on May 13, 2017.

² A critical edition of Sr. Lucia's memoirs has recently been published as Lúcia de Jesus, *Memórias*, ed. Cristina Sobral (Santuário de Fatima, 2016). The most recent English-language translation of her memoirs is *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*, ed. Louis Kondor, trans. Dominican Nuns of Perpetual Rosary, 19th ed. (Fundação Francisco e Jacinta Marto, 2014). See Una M. Cadegan, "The Queen of Peace in the Shadow of War: Fatima and U.S. Anticommunism," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 22, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 1-16, for an account of the origin of

The third secret was written down by Sr. Lucia in 1944 and sent in a sealed envelope to the pope, with the instruction not to open the envelope until 1960. However, in 1960 Pope John XXIII announced to the world that the third secret would not be made public. This gave rise to much speculation and conspiracy theory about the content of the third secret, especially in the years following the Second Vatican Council. It was widely believed that the phrase that had been written by Sr. Lucia at the end of the second secret, “in Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved, etc.” was the beginning of the text of the third secret, as we shall discuss in more detail in section three below. The third secret was officially revealed by the Vatican in 2000, consisting of a vision of a pope being shot and killed, and numerous bishops, priests, religious, and lay faithful being martyred. This was interpreted as referring to the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II by a close-range gunshot on May 13, 1981 (the anniversary of the first apparition of Fatima), and as a prophetic vision of the numerous persecutions and martyrdoms of Christians that occurred during the twentieth century. Pope John Paul II himself interpreted his survival as due to the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima, and on May 13, 1984, he placed the bullet from the attempted assassination into the crown of the statue of Our Lady at the shrine in Fatima, as an act of thanksgiving.³

It is also necessary to provide some historical context regarding the *North American Voice of Fatima*. It was an English-language weekly newspaper founded in 1962, and published from the National Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, run by the Barnabites in Lewiston, New York. Its editor during the 1960s was Robert Francis Bergin (1914-1996), who lived in Brisbane, Australia and was the leader of the Blue Army in Australia. As part of his journalistic work, he traveled extensively to North America and other locations including Vietnam. Later in his life he founded the organization Fatima International, which published

anticommunist interpretations of the message of Fatima in the United States in the 1940s following the publication of Sr. Lucia's memoirs.

³ See the official account published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The message of Fatima* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice, 2000).

two of his books.⁴ The format of *North American Voice of Fatima* was generally four pages per week, with an occasional unnumbered four-page insert, printed on inexpensive newspaper. Its articles were written for a readership of devout English-speaking Catholics at a popular level. Despite its similar name, the newspaper had no affiliation with the Portuguese-language periodical *Voz da Fátima*, published by the Santuário de Fátima at the site of the Marian apparitions in Portugal. In terms of its political orientation, the *North American Voice of Fatima* typically expressed viewpoints that would now be associated with the center-right, due to its strong rejection of communism, and its emphasis on traditional dogma and sexual morality.

North American Voice of Fatima was not as widely read as *Soul*, a more slickly produced 24-page (later 32-page) bimonthly English-language magazine, published by the Blue Army of Fatima in Washington, New Jersey. The Blue Army of Fatima (now known as the World Apostolate of Fatima) was well-known for its embrace of the anti-communist message of Fatima, as seen by its name which deliberately contrasts with the Red Army of Soviet Russia. However, a review of the articles published by *Soul* during the time period of 1962-1969 shows that very few of them addressed the conflict in Vietnam, and most of those were simple news stories about religious events in Vietnam such as the Blue Army bringing the pilgrimage statue of Our Lady of Fatima there. Only four articles in *Soul* magazine in that time period analyzed the war in Vietnam from the standpoint of the spiritual and political struggle against atheistic communism, and two of those articles were authored by none other than Robert Bergin.⁵ This

⁴ Information about Robert F. Bergin was obtained from the following sources: sites.google.com/site/robertfbergin; R.F. Bergin, "Memories of Vietnam," *Soul* vol. 18, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1966): 3; Christopher Rengers, *The Youngest Prophet: The Life of Jacinta Marto, Fatima Visionary* (New York: Alba House, 1986), 142. Books published by R.F. Bergin by Fatima International include: *This apostolic age: a commentary on prophecies relating to these times and their portents* (Stoke-on-Robert: Voice of Fatima International, 1970), and *The triumphant third century, 1976-2076: authentic and reliable prophecies foreshadow a great victory over Communism and a brilliant future for America and all the world* (Hamilton: Ontario Fatima International, 1976).

⁵ See "How bad is communism in America?," *Soul* vol. 14, no. 5 (Sept. -Oct. 1962): 12-13; R.F. Bergin, "Memories of Vietnam," *Soul* vol. 18, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1966): 3,

comparison highlights the uniqueness of the perspective of *North American Voice of Fatima*, which I will refer to subsequently as “the paper.” The paper offers an excellent example of the interpretation of a Marian apparition and its application to countercultural historical events in North America during the 1960s.

I. “If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church.”⁶

These quoted words from the message of Our Lady of Fatima were prophetic, and when they were first communicated in July 13, 1917, very few could have predicted the Russian Revolution a few months later, and the subsequent spread of Marxist communism throughout the world through military battles, political coups, and ideological propaganda. The *North American Voice of Fatima* took a strongly anti-communist stance during the 1960s, and it is filled with straightforward political news stories about wars, peace talks, events happening behind the Iron or Bamboo Curtains, and even editorial speculations about

23; and R.F. Bergin, “Vietnam Report,” *Soul* vol. 18, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1966): 18-20; Joseph A. Breig, “How can the Vietnam War be ended?,” *Soul* vol. 19 [sic], no. 2 (Mar.-Apr. 1968): 3. In fact, the article “Vietnam Wonder,” in *Soul* vol. 19 [sic], no. 4 (July-Aug. 1968): 19, states that “[t]he Blue Army of Our Lady does not take sides” in regard to Americans who protest against the war, but rather prays all involved to be converted through the message of Fatima. Regarding the other themes of this article, from 1962-1969 *Soul* magazine published only five articles on modesty, and only one article on the relationship of post-Vatican II dissent to the message of Fatima, which again was written by R.F. Bergin, “Trojan Horse,” *Soul* vol. 19, no. 2 (Mar.-Apr. 1967): 7-8. There was only one article about the Third Secret, namely a reprint of an address by Cardinal Ottaviani on the subject, titled “What Happened to the 1960 secret?,” *Soul* vol. 18 [sic], no. 3 (May-June 1967): 3.

⁶ *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*, ed. Louis Kondor, trans. Dominican Nuns of Perpetual Rosary, 19th ed. (Fundação Francisco e Jacinta Marto, 2014), 124, see also 179. The original text from the Third Memoir reads: “Para a empedir, virei pedir a consagração da Rússia a meu Imaculado Coração e a Comunhão reparadora nos primeiros sábados. Se atenderem a meus pedidos a Rússia se converterá e teram páz, se não espalhará seus erros pelo mundo, promovendo guerras e presseguições á Igreja” from Lúcia de Jesus, *Memórias*, ed. Cristina Sobral (Santuário de Fatima, 2016), 186-87.

the hidden strategies and motivations of the Soviet Union or of Red China. However, we are interested here especially in those articles that give a religious interpretation of the Vietnam War in light of the spread of communism predicted by the message of Fatima.

The paper's primary objection to communism is that it imposes atheism, suppressing the truth about God and causing the loss of souls. In an article during its first year, the paper characterizes Marx as proposing "nothing less than war to the death against the very idea of God, a carefully thought out plan of dialectical materialism which would exclude God utterly from the world he created, which he loved with an infinite love, which he redeemed at the cost of his blood. Today the flag of atheistic communism flies over one third of the human race."⁷ Another article from the same year states that "[c]ommunism is based on the most grotesque of errors, the idea that there is no God. It is the heresy of heresies and as such destined to be destroyed by Mary Immaculate."⁸ Atheistic communism represents a turning away from God and thus towards Satan, for "there can be no neutrality."⁹ Indeed the paper frequently quotes Sr. Lucia who in 1946 stated that "the world would indeed be overrun by atheistic Communism unless men returned to God and did penance for their sins."¹⁰

The stark, even apocalyptic contrast between the two worldviews was clearly expressed in the following pithy quote:

⁷ "Background to the Fatima apparitions," *North American Voice of Fatima* 1, no. 2 (July 2, 1962): 3.

⁸ "The world hungers for sound doctrine," *North American Voice of Fatima* 1, no. 9 (Nov. 5, 1962): 3. In the same issue, in the article "The Cuban crisis," 1, we find the claim that "Every mortal sin helps the cause of Communism, every prayer, every act of penance helps the cause of freedom, the American cause."

⁹ "What do the prophecies say of this age?" *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1967): 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. See also "An incredible prophecy," *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1967): 1, which stated that "[i]t is difficult to understand, in the spiritual darkness of the sixties, what a sensational statement this appeared to those hushed journalists who were speaking to Lucia in the forties."

In 1917 two drives were launched for the dominion of the souls of men. One of these drives made its headquarters in Moscow, the other in Fatima. The drive led by Moscow wants men to abandon all belief in God and religion.... The drive led by Fatima wants men by prayer and penance to free themselves from the slavery of sin.... Mary, the Mother of God, is the Commander-in-Chief of the Fatima forces. Her symbol is hands joined in prayer. The men of the Kremlin are the Commanders-in-Chief of the Moscow forces. Their symbol is the clenched fist.¹¹

Therefore, the paper interpreted the Vietnam War in religious terms, stating that “Vietnam may well be the most crucial war in history. It is far more than a military confrontation. It has become a clash between two world ideologies, between two diametrically opposed visions of man.”¹² Vietnam was seen as a battle against “atheistic collaborators in all countries to subvert democracy and destroy our Christian civilization.”¹³ It was the “cockpit of the great ideological struggle, the hot front line where irreconcilable spiritual forces meet.... All who believe in God, should appreciate and identify the godless foe which threatens them.”¹⁴ The paper frequently exhorts its readers to view Vietnam primarily as the ground of a spiritual war that ultimately can be won through spiritual means. Because Our Lady of Fatima stated that “war is ‘a result of the sins of mankind’” and prophesied that “Russia would spread her errors throughout the world provoking wars and persecution,” it is only through prayer, penance, and reparation that the war will cease.¹⁵ Christians can participate in this spiritual war through their “sincere consecration to Our Lady, [their] resolution to

¹¹ “War famine persecutions: a few questions on the message of Fatima,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 5 (Mar. 15, 1968): 1.

¹² “The end of an era,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 21 (Nov. 30, 1968): 1.

¹³ R.F. Bergin, “News of the world: the nuclear pact,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 8 (Apr. 15, 1968): 1.

¹⁴ “Saigon seeks divine help,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 20 (Nov. 15, 1969): 1.

¹⁵ Gregory Pope, “Peace is the only alternative,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no.1 (Jan. 8, 1966): 3.

pray the Rosary, and [their] own self-discipline as reparation to God for the excesses and blasphemies of this age.”¹⁶ One of its articles compared this spiritual warfare with that of the Battle of Lepanto, stating that “every fervent Rosary, every Mass and Holy Communion strike at the powerful colossus of evil which dominates the world today.”¹⁷

While recognizing that the battle was primarily spiritual, the paper strongly supported the military struggle against communism on the battlefields of Vietnam, a country with many devout Catholics. For example, the paper assures “Catholic parents in America that their sons are serving and dying in Vietnam in an honorable cause, the cause in fact of Christ himself. For it is certain that, if the Communists were not resisted, they would overrun South Vietnam, burn and profane the churches, hinder the preaching of the Gospel and kill and persecute Christ’s anointed,” hence the soldiers who paid the supreme sacrifice there have not died in vain.¹⁸ The soldiers fighting in Vietnam “are, in reality, fighting the organized atheism of the world. They are fighting for man’s inalienable right to know, love and serve God.”¹⁹

Conversely, the moral decline occurring within the United States during the 1960s was seen as aiding the cause of communism. R.F. Bergin, the editor of the paper during this time period, characterized the United States as a great country which was succumbing to internal corruption and decay, leading to social anarchy, and that its moral confusion and turning away from God would cause its morale to

¹⁶ “Fatima and the future,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 10 (May 30, 1968): 3.

¹⁷ “The last great challenge: the light on the hill,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 7 (Apr. 15, 1967): 4.

¹⁸ “The report of Msgr. Pignedoli,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 21 (Nov. 21, 1966): 1.

¹⁹ R.F. Bergin, “Vietnam: past and future,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 6 (Mar. 30, 1968): 1.

collapse so that she abandons the war against communism in Vietnam.²⁰

The paper actively criticized those who opposed the war. For example, calling for withdrawal of troops “implies that America is completely in the wrong in Vietnam, and by inference that the Communists are right... [i]t implies that Americans are aggressors in Vietnam, when in fact they are dying for the right of self-determination for the Vietnamese people with nothing to gain for themselves.”²¹ The paper occasionally suggested that opposition to the war was the result of left-wing secular propaganda within the West. Bergin states that the American people “have been confused and divided in the classical tradition by left-wing propagandists. They have lost the will to win. A majority would opt out of Vietnam.”²² Dean Manion echoes him by writing that “our influential secularists who are guiding us so skillfully into godlessness do not want us to disturb the godless Communist anywhere, whether it is in East Berlin, Moscow, or Vietnam. That is why, for the first time in our history, we are witnessing massed public resistance to our government in wartime, a resistance that is marched publicly around the White House.”²³ Furthermore the paper expressed an increasing disappointment with the leadership of Johnson and Nixon as their resolve to continue the war diminished.²⁴

Although the paper frequently took a critical stance and had a very dark view of the state of American culture during the 1960s, it relied on the message of Fatima to provide a counterbalance of hope. Following the “tremendous struggle between good and evil, between

²⁰ R.F. Bergin, “Looking back at 1965,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 8, 1966): 1; see also “The enemy within: above all, hold the fort,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 1, no. 7 (Oct. 5, 1962): 1.

²¹ R.F. Bergin, “Vietnam and the leftwing,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 6 (Mar. 26, 1966): 1.

²² R.F. Bergin, “The crucial war,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 22 (Dec. 15, 1969): 1.

²³ Dean Manion, “The corked bottles,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 17 (Sept. 30, 1969): 2.

²⁴ “Missiles of Soviet Russia,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 8 (Apr. 30, 1969): 1.

Christ and the forces of anti-Christ... [t]he great Christian civilization of the West will reassert its supremacy under the leadership of Mary Immaculate whose historic mission it is to crush the serpent's head, to cause Jesus Christ to triumph."²⁵ The paper occasionally felt the need to defend itself by reminding readers that "[i]f we have referred to a likely third world war or a possible 'reign of Antichrist' it is only to state that it is the catharsis that will precipitate the great victory of Our Lady and the era of peace."²⁶ The paper even anticipated the eventual collapse of communism in Soviet Russia which occurred under the pontificate of St. John Paul II, by stating that "[t]he fact that the conversion of Russia is mentioned in the Fatima prophecies may indicate successful uprising behind the Iron Curtain, an uprising which would destroy the present regime of the godless."²⁷

However, it is clear today that despite the fall of communism throughout much of the world, the message of Fatima which calls us to prayer, penance, conversion, and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is still relevant in combating the many spiritual and material evils that remain in the world. The paper addressed this future situation by stating that "[t]he peace of the world is not helped, necessarily, by the failure of Marxism. Unless men return to God another evil ideology will surely take its place. The cross alone saves the world."²⁸

II. "The sins by which more people are lost are the sins of the flesh; it is necessary for people to give up luxuries, that they must

²⁵ "The incredible tomorrow: why the future is full of promise for all the world," *North American Voice of Fatima* 1, nos. 3-4 (Aug. 10, 1962): 1.

²⁶ "Pope Paul in Fatima," *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 10 (May 30, 1967): 3; see also "Hate the error," *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 10 (May 30, 1968): 1.

²⁷ "Missiles of Soviet Russia," *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 8 (Apr. 30, 1969): 2.

²⁸ "The Czech crisis," *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 4 (Feb. 28, 1969): 1. Of course, the world is still threatened by the real and potential aggression of Communist or formerly Communist nations, and few would dispute that even in areas of the West where political and economic communism did not take hold, cultural Marxism is alive and well, particularly among academics.

not be obstinate in sin, and it is necessary to do much penance.”²⁹

These words of Our Lady of Fatima, given in a private apparition in 1919 to St. Jacinta shortly before her death, introduce the second theme of our article. We will examine articles from the *North American Voice of Fatima* during the years 1962-1969, regarding the decline of morality during the so-called Sexual Revolution in North America, and will address three topics covered by the paper during those years: immodest dress, pornography and its link to atheism, and the decline of parental rights to regulate exposure of sexually explicit material to their children.

In addition to receiving the message described above, regarding sins of the flesh, St. Jacinta was especially concerned with modesty in dress. She viewed immodest dress as an occasion of sin, enticing others to the sin of lust, and thus leading to the damnation of souls. She lamented the vanity of following transitory fashions, especially when contrasted with the eternal punishment of hell.³⁰

The paper referred numerous times to these words of Our Lady and of St. Jacinta when treating of forms of immodest dress in the 1960s, of which miniskirts are probably the most recognizable. It quotes Sr. Lucia who, while speaking with American visitors, said “[w]hen I think about the United States I think about this: One of the things that Our Lady asked for is modesty in dress. There doesn’t seem to me to be much modesty in the life of women in your country. But modesty

²⁹ “Afirmava a vidente que Nossa Senhora lhe havia comunicado: ‘que o pecado que leva mais gente à perdição, era o pecado da carne, que era preciso deixarem-se de luxos, que não deviam obstinar-se no pecado como até aqui, e que era preciso fazer muita penitência.’” These words from St. Jacinta are documented in *Documentação crítica de Fátima*, vol. 2, *Processo canônico diocesano (1922-1930)* (Santuário de Fatima, 1999), 187-88.

³⁰ Ibid. The same source also documents the lament of St. Jacinta regarding “certain immodestly dressed persons” in the hospital (“algumas pessoas, imodestamente vestidas”), regarding whom she said “para que serve aquilo!? Se soubessem o que é a eternidade!” (“what good is this? If they only knew what eternity is.”)

would be a good sacrifice to offer to Our Lady and it would please her.”³¹ The paper continues by stating:

[W]e must let Our Lady once again become a *living* model of purity and modesty and not remain just a statue or picture that we admire. Let her little angel of purity and modesty, Jacinta Marto, who is considered a candidate for beatification, be our guide to truly high Christian standards for these virtues. In this age of sensuality and body worship and impurity and immodesty and pornography, she is indeed a much-needed messenger of God for all.³²

This emphasis on Mary as a model of purity and modesty is also found in an exhortation to young women not to follow the immodest fashions of the 1960s, as found in the following quote: “Every mature person recognizes the close relationship between a girl’s or woman’s morals and the clothes she wears. If you are striving to imitate the virtues of Mary, you cannot dress in the likeness of sinful women who have perverted the true meaning of beauty and sex, and who deliberately seek to lead men into temptation and sin.”³³ The paper advocates resistance to both peer pressure and commercial trends by stating “[b]e a true and loyal child of Mary by your own example of uncompromising modesty, by your refusal to buy or wear immodest styles and by your unflinching zeal in promoting this cause.”³⁴

In numerous articles, the paper exhorted young women that “[y]ou are to blame for immodesty if you appear in suggestive, provocative, or sinfully revealing styles.” These styles included low necklines, “sweater[s] or other garments that cling too closely, especially when worn over improper bra styles,” shorts, mini-skirts, bikinis, and clothes

³¹ Martin Stepanich, “Jacinta, Apostle of Purity and Modesty,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 15 (Aug. 13, 1966): 4.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ “Who is to Blame for Immodesty?” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 12 (June 25, 1966): 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

with “colors, designs or transparencies which create the illusion or equivalent of indecent exposure.”³⁵ The paper expressed the view that wearing these styles of clothing was sinful, having an effect not only upon individuals but also upon the country, and advised young women that “you do not wish, I feel sure, to seriously harm our country by irresponsible and selfish behavior.”³⁶

The paper was especially critical of wearing immodest clothing in church, as expressed in the following editorial: “I know that God is offended, often very grievously, by women and girls who show so little dignity as to come to church even to Holy Mass and Communion, while wearing clothes that overexpose and overemphasize the figure.”³⁷

Additional material was provided by sayings or anecdotes related to recent popes, such as this one by Pope Pius XII, who was more willing to ascribe ignorance rather than sinfulness to the young women in question in his own exhortation: “How many young women there are who see no wrong in following certain shameless styles like so many sheep. They certainly would blush if they could guess the impression they make and the feeling they evoke in those who see them.”³⁸ A more humorous anecdote was attributed to Cardinal Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII, who supposedly gave an apple to an immodestly dressed woman in Paris. When asked why, he replied that “it was only after Eve ate the apple that she realized that she was naked.”³⁹

Finally, Pope Paul VI was quoted on the subject as saying:

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2, and “Modesty, Please, Girls,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1967): [2b].

³⁶ “Modesty, Please, Girls,” [2b].

³⁷ “Code of Attire for Church and other Sacred Places,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 13 (July 15, 1967): 5.

³⁸ “The Decay and Fall of a Nation,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 8 (Apr. 23, 1966): 2.

³⁹ R.F. Bergin, “News of the World: Give Her an Apple,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 12b (June 30, 1968): 2.

Innocence and purity are virtues that one is almost afraid to mention nowadays... We know for example how immodesty in dress is required by the dictates of fashion, how the provocative, even pornographic illustrations of certain papers, some shows and advertisements are deliberately intended to excite the basest passions and profane life; and this not only in external matters but in the most sacred ties, in the psychological field, in our hearts, so that they are no longer the fount of pure feelings, but of vicious and inhuman fantasies and thoughts, and so sometimes the cause of terrible crimes.⁴⁰

This quote provides a fitting transition between concerns about immodest dress, and concerns about the rise of pornography, which was viewed by the paper as both a cause and an indicator of moral decline in American culture.

The paper frequently lamented the trend of allowing pornographic materials to be sold and distributed on the basis of freedom of speech, and often pointed out the link between the availability of such materials and the moral decline of American culture. “The Church has always understood that pornography and lewd literature is inspired by the devil to bring about the damnation of souls... For this reason She has always advised statesmen and legislators to ban obscene books and illustrations in order to guard, in this way, the moral stability of the nation.”⁴¹

The decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court in his regard were explicitly criticized in light of the message of Fatima:

⁴⁰ “Pope Calls for Purity,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 20 (Nov. 15, 1969): 3, quoted from his Angelus address of Sept. 14, 1969, following his visit to the Shrine of St. Maria Goretti.

⁴¹ R.F. Bergin, “News of the World: America’s Problem,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 7 (Apr. 15, 1969): 1.

It is not surprising that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that possession of obscene films and pornographic books is not itself a crime. This is logical enough, granted the 'liberal' outlook of the seven judges who interpret laws and do not concern themselves with morals, with philosophy, or even perhaps with history... This is a purely secular-humanist outlook. It is the 'death of God' philosophy in public life.... God is not dead. He is risen. And he spoke to the world through his Mother in 1917 and warned it in effect that 'blue' films and pornography are more destructive than atom bombs.⁴²

Atheism was seen as the underlying concept behind the growing emphasis on "separation of church and state" in the decisions of the Supreme Court in the 1960s, as the following citation demonstrates: "The 'wall of separation' which the Supreme Court insists on erecting between the Church and State has resulted in decisions in the name of liberty which have opened the floodgates of Hell and unleashed a torrent of evil and lascivious literature upon American youth."⁴³

The moral decline signaled by widespread pornography was linked with weakening resistance against Communist intrusion as expressed through protests against the Vietnam War: "This [pornographic literature] is certainly Communism's secret weapon in the struggle with the U.S.A., for how long can we depend upon an American youth, degraded by this filth to fight and die on foreign battlefields for freedom?"⁴⁴

The paper saw a common effect of both pornography and atheistic communism, in that both have a destructive influence on Christian

⁴² R.F. Bergin, "News of the World: U.S. Supreme Court," *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 9 (May 15, 1969): 1.

⁴³ R.F. Bergin, "News of the World: the Tidal Wave," *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 17 (Sept. 30, 1968): 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

moral traditions, leading to a collapse of the moral foundations of western nations such as the United States:

It is curious how the mass media, the newspapers, radio and television are combining with the left wing forces to drag down the moral fiber of the Western nations. Most newspapers and commentators on radio and TV deride censorship as old-fashioned, unnecessary. They are right in there with the Communists, anxious to destroy the Christian traditions of our people... As always, the flesh lusts against the spirit. The disorderly passions, blind to reason, defy reason and plunge the whole man into ruin. And when enough men are plunged into ruin the nation collapses in tyranny... Our Lady calls upon us to help her save souls from *irreparable* disaster.⁴⁵

The paper also lamented the decline of the rights of the parents to determine the education of their children in matters of sex, or to protect their children from obscene or pornographic materials. For example, one article stated that “[p]arents bear a heavy responsibility in seeing that their children are not harmed by exposure to filthy literature. It is the duty of parents—through their example and counsel—to provide their children with a solid foundation of spiritual and moral values.”⁴⁶ A more specific example cited by the paper is the Mingolello case in Connecticut, in which neighborhood boys were sharing pornographic materials with the sons of the Mingolello family. According to the paper, the parents of the neighborhood boys, the police, and the Juvenile Court were all unsympathetic to the Mingolello’s complaint, with one Juvenile Court case worker criticizing “the parents for being too rigid with the children and said that the nuns teaching them were also too strict. She suggested that the children

⁴⁵ R.F. Bergin, “News of the World: Censorship,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 17 (Sept. 30, 1969): 1. Emphasis in original text.

⁴⁶ “Poison for our youth: a warning from FBI Chief, J. Edgar Hoover,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 11 (June 11, 1966): 2.

would probably be happier at a state school.”⁴⁷ The two boys were eventually removed from the Mingoello’s home and the parents were not allowed to defend themselves in court. One of the boys was encouraged to read anything he wanted “except for the religious books his mother sent him from home. These were termed ‘damaging to his mental health.’” The overall assessment of the paper based on this case is that “More and more we see on all sides the shocking evidence that America is in an advanced state of moral decline... Christian parents who try to raise their children in an atmosphere of decency and respect are hated and ridiculed for their beliefs... Equally alarming, our courts in many instances are becoming instruments of tyranny and injustice.”⁴⁸

In this section we have seen that the rise of immodest dress, the proliferation of pornography, and the decline of parental rights with regard to the education of their children in matters of sexuality during the 1960s, were viewed by the paper as symptoms of a decline in the morality of the United States and the West in general, with harmful temporal and spiritual consequences for the entire culture and especially youth. The inability of members of Western society, individually and collectively, to regulate immoral sexual desires, coincides with the spread of an atheistic communism as described in the previous section of this article. In such a culture of practical atheism, the love of God and fear of eternal punishment as warned by Our Lady of Fatima, no longer motivate members of a post-Christian society to practice the virtues of temperance and fortitude necessary to resist the spread of atheistic communism and sexual immorality.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ “A State of Moral Decline: The Mingoello Case,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 16 (Sept. 10, 1966): 3. I was unable to find independent confirmation of the facts or existence of this sensitive juvenile court case.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁹ The paper addressed other areas connected to sexual morality as well, such as a bill to legalize abortion in Great Britain, although it had not yet been legalized in the United States at that time; see for example R. F. Bergin, “News of the World: Heresy Does Matter,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 12 (June 15, 1968): 1; “Changing the Flag,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 1 (Jan. 15, 1969): 1; “Fight against Legalized Abortion takes on National Proportions,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 5 (Mar. 15, 1969): 1.

III. “In Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved, etc.”⁵⁰

This section will address the coverage by the *North American Voice of Fatima* of the doctrinal confusion within the Catholic church during the mid- to late-1960s as interpreted through the lens of the message of Fatima, and will address the following interrelated themes: the interpretation of the Third Secret, the weakening of traditional dogma within the Catholic church during the post-conciliar period and the resulting confusion among the faithful, and the message of Fatima as powerful remedy.

During the years 1962-1969, the paper did not engage in conspiracy theories regarding the Third Secret of Fatima. It did not place blame on Pope John XXIII or Pope Paul VI for refusing to reveal to the public the third secret, nor did it address the question of why neither pope had consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as requested in the message. Furthermore, it did not place blame on Pope John XXIII or Pope Paul VI for the doctrinal confusion that ensued during or after the Second Vatican Council. Instead, it depicted Pope Paul VI as a heroic defender of Catholic doctrine and morals, especially in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, in the face of widespread dissent and disobedience by theologians and clergy.⁵¹

Nevertheless, it did include articles that speculated about the content of the Third Secret, building upon statements made by Sr. Lucia in the second part of the secret regarding the annihilation of nations, and her

⁵⁰ The original text from the Fourth Memoir reads: “Em Portugal se conservará sempre o Doguema da fé etc.” in Lúcia de Jesus, *Memórias*, 232-33.

⁵¹ See for example, “Church teaching not determined by public opinion, pope insists,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 8 (Apr. 30, 1967): 3; “The Pope Stands Firm,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 15 (Aug. 15, 1968): 1; “The Meaning of the Crisis,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 19 (Oct. 30, 1968): 1; “The Pope’s Strong Words,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 9 (May 15, 1969): 2. For a recent, exhaustive summary of the controversies surrounding the Third Secret, see Kevin J. Symonds, *On the Third Part of the Secret of Fatima* (St. Louis MO: Enroute Books and Media, 2017).

cryptic elliptical phrase regarding the preservation of the dogma of the faith in Portugal in her fourth memoir.

For example, an article that discussed a purported copy of the text of the Third Secret that “seems of doubtful authenticity to us,” nevertheless stated that “it seems to be correctly forecasting a schism in the Church and a third world war” and reminds readers that the known message of Fatima offers predictions of “the suffering of some Pope, and the annihilation of some nations” that had not yet been fulfilled.⁵²

The elliptical and mysterious phrase of Our Lady of Fatima about Portugal preserving the dogma of the faith, as reported by Sr. Lucia, suggests by implication that other nations will not preserve the dogma of the faith, and this theme of apostasy is explored in many ways by the paper during this time. The paper is filled with articles describing radical departures from traditional Catholic dogma and morals in various nations such as the Netherlands in the post-conciliar period. These departures are described variously as apostasy, heresy, and disobedience.⁵³

⁵²“Revealed! The Third Secret,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 20 (Nov. 15, 1968): 1. Regarding the special mention of Portugal, the paper quoted a 1939 letter from the Bishop of Leiria, who said that war was a punishment for “nations that wanted to destroy the Kingdom of God in souls,” and who cited the Spanish Civil War as an example of such a punishment. The bishop expressed the view that Portugal was a nation that, while guilty, has been chosen by God to offer the message and example of prayer and reparation for sinful nations, quoted in “The Secret: Problem of Fatima,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 6 (Mar. 30, 1967): 1.

⁵³ See for example, R.F. Bergin, “A Trojan Horse enters the City of God,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 22 (Christmas 1966): 3; “No Sin, No Hell, in the New Child Catechism,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1967): [2b]; R.F. Bergin, “News of the World: The French Bishops,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 7 (Apr. 15, 1967): 1; “The Dutch Problem,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 17 (Sept. 30, 1967): 1; “The Fourth Church? Errors Old and New,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 13 (July 15, 1968): 1; “The Church in Holland,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 19 (Oct. 30, 1969): [2a insert].

This doctrinal confusion within the Church was blamed on the laxity of institutional Church leaders: “It is certain that Our Lady, in 1917... saw far too many tepid, worldly Bishops, instead of the zealous, saintly prelates her Son wanted... She saw vast numbers of laity falling away from the Church, saw the wolves scattering and devouring the flocks, and the demons reaping a great harvest of souls... [who] were being lost forever because no one cared enough to save them.”⁵⁴

The paper suggested a causal connection between this situation of doctrinal confusion within the Church during the 1960s and the neglect of the message of the Fatima by Catholic clergy and laity (again not including the popes), stating for example that “the failure of the Church generally to treat with respect and reverence the important message of Fatima was the root of the general problem.”⁵⁵

Furthermore it suggested that this decline of the institutional Church had a causal connection with the moral decline of the broader society: “If the Fatima message means anything, it means that the Church stabilizes society; when the Church is strong, society is strong. When the Church is weak, the social structure is imperiled.”⁵⁶ Thus the internal destabilization of the institutional Church during the 1960s, reflected in doctrinal confusion and widespread dissent, was linked by the paper with the moral decline of Western society during the same

⁵⁴ “Warning and Anarchy: The Institutional Church,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 8 (Apr. 30, 1967): 1. The same article stated that the failure of the Church to fulfill the requests of Our Lady of Fatima for prayer and penance, was the cause of the destruction of the institutional Church in many Communist lands, and that heeding this message was the only way to destroy Communism and establish a new Christian world order of peace, *ibid.* 1, 4.

⁵⁵ R.F. Bergin, “A Trojan Horse Enters the City of God,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 22 (Christmas 1966): 3.

⁵⁶ “The America of 1969: a national ‘nervous breakdown?’” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 16 (Sept. 15, 1968): 1. This article makes the interesting observation that “the new President, elected in November, will inherit a nation that is ungovernable,” referring to the then-unknown winner of the Nov. 1968 presidential election, Richard M. Nixon.

decade, reflected in its failure to resist the spread of communism and the erosion of traditional sexual morality.⁵⁷

Heeding the message of Fatima was proposed by the paper as the solution to this problem of doctrinal confusion within the Church, and therefore of the problem of the moral decline of Western culture:

It is very significant that the Fatima apparitions, sent by Heaven to save the Church in this age, brought into the twentieth century almost the entire corpus of traditional Christian theology. Clearly God foresaw the doctrinal confusion to come, and His Mother acted to defeat the infernal enemy. The Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the Mass, the existence of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory, the existence of angels and devils, the Immaculate Conception and the implied doctrine of original sin, the absolute necessity of prayer, penance and reparation—all these powerful and traditional dogmas of our Faith were brought into sharp relief at Fatima and reinforced by the great public miracle.⁵⁸

The paper placed particular stress on the practice of prayer, penance, and reparation, which are necessary for the salvation of souls, for the conversion of Russia, for the end of war, which is caused by sin, and especially to avoid the danger of a nuclear war, which would result in the destruction of many nations.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ See for example “The Pope’s Strong Words,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 9 (May 15, 1969): 2, which states the opinion of the article’s author that “the massive corruption of the world, the rising power of Communism, the widespread heresies and disobedience... are a Frankenstein monster of our own creation [for not heeding the message of Fatima].”

⁵⁸ “The Pope Stands Firm,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 15 (Aug. 15, 1968): 1.

⁵⁹ See for example, R.F. Bergin, “The Uncertain Future,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 3 (Feb. 12, 1966): 1; Thomas McGlynn, “Fatima on War and Peace,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 13 (July 1, 1966): 3; “The Last Great Challenge: the Light on the Hill,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 7 (Apr. 15, 1967): 1, 4. The paper during this time is filled with devotional articles and photos

Conclusion

As shown throughout this article, the *North American Voice of Fatima* frequently takes an exhortatory tone in its articles, by encouraging its readers to resist the spread of communism, to resist the spread of sexual immorality, and to resist departures from traditional Catholic dogma. It linked these trends with historical events occurring in North America during the 1960s, such as protests against the Vietnam War, the Sexual Revolution, and post-conciliar doctrinal confusion in the Catholic Church.

The *North American Voice of Fatima* proposed the message of Fatima, with its call to prayer, penance, acts of reparation, and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as the best means to combat these three secularizing trends. Despite its bleak and occasionally apocalyptic reading of historical events of the 1960s as they were unfolding, it frequently reminded its readers of the promise of Our Lady of Fatima that “[i]n the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph... and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”⁶⁰ The message of Fatima, given by the Blessed Virgin Mary to three shepherd children in a small Portuguese village over one hundred years ago, was seen as the interpretive key to the signs of the times in North America during the turbulent countercultural decade of the 1960s, and as the most trustworthy source of hope for the future.

meant to encourage a spirit of prayer, including for example a photo of Robert Kennedy lying on the ground after being shot, clinging to a Rosary, in “The Rosary and Death,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 12b (June 30, 1968): 1.

⁶⁰ *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*, 124; the original text from the Third Memoir reads: “por fim o meu Imaculado Coração triunfará... e será condesido ao mundo algum tempo de páz.” from Lúcia de Jesus, *Memórias*, 187.