

Introduction to the Fatima Symposium Acta

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

Pope John Paul II¹

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

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger²

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

+ Telesphore Cardinal Toppo

+ Luis Cardinal Aponte Martínez

+ Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, C.Ss.R

+ Edouard Cardinal Gagnon, P.s.s

+ Riccardo Cardinal Vidal

+ Ernesto Cardinal Corripio Ahumada