

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

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## Introduction

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

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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 57.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace.<sup>5</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>5</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (Nov. 21, 1964), 61: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>9</sup> Mark Miravalle, “With Jesus”: *The Story of Mary Coredeptrix* (Goleta CA: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 70.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>14</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), n. 56.

<sup>15</sup> Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (December 4, 1963), n. 103.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>16</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), n. 57.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 58.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>19</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

<sup>20</sup> Miravalle, 2003, 78–79.

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

<sup>22</sup> Miravalle, 2003, 79–80.

<sup>23</sup> O’Carroll 2000: 204.

<sup>24</sup> Miravalle 2003: 81; O’Carroll 2000: 204.

<sup>25</sup> Bernard, *Sermo 3 de Purificatione*; PL 183.370.

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

<sup>27</sup> O’Carroll, 306.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., n. 13–14.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>32</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 61.

<sup>33</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 62.

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>37</sup> D-H, 3274.

<sup>38</sup> Ott, 231.

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

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 458.

<sup>41</sup> Benedict XVI, homily of May 11, 2007, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/pt/homilies/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20070511\\_canonization-brazil.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/pt/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20070511_canonization-brazil.html) (accessed May 2, 2019).

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

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

## Conclusion

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

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<sup>42</sup> Benedict XVI, Letter to Archbishop S. Zimowski January 10, 2013, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/la/letters/2013/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20130110\\_card-zimowski.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/la/letters/2013/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20130110_card-zimowski.html) (accessed May 2, 2019).