

Mary in the Redemption: The Eastern European Perspective

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁸ The occurrences are as follows.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deo vobisque gratias.

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

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

²⁶ Cf. note 12 above.

²⁷ Kamyk, Borowianka: 1993, Druk-Allegro.

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

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