

Apologia Pro Dogma Sua: Ecclesial, Anthropological, and Contemporary Global Fruits from a Potential New Marian Dogma¹⁵⁵

MARK MIRAVALLE, S.T.D.

Professor of Mariology, Franciscan University of Steubenville

On August 22, 2019, six cardinals and bishops, in representation of the world's continents, wrote an open letter to our Holy Father, Pope Francis¹⁵⁶ in which they respectfully requested the solemn papal definition of the unique role of Mary, Mother of Jesus, in the Redemption of humanity accomplished by Jesus Christ.

These global cardinals and bishops have made this public appeal to Pope Francis, as they state, in light of “so much suffering” in the world, and their grave concern that there is “more to come.”

The prelates believe that a solemn definition of Mary's unique role in the Redemption will allow Our Lady to “fully exercise her maternal mediation on our behalf.”

The full letter of the prelates to the Holy Father appears as follows:

Dear Holy Father:

As Catholic Christians, we write this letter to you out of concern for the peoples of the world. There is so much suffering. We see more coming. The world is out of balance politically, economically, morally, ecologically, and on the edge of world catastrophe. We support your heroic call for political social action, for dialogue between nations, cultures, and religions.

But, as you know, this will not be enough. Behind all these external events, a spiritual battle is taking place, more than ever, between good and evil, light and darkness, in the hearts of humanity. Here, the real battle must be fought. Humanity is in need of great conversion,

¹⁵⁵ General concepts contained in this essay were originally published in a more popular format in Mark Miravalle, “7 Reasons to Declare a New Marian Dogma Now,” *Mother of All Peoples*, revised May 28, 2020, www.motherofallpeoples.com/post/7-reasons-to-declare-a-new-marian-dogma-now.

¹⁵⁶ See www.openletterformary.com.

and of help from the Lord, from his angels, and from his Mother.

As Christians, we believe that on the Cross, Jesus Christ, our divine Redeemer, has gained full victory over Satan. We also believe that in a special way, the Lord at Golgotha entrusted his beloved people to Mary, the Spiritual Mother of all humanity. As the "Woman clothed with the Sun," clothes with the redeeming power of her Son, she stands in battle with the dragon, now more than ever before.

We need her, but she also needs us. If we honor Our Lady in the full greatness that our Lord has granted her, then she can fully exercise her maternal mediation on our behalf, and as at Cana, can intercede with her Son to do miracles in our times.

In the last two thousand years, the Church has recognized, in four dogmas, the special privileges the Father has granted Mary as the Mother of his divine Son. Yet, never has the Church solemnly recognized her human but crucial role in God's plan of salvation, as the New Eve next to the New Adam, as the Spiritual Mother of all humanity. We are convinced that the Father awaits his Church to specifically and dogmatically honor her coredeemptive role with Jesus, for which he will respond with a historic new outpouring of his Holy Spirit.

As you know, many saints of our time, including St. Teresa of Calcutta and St. Maximilian Kolbe, together with over 8 million faithful, and more than 800 bishops and cardinals, have already petitioned the Holy See for this cause, since Cardinal Mercier began this movement in 1915. With our humble voices, we join them now, at this critical moment of human history.

Our Lord gave Peter the keys of the kingdom. We ask you, dear Holy Father, to use them now, in these dramatic times, and with your powerful word, in the

fullness of your office as Successor of Peter, proclaim the great role that the Virgin Mary played in God's plan of Redemption. Surely, it will release great graces for today!

In love, loyalty, and respect,

*Juan Cardinal Sandoval (Mexico, Central America),
Archbishop Felix Job (Nigeria, Africa),
Telesphore Cardinal Toppo (India, Asia),
Bishop John Keenan (Scotland, Europe),
Bishop David Ricken (USA, North America),
Bishop Antonio Baseotto (Argentina, South America),
Archbishop Denys Raboula Antoine Beylouni (Auxiliary
Patriarch Emeritus of Syriac Catholics),
and Archbishop Chucrallah-Nabil E Hage (Maronite
Archbishop of Tyre, Lebanon)*

In theological analysis of the cardinal-bishop letter, it should be acknowledged that the unique human cooperation of Mary in the saving work of Jesus Christ already constitutes the explicit and undeniable doctrinal teaching of the Papal and conciliar Magisterium for the past three centuries.¹⁵⁷ The Second Vatican Council repeatedly teaches Mary's unique role in the Redemption:

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.¹⁵⁸

And again:

¹⁵⁷ Mark Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemprix: Doctrinal Issues Today* (Queenship Publishing Company: Goleta, CA, 2001), 41-47. For a more extended treatment, cf. Calkins, "Pope John Paul II's Teaching on Marian Coredemption," 113-147; also "The Mystery of Mary Coredemprix in the Papal Magisterium," *Mary Co-redemprix: Doctrinal Issue Today*, 41-47.

¹⁵⁸ Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November, 1964," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), 56 (hereafter, LG).

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....¹⁵⁹

And again:

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.¹⁶⁰

And again:

She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in giving back supernatural life to souls. Therefore, she is our mother in the order of grace.¹⁶¹

Following the Council, St. John Paul II provided an authoritative interpretation of the Mariology contained in *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter 8. During his extraordinary Mariological pontificate, the great John Paul referred to Mary as the "Co-redemptrix" on at least seven occasions, and provided the greatest quality and quantity of papal teaching on Marian Coredeemption in the history of the Church.¹⁶² Perhaps John Paul's single greatest use of the Co-redemptrix title comes in context of his 1985 homily in Ecuador:

¹⁵⁹ *LG*, 57.

¹⁶⁰ *LG*, 58.

¹⁶¹ *LG*, 61. Cf. Arthur Calkins, "Pope John Paul II's Teaching on Marian Coredeemption," Msgr. Arthur Calkins, 2002 (21st edition), www.christendom-awake.org/pages/calkins/jp2marcor.htm.

¹⁶² John Paul II, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1978-, V/3, 1982, 404; John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, November 12, 1984, 1; *Ibid.*, March 11, 1985, 7; John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, April 9, 1985, 12; John Paul II, *Inseg.*, XIII/1, 1990, 743:1; John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, October 14, 1991, 4.

Mary goes before us and accompanies us. The silent journey that begins with her Immaculate Conception and passes through the “yes” of Nazareth, which makes her the Mother of God, finds on Calvary a particularly important moment. There also, accepting and assisting at the sacrifice of her son, Mary is the dawn of Redemption; ...Crucified spiritually with her crucified son (cf. Gal. 2:20), she contemplated with heroic love the death of her God, she “lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth” (*Lumen Gentium*, 58)....

In fact, at Calvary she united herself with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church; her maternal heart shared to the very depths the will of Christ “to gather into one all the dispersed children of God” (Jn. 11:52). Having suffered for the Church, Mary deserved to become the Mother of all the disciples of her Son, the Mother of their unity....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 Coredemprix did not cease with the glorification of her Son.¹⁶³

Yet, the question could still be posed: if Mary’s role in the Redemption is already an established doctrine in the perennial teachings of the Magisterium, what then would be the benefit of a dogmatic definition of Marian coredemption?

Let us therefore examine *seven immediate and potentially historic benefits* to the Church that would result if in fact our present Holy Father, Pope Francis, would solemnly define the *Spiritual Motherhood of Our Lady*, which is first grounded upon her maternal role as Co-redemprix, and inclusive of her two consequential roles of subordinate mediation as Mediatrix of all graces and Advocate.

¹⁶³ John Paul II, *Homily at Sanctuary of Guayaquil*, Jan. 31 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, printed in English March 11, 1985, 7.

1. Releasing Historic Grace for the Church and World: Activating Our Lady's full intercessory power for humanity

During the horrors of World War I, the renowned Désiré Cardinal Mercier of Belgium initiated a petition drive to Pope Benedict XV in 1915 for the dogma of the universal mediation of Mary, which necessarily included her roles as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces.

What was Mercier's rationale for the new dogma? He argued that the papal definition of Our Lady's roles of intercession would lead to "great graces" and in particular, "the grace of peace" for the world.¹⁶⁴

By the early 1920s, St. Maximilian Kolbe added his voice of support for the new definition.¹⁶⁵ In 1922, Pope Pius XI formed three commissions to study the possibility of the definition. The Belgian and Spanish commissions alone produced over 2,500 pages of positive theological support for the new Marian dogma.¹⁶⁶ By 1925, over 450 bishops presented their testimonies in favor of a new dogma of Mary's universal mediation.¹⁶⁷

On December 1, 1950, the world's leading mariologists gathered in Rome and presented a *votum* to Pope Pius XII for the dogma of Mary's Universal Mediation, and this just one month after his definition of the Assumption. The Mariological basis behind the dogma *votum* was the following: now that all the providential prerogatives regarding Our Lady's earthly life have been defined, it was now time to solemnly define her heavenly roles of maternal intercession on behalf of humanity.¹⁶⁸

Momentum for a fifth Marian dogma continued to build through the 1950s and leading up to Vatican II. Hundreds of conciliar bishops had sent in preliminary requests for a definition of some aspect of Our Lady's mediation during the Council.¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Pope St. John XXIII made clear at the Council's offset that Vatican II would not be a council defining

¹⁶⁴ Manfred Hauke, *Mary, Mediatress of Grace*, (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2008), 129.

¹⁶⁵ Militia Immaculatae, "St. Maximilian Kolbe and the Fifth Marian Dogma," *Immaculata Magazine*, May 1997, 7-9.

¹⁶⁶ Hauke, *Mary, Mediatress of Grace*, 66-74.

¹⁶⁷ Hauke, *Mary, Mediatress of Grace*, 77.

¹⁶⁸ Michael O'Carroll, Cssp, "Mediation," *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia on the Blessed Virgin Mary*, (Dublin, Ireland: Michael Glazier Publication, 1983), 238-245.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

any new dogmas, but rather one pastoral in nature. Pro-dogma members at the Council would have to wait for some post-conciliar possibility for a new Marian dogma.

Since 1993, over 8 million petitions from the People of God spanning over 180 countries have been sent to recent popes in support of this dogmatic proclamation of Marian Coredemption.¹⁷⁰ These numbers from the world's *sensus fidelium* are joined with the hierarchical ranks of some 615 bishops, including 70 cardinals, since 1993.¹⁷¹ With the additions of over 200 bishops from 1915 to 1918, the total known number of bishops supporting the definition far exceeds 800, and the large quantity of potential episcopal supporters for the more than seventy years between 1918 until 1993 is known by the Holy See alone.

The communally manifest reason of support for the fifth Marian dogma over the last century appropriately mirrors that of the movement's founder of Mercier in its simplicity and profundity: the proclamation of the dogma of Mary as the Spiritual Mother of All Peoples will lead to a historic release of grace for the Church and for the world. It should therefore not be surprising that the selfsame motivation is voiced by cardinals and bishops in their 2019 open letter to our present Holy Father—*epic graces for a contemporary humanity that desperately needs them*.

What would constitute a valid theological justification for such a monumental release of grace caused by defining a new Marian dogma?

A theological argument could be made that God the Father so respects human freedom that free human assent would be appropriately required for such a historic release of grace. The Father does not force saving grace upon his human children.

The consent of humanity is therefore likewise necessary for Our Lady to fully intercede on humanity's behalf in our own day. If the pope, as Vicar of Christ on earth and supreme authority of the Church were to freely and solemnly acknowledge Our Lady's unique human role in the Redemption, (as well as her consequent roles in the distribution of the graces of the Redemption) this would thereby appropriately lead to the *full activation, the most complete possible exercise of her powerful maternal roles of intercession for the world*.

¹⁷⁰ *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* Archives, Hopedale, Ohio, U.S.A.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Just as God the Father awaited the free human fiat of one woman to bring to the world its Redeemer, so now that same human woman, glorified in heaven, awaits the fiat of one human man, the successor of Peter, to bring to the world the graces of what was called the “Triumph of her Immaculate Heart” at Fatima.¹⁷²

We see the same theological principle confirmed in the biblical institution of the papacy. For example, Mt 16:15-20, where Jesus asks the apostles the question: “Who do they say that I am?” Jesus, of course, knew who he was, *but he wanted the truth proclaimed by Peter*. Then, *and only then*, does Jesus establish the papacy and all the graces that would thereby enter the world through the papacy.

Once again, a similar phenomenon of a historic grace, it is believed, will flow upon the world once the Holy Father freely and solemnly proclaims Our Lady’s intercessory roles for humanity.

2. The Completion of Marian Dogma: Declaring Mary’s relationship with humanity as Spiritual Mother

The four Marian dogmas solemnly defined by the Church all focus on Our Lady’s providential prerogatives as granted by the Heavenly Father for her own perfection and in relation to her divine son, *i.e.*, the “Theotokos,” her threefold Virginity, her Immaculate Conception, and her bodily Assumption. Yet, none of these existing dogmas testify to *Mary’s relation to humanity*.

In a certain sense, the other four dogmas require the fifth doctrine of Spiritual Maternity in order to manifest their salvific relevance for humanity.

The solemn definition of Spiritual Motherhood would not only accentuate Mary’s saving role to the human race, but would also effectively bring to completion the “whole truth about Mary,” that is, the divinely revealed roles of Our Lady both in relation to Jesus and in relation to mankind.

How can we be sure that the definition of Spiritual Maternity would constitute the final Marian Dogma in Church history? For the simple reason that there are no remaining Marian doctrines revealed in Scripture and Apostolic Tradition to define.

¹⁷² Louis Kondor, SVD, “July 13, 1917, Message of Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima,” *Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words: Sister Lucia’s Memoirs*, (Fatima: Posulation Center, 1976), 112.

How appropriate that at the present climax of the universally designated “Age of Mary”—an age which boasts of more Marian dogmas declared, more Marian apparitions approved, and more Marian popes than in any other single period of the Church’s history—that her role as the Spiritual Mother of all peoples would be solemnly defined.

It is furthermore appropriate that the Marian truth which most specifically and foundationally supports the present climax of Marian devotion be dogmatically defined in our present historical moment. Love of Mary must be based on truth about Mary, and all the principal Marian devotions, i.e., the Rosary, Marian consecration, the Scapular devotion, etc. are all theologically grounded upon the doctrine of Spiritual Motherhood.

3. Declaring the Christian Redemptive Value of Human Suffering: Mary Co-redemptrix and the Christian’s role as “co-redeemer”

A papal definition of Mary Co-redemptrix would highlight to the world the fundamental Christian truth that “suffering is redemptive.” This dogma would inherently highlight redemptive value of human suffering, which, in a global society experiencing ubiquitous suffering, both spiritual and physical in nature, could provide a quintessential pastoral message to the contemporary Church and world.

While Our Lady’s suffering with her Crucified Son was unparalleled in its depth and in its merit, all Christians are called by St. Paul to “make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church (Col.1:24).” Each of us within the Body of Christ has the privilege and responsibility to join the redemptive mission of Jesus and Mary, and by the patient enduring of our sufferings and spiritually uniting them to the sufferings of our Redeemer, can contribute to the mysterious release of graces for human salvation.

St. John Paul repeatedly called the People of God to live up to the sublime call to be “co-redeemers in Christ.”¹⁷³ Pope Benedict XVI beckoned the infirmed at Fatima to become “redeemers in the

¹⁷³ Cf. John Paul II, Address to the sick at the Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God, April 5, 1981, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, April 13, 1981, 6; General Audience, Jan. 13, 1982, *Inseg.* V/1, 1982, 91; Address to candidates for the Priesthood, Montevideo, May 8, 1988, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, May 30, 1988, 4; cf. Pius XI, Papal Allocution at Vicenza, Nov. 30, 1933, Domenico Bertetto, S.D.B., ed., *Discorsi di Pio XI* 2:1013.

Redeemer.”¹⁷⁴ A solemn proclamation of Mary as the human Co-redemptrix with Jesus would offer the Christian faithful a perfect human example to imitate in our own Christian imperative to live Colossians 1:24 and offer daily sufferings for the subjective redemption of others.

In an age where the evils of euthanasia and suicide are massively on the rise, the world could use a solemn re-emphasis that human suffering need not be futile under materialist perceptions of hopelessness and uselessness. On the contrary, human suffering can be both supernaturally redemptive and eternally meritorious when they become coredemptive.

4. Highlighting the Dignity of the Human Person and Human Freedom: The human imperative to cooperate with grace

Proclaiming Mary’s free and personal role in the Redemption would inherently proclaim the dignity of the human person as well as the dignity of one of God’s most sublime gifts to humanity: *freedom*. This dogma would recognize in a solemn expression that a free decision of a human being was a necessary element within God’s providential plan for human Redemption.

Numerous contemporary ideologies deny both the dignity of human freedom and the dignity of the human person—from totalitarian regimes like Communist China, to western syndicates of human trafficking (where its principal market is found the United States). A dogma founded on God’s respect for human freedom joined with Our Lady’s perfect exercise of it would innately pronounce the transcendent dignity of the human person and the imperative to respect human freedom in all circumstances—as does the Creator himself.

This Marian declaration would moreover underscore the perennial Catholic teaching on the human necessity to cooperate with grace for our salvation. St. Augustine declares this indispensable soteriological truth in

¹⁷⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, “Apostolic Journey of Pope Benedict XVI to Portugal on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Beatification of Jacinta and Francisco, Young Shepherds of Fatima: Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI,” The Holy See, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, May 13, 2010, www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100513_fatima.html.

his famous maxim: “God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us.”¹⁷⁵

The historical summit of human cooperation with grace is reached in Mary’s climactic “yes” at Calvary.¹⁷⁶ Not only did she freely cooperate with the divine will for her own personal justification, but she also freely participated in the redemptive work of Christ for all humanity. Mary’s lifelong human consent as the New Eve with Christ, the New Adam represents the historical highpoint of human cooperation with grace, both personally and universally. It thus becomes the greatest model for all human cooperation with divine grace in obedience to God’s salvific plan.

The Co-redemptrix title may well be the single greatest term that most completely embodies the full Catholic doctrinal teaching on human salvation, as it necessarily includes Catholic soteriological principles such as the proper relationship between human freedom and divine providence; between grace and free will; and between faith and works.

5. Proclaiming the True Dignity of Woman: Authentic Christian Feminism as embodied in Mary

This proposed dogma would sublimely underline that the greatest act of human history—the redemption of the human family— is the result of a woman’s active and feminine “yes.”

It was the will of God that the human person to partake most intimately in the greatest divine act for humanity would not be a pope, nor a bishop, nor a priest, nor a man—but rather a woman and a mother. This speaks volumes regarding both the dignity of woman and the true theological, anthropological, and social nature and dignity of authentic Christian feminism.

The providential necessity of a woman’s contribution to the Redemption has been acknowledged throughout Christian history. In 180 A.D., St. Irenaeus refers to Mary’s feminine contribution as “the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race.”¹⁷⁷ In 1918, Pope Benedict XV authoritatively teaches: “We may rightly say that she

¹⁷⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., (1997), 1847.

¹⁷⁶ Josef Seifert, “Mary as Coredemptrix and Mediatrix of all Graces – Philosophical and Personalist Foundations of a Marian Doctrine.” In *Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations II, Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical*, Mark I. Miravalle, ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1996), 168.

¹⁷⁷ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses*, III.22.4.

redeemed the human race together with Christ.”¹⁷⁸ In 1993, Mother Teresa succinctly conveys the same truth: “No Mary, no Jesus.”¹⁷⁹

The Redemption of the human race is therefore both a gift from the Divine Redeemer to humanity, and at the same time *a gift from a woman to humanity*. As eloquently expressed by personalist philosopher, Josef Seifert:

This dogma would express a dignity of a woman’s action which exceeds in activeness, sublimity and effectiveness the deeds of all pure creatures and men: of all kings and politicians, thinkers, scientists, philosophers, artists and craftsmen from the beginning of the world to the end of doom, and in a certain manner even of all priests except Christ. For all other priestly actions render only present Christ’s redemptive grace and action but Mary’s act rendered our redemption itself possible and thus mediated for mankind the most high gift of our divine Savior himself.¹⁸⁰

Particularly in a time of the Church when confusions regarding the nature and role of women abound, the clarity is Mary. Proclaiming the greatness of Mary and her roles of maternal intercession for humanity will clarify in flesh the proper role of women in the Church, leading to their powerful yet humble service of women within the Body of Christ.

6. Applying Authentic Catholic Ecumenism to Mary: A Mother Unites her Children

A new dogma on Mary’s role in the Redemption would actually serve authentic ecumenism (apart from strong contemporary opinions to the contrary), based on an accurate understanding of the ecumenical mission from a truly Catholic perspective. What constitutes authentic Catholic ecumenism as delineated by the Magisterium, and how does it accurately relate to a potentially new definition of Spiritual Maternity?

The Second Vatican Council teaches:

It is, of course, essential that doctrine be clearly presented in its entirety. Nothing is so foreign to the spirit

¹⁷⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter, *Inter Sodalicia*, AAS 10, 181–2.

¹⁷⁹ Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *Dialogue with Author*, Missionary of Charity Motherhouse, Calcutta, India, August 14, 1993.

¹⁸⁰ Seifert, “Philosophical and Personalist Foundations,” 168.

of ecumenism as a false conciliatory approach which harms the purity of Catholic doctrine and obscures its assured genuine meaning.¹⁸¹

In his papal document on ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope St. John Paul II describes authentic Catholic ecumenism to consist of prayer as the soul and dialogue as the body in pursuit of true and lasting Christian unity, an ecclesial unity to be found firmly grounded within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ.¹⁸²

Concerning areas of doctrinal disagreement, such as Marian dogma or doctrine, John Paul strongly condemns any form of doctrinal “reductionism”:

With regard to the study of areas of disagreement, the Council requires that the whole body of doctrine be clearly presented ... Full communion of course will have to come about through the acceptance of the whole truth into which the Holy Spirit guides Christ’s disciples. Hence all forms of reductionism or facile “agreement” must be absolutely avoided.¹⁸³

And again:

The unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety. In matters of faith, compromise is in contradiction with God who is Truth. In the Body of Christ, ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (Jn.14:6), who could consider legitimate a reconciliation brought about at the expense of the truth?¹⁸⁴

Therefore, 1) *fullness of doctrinal truth* and 2) *greatest possible clarity of doctrine* constitute two essential and required pillars of legitimate Catholic ecumenical activity.

¹⁸¹ Second Vatican Council, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 21 November, 1964,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), 11.

¹⁸² John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, Encyclical Letter, Vatican Website, May 25, 1995, www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html, 21, 28.

¹⁸³ *UUS*, 36.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

If then, the expressed purpose of a dogmatic proclamation of Mary's role in the Redemption would precisely be to best articulate the fullness of doctrinal truth and the greatest possible clarity of doctrine regarding Our Lady's Spiritual Motherhood, it cannot, by definition, constitute a violation of authentic Catholic Ecumenism. Moreover, to hold such would be to, *a priori*, rule out the charism of papal infallibility itself regarding Mary, and to, by principle, rule out the dogmatic legitimacy of the four existing Marian dogmas.

The late John Cardinal O'Connor of New York, in his letter to Pope John Paul II for the fifth Marian dogma, well expressed this potential dogma's prospective service to authentically Catholic ecumenical efforts:

Clearly, a formal papal definition would be articulated in such precise terminology that other Christians would lose their anxiety that we do not distinguish adequately between Mary's unique association with Christ and the redemptive power exercised by Christ alone.¹⁸⁵

Ironically, the same proper understanding of Ecumenism regarding this potential Marian dogma was voiced by Anglican Oxford scholar, John MacQuarrie, commonly recognized as Anglicanism's most distinguished systematic theologian in the second half of the 20th century:

The matter cannot be settled by pointing to the dangers of exaggeration or abuse, or by appealing to isolated texts of scripture such as 1 Tim 2:5, or by the changing fashions in theology and spirituality, or by the desire not to say anything that might offend one's partners in ecumenical dialogue. Unthinking enthusiasts may have elevated Mary to a position of virtual equality with Christ, but this aberration is not a necessary consequence of recognizing that there may be a truth striving for expression in words like Mediatrix and Co-redemptrix. All responsible theologians would agree that Mary's coredeemptive role is subordinate and auxiliary to the

¹⁸⁵ John Cardinal O'Connor, *Letter of Endorsement for Papal Definition of Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, New York Chancery, February 14, 1994, *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* Archives, Hopedale, Ohio, USA.

central role of Christ. But if she does have such a role, the more clearly we understand it, the better.¹⁸⁶

On a complimentary pastoral note, Lutheran theologian, Dr. Charles Dickson sees the acknowledgement of Our Lady's Spiritual Maternity as a positive and powerful instrument for Christian unity—a Marian “source of reconciliation” for contemporary Christians, who Dickson refers to as her “scattered and divided children”:

In our time, we are still faced with the tragic divisions among the world's Christians. Yet, standing on the brink of a bright new ecumenical age, Mary as model of catholicity, or universality, becomes even more important. In the course of many centuries from the beginning of the Church, from the time of Mary and the Apostles, the motherhood of the Church was one. This fundamental motherhood cannot vanish, even though divisions occur. Mary, through her motherhood, maintains the universality of Christ's flock. As the entire Christian community turns to her, the possibility of a new birth, a reconciliation, increases. So Mary, the mother of the Church, is also a source of reconciliation among her scattered and divided children.¹⁸⁷

Within this brief discussion of ecumenism in relation to the fifth proposed Marian dogma, it is quintessentially important, and in fact long overdue, to present a historically and theologically accurate understanding of the commonly referred to “Częstochowa Commission,” most notably its actual historical composition and purpose, its completely non-authoritative nature, and its totally non-binding power in relation to the proposed dogma.

In 1996, an ecumenical gathering of theologians (18 Catholic, 3 Orthodox, 1 Lutheran, 1 Anglican) during the general meeting of the International Pontifical Marian Academy in Częstochowa, Poland, came

¹⁸⁶ J. MacQuarrie, “Mary, Coredeematrix and Disputes over Justification and Grace: An Anglican View,” *Mary Co-redempatrix: Doctrinal Issues Today* (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 2002), 140.

¹⁸⁷ Charles Dickson, “A Protestant Pastor Looks at Mary” (Huntington, Ind: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996), 77.

out with a negative statement regarding the appropriateness of a Marian dogma of the Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate following what was alleged as a “serious study” of the issue. In the new proper spirit of Church transparency, the following clarifications must be made regarding the true nature and consequent conclusions, as was later testified by original members of the commission, as well as by some officials of the Pontifical Marian Academy at the time:

1. The “commission” was not in fact a specific commission formed to make a serious study of the issue of the proposed dogma, but merely the normal ecumenical meeting of theologians which routinely accompanied the meetings of the Pontifical Marian Academy. It was subsequently made up of membership of 16 Catholic and 5 non-Catholic theologians. The members were not selected based on any expertise of the issue, nor were the members ever notified that they were acting as a formal commission of theological investigation.
2. There was *no serious theological study* of the issue of the proposed dogma but only a 20-minute presentation delivered against the proposed dogma. There was no research, study, or analysis of the issue of the proposed dogma.
3. The “conclusions” of the commission were principally written by one theologian, with more negative additions later made by members of the Vatican Secretariat of State.
4. The conclusions directly criticized several elements already contained within the magisterial Mariological writings of St. John Paul II.
5. The conclusions of the Częstochowa Commission in no way constitute an authoritative document of the Church’s Magisterium and should not be quoted as such.

The 1996 Częstochowa Commission was not, therefore, a theological commission which provided a serious study and analysis to

the issue of a possible new Marian dogma. Perhaps now, some 20 years later, would be the appropriate time to initiate a legitimate study of the issue, with a qualified team of diversified Mariological experts who could judiciously perform a balanced theological investigation into the issue.

7. Confirmation from Church Approved Private Revelation: Our Lady Wants This Dogma “Now”

Marian private revelation, even when approved by the Church, can in no way constitute the theological foundation for a Marian dogma. Yet, it can serve as a supernatural confirmation for a proposed dogma's appropriateness, importance, and even Heaven's desire for such a definition at a particular moment in the Church's history.

The ecclesiastically approved apparitions of the Lady of All Nations in Amsterdam, Holland (1945-1959) which were declared as “consisting of a supernatural origin” by the local ordinary, Bishop Punt of Haarlem-Amsterdam¹⁸⁸ (May 31, 2002) provide precisely such a heavenly confirmation. Not only do the Amsterdam apparitions ratify the appropriateness of a fifth Marian dogma for our time, they further specify this Marian dogma as a *heavenly condition for world peace*.

On April 29, 1951, the Lady of All Nations articulates heaven's desire for a new dogma of Mary as Co-redemptrix, as well of as the providential assurance of its certain outcome:

I stand here as the Co-redemptrix and Advocate. Repeat this after me: the new dogma will be the “dogma of the Co-redemptrix.” Notice I lay special emphasis on the word, “co.” I have said that it will arouse much controversy. Once again, I tell you that the Church, “Rome” will carry it through and silence all objections. The Church, “Rome,” will incur opposition and overcome it. The Church, “Rome,” will become stronger and mightier in proportion to the resistance shows up in the struggle. My purpose and my commission is none other than to urge the Church, the theologians, to wage this battle....I know well the struggle will be hard and bitter (and then the Lady smiles to herself and seems to gaze

¹⁸⁸ May 31, 2002 Declaration of Bishop Josef Marianus Punt on the Supernatural Character of the Amsterdam Apparitions, Website of Diocese of Harlaam, Amsterdam, www.bisdomehaarlem-amsterdam.nl.

into the far distance), *but the outcome is already assured.*

On May 31, 1954, the Lady of All Nations further instructs:

Work and ask for this dogma. You must petition the Holy Father for this dogma...The world is dominated by the spirit of Satan. When the dogma, the last dogma in Marian history has been proclaimed, then the 'Lady of All Nations' will give peace, true peace, to the world.

And again, in the Amsterdam message of May 31, 1955:

The world has lost its bearings? Well then, nations, put your trust in your Mother. She is allowed to come to you under this new title: Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate. Why do you not ask your Holy Father to pronounce the Dogma the Lady demands?... Once the dogma has been pronounced, the Lady of all Nations will give her blessing Then, the 'Lady of All Nations' will bestow peace. She will help you when this dogma has been proclaimed.

Our Lady's approved apparitions in Amsterdam are later confirmed by a second Church-approved apparition involving the Lady of All Nations in Akita, Japan. From 1973 to 1981, Our Lady began a series of mystical phenomena in Akita where a wooden statue of the Lady of All Nations wept tears on 101 different occasions (several times in the presence of the local bishop, Bishop John Ito). The visionary at Akita, Sr. Agnes Sasagawa, was taught the Prayer of the Lady of All Nations by her guardian angel in preparation for the mystical visitations of Our Lady. Bishop Ito approved the supernatural authenticity of the Akita events in 1984, and confirmed that these two Church approved apparitions possess an essential unity when he stated: "Akita is the continuation of Amsterdam."

Both the Marian messages Amsterdam, and Akita likewise speak of a conditional global catastrophe and other upcoming trials, for which the graces received through the proclamation of the fifth Marian dogma can serve as remedy or mitigation.

From Cardinal Mercier's initial inspiration of "great graces for the Church and world" to Our Lady's supernatural confirmation that only with the dogma of Mary Co-redemptrix can she then "bring peace, true peace

to the world” we see truly historic benefits for the Church and the world through a papal proclamation of the fifth Marian dogma.

Conclusion

For many contemporary supporters, including the author, the proclamation of the fifth Marian dogma is no ivory tower theological issue. It constitutes a providential prerequisite for historic grace and world peace—a God-ordained solemn recognition of Our Lady’s role in the Redemption and its subsequent roles in the mysterious mediation of grace and universal advocacy that is in itself a condition for the supernatural help required to remedy the ubiquitous crises threatening the world and the Church today.

Historically, a complex combination of truth and confusion, tragedy and grace, have often participated in the proclaiming of Marian dogmas. It is the author’s hope and prayer that maximum grace and minimum tragedy can be the historical conditions for the eventual dogmatic crowning of the Spiritual Mother of all Peoples in the fifth and final Marian Dogma.