

## **Mary Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces: Perennial Catholic Doctrines and Recent DDF Statements**

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*...The theologian has the duty to make known to the Magisterial authorities the problems raised by the teaching in itself, in the arguments proposed to justify it, or even in the manner in which it is presented. He should do this in an evangelical spirit and with a profound desire to resolve the difficulties. His objections could then contribute to real progress and provide a stimulus to the Magisterium to propose the teaching of the Church in greater depth and with a clearer presentation of the arguments. (Donum Veritatis, n. 30)*

### **New DDF Norms**

On May 17, 2024, the Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith released, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena*, a new disciplinary document on the process of pronouncing on the credibility of reported apparitions. A significant difference from the 1978 DDF (then CDF) Norms, these new norms remove the possibility of any bishop, or even the DDF itself, from declaring any reported apparition, to be supernatural in origin (*constat de supernaturalitate*), but only the pope on rare occasions. This constitutes a substantial break from an approximate half millennium Church precedent (dating back at least to the Guadalupe apparitions in 1531) whereby local bishops made the initial call concerning the potential supernatural character of private revelations within their diocese. Noteworthy is the fact that on the other side of the Vatican piazza, the Dicastery for the Cause of Saints still requires a positive judgment of the supernatural character of an act (i.e., a miracle) in order for a cause of beautification or canonization to advance--an unusual inconsistency.

Now, alleged supernatural phenomena will only be placed in one of six new prudential categories, and only with the direct approval of the DDF. The new categories begin with *Nilil Obstat* ("nothing stands in the way" i.e., no doctrinal errors), followed by increasingly problematic

categories, and concluding with the fully negative category of *declaratio de non supernaturalitate*.<sup>1</sup>

### **Problem with Mary's Role in the Mediation of graces?**

The release of the new DDF norms were quickly followed by several specific rulings, each accompanied by theological commentaries pertaining to the reported apparition in question. For example, one commentary of particular Mariological relevance is the commentary on the Rosa Mystica apparitions declaration of July 8, 2024.<sup>2</sup> In this statement wherein the DDF essentially grants the local bishop of Brescia permission to proceed with a *Nihil Obstat* determination, the document also identifies certain texts of the Rosa Mystica message which they place under the heading, "Some Texts Require Clarification." The document states that certain texts of the message "attribute functions to the Blessed Virgin that can easily be misinterpreted."<sup>3</sup> Among those Marian messages presented are several texts with refer to Our Lady's function as "Mediatrice." For example:

"[Mary said:] 'I placed myself as Mediatrice between men (particularly religious souls) and my Divine Son who, tired of the offenses continually received, wished to exercise his justice'" (22 October 1947, p. 123).

"[Mary said:] 'After I was assumed into heaven, I always placed myself as the Motherly Mediatrice between my Divine Son, Jesus Christ, and all humanity!'" (6 August 1966, p. 322).

"[Mary said:] 'Through the prayers and the sacrifices that so many generous souls offered for their sinful

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<sup>1</sup> Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, *Norms for Proceeding in the Discernment of Alleged Supernatural Phenomena*, May 17, 2024, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2024/05/17/240517h.html>, cited May 31, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, *Declaration of the Rosa Mystica Apparitions*, July 8, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_ddf\\_doc\\_20240705\\_lettera-devozione-mariarosamistica\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20240705_lettera-devozione-mariarosamistica_en.html), cited July 9, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

brothers and sisters [...] How many graces have I, the Motherly Mediatrix, obtained for humanity from the Lord, my Divine Son, Jesus Christ, sparing terrible chastisements that the world had to suffer” (1 January 1978, p. 408).<sup>4</sup>

The DDF document then makes the substantially problematic statement in which it appears *to specifically reject any role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the mediation of graces*:

At the same time, it must be maintained that ***only the Lord can act in people’s hearts by bestowing sanctifying grace*** that uplifts and transforms, because sanctifying grace is “first and foremost the gift of the *Spirit* who justifies and sanctifies us” (CCC, no. 2003; emphasis added), “it is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of *his* own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul” (CCC, no. 1999; emphasis added). ***In this action, which only God can do in the depths without overlooking our freedom, there is no other possible mediation, not even that of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*** Her cooperation is always to be understood in the sense of her maternal intercession and in the context of her helping to create provisions for us to be open to the action of sanctifying grace. The Second Vatican Council explained that since God “elicits in his creatures a manifold cooperation, which is but a sharing in this one source,” for this reason, “the Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary” (LG, 62).<sup>5</sup>

Even apart from DDF difficulties with messages of Our Lady which expound on her doctrinal role as Mediatrix of graces, the explicit statement that “there is no possible mediation...not even that of the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., (bold emphasis mine).

Blessed Virgin Mary” in the bestowing of sanctifying graces from God to humanity directly contradicts the consistent official papal teachings on Mary as Mediatrix of all graces which spans over four centuries.

Mindful of Chesterton’s famed example of an English explorer who eventually rediscovers his own homeland of England, it appears necessary to re-examine in order to rediscover what *already constitutes the perennial papal and conciliar teachings on Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces*, as evidenced in the following litany of magisterial texts.

### **Mediatrix of All Graces in the Papal Magisterium**

Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, Pope Benedict XIV describes the Mother of Jesus’ mediational role in grace as “a celestial stream through which the flow of all graces and gifts reach the soul of all wretched mortals.”<sup>6</sup>

Pope Pius VII, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, identifies her as the “Dispensatrix of all graces.”<sup>7</sup>

Pope Pius IX, in his 1849 encyclical, *Ubi Primum*, states: “For God has committed to Mary the treasury of all good things, in order that everyone may know that through her are obtained every hope, every grace, and all salvation.”<sup>8</sup>

Pope Leo XIII repeatedly teaches the Virgin’s role as the Mediatrix of all graces, as, for example, in his 1891 Apostolic letter, *Octobri mense*:

It is right to say that *nothing at all of the immense treasury of every grace which the Lord accumulated* – for ‘grace and truth come from Jesus Christ’ (Jn 1:17) – *nothing is imparted to*

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<sup>6</sup> Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758), *Op. Omnia*, v. 16, ed., Prati, 1846, p. 428. See also this list of papal texts in Mark Miravalle, *Mary Co-redemprix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, Santa Barbara, Queenship Publications, 1993, pp. 39-48.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Pius VII (1800-1823), *Ampliatio privilegiorum ecclesiae B.M. Virginis*

<sup>8</sup> Pope Pius IX (1846-1878), Encyclical Letter, *Ubi Primum*, 1849.

*us except through Mary.* How great are the goodness and the mercy revealed in this design of God. Mary is our glorious intermediary; she is the powerful Mother of the omnipotent God.<sup>9</sup>

Leo XIII also quotes St. Bernadine of Siena as to Mary's essential and direct role in the mediation of sanctifying graces to humanity: "Thus is confirmed that law of merciful mediation of which we have spoken, and which St. Bernadine of Siena thus expresses: 'Every grace granted to man has three degrees in order: for by God it is communicated to Christ, *from Christ it passes to the Virgin, and from the Virgin it descends to us.*'"<sup>10</sup>

Another encyclical teaching by Leo XIII unequivocally defends Mary's role as "mediatrix to the Mediator", based on her unique coredemptive participation with the Redeemer:

For, surely, no one person can be conceived, who has ever made, or at any time will make an equal contribution as Mary to the reconciliation of men with God. Surely, she it was who brought the Savior to man as he was rushing into eternal destruction...she it is "of whom was born Jesus [Matt. 1:16], namely his true Mother, and for this reason she is worthy and quite acceptable as the *mediatrix to the Mediator.*"<sup>11</sup>

Pope St. Pius X in his monumental Marian 1904 encyclical letter, *Ad diem illum*, repeatedly articulates Mary's direct mediation of all graces of Jesus Christ to humanity. It is Mary who "entirely participating in his Passion, became the *"dispensatrix of all the gifts that our Savior purchased for us by his death and his blood."*<sup>12</sup> In further defense and explanation of her role as Mediatrix, St. Pius X explains: "It cannot, of course, be denied

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<sup>9</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Octobri mense*, 1891 (emphasis mine).

<sup>10</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Jucunda Semper*, 1894; cf. St. Bernadine of Siena, *Serm. in Nativit. B.V.M.*, n. 6 (emphasis mine).

<sup>11</sup> Pope Leo XIII, encyclical *Fidentem*, on the Rosary, Sept. 20, 1896, ASS 29 (1896), 206; AL. VI 214.

<sup>12</sup> Pope St. Pius X, *Ad diem illum*, 1904; cf., Eadmer, *De Excellentia Virginis Mariae*, c. 9.

that the dispensing of these gifts belongs by strict and proper right to Christ, for they are the exclusive fruit of his death, who by his nature is Mediator between God and man. Nevertheless, by this union in sorrow and suffering, as we have said, which existed 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 Son.’<sup>13</sup> Once more on the level of encyclical teaching, St. Pius X instructs: ...Since she surpassed all in holiness and union with Christ, and has been associated with Christ in the work of redemption, she...is the principal minister in the distribution of grace.”<sup>14</sup>

Pope Benedict XV confirms that the reason Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces in distributing the fruits of redemption is because she was first participated with Jesus Christ in redeeming the world, and therefore in the acquisition of the heavenly gifts of grace at Calvary: “For with her suffering and dying Son, Mary endured suffering and almost death. One can truly affirm that together with Christ she has redeemed the human race....For this reason, every kind of grace we receive from the treasury of the redemption is ministered as it were through the hands of the same sorrowful Virgin.”<sup>15</sup>

Benedict XV further granted permission to celebrate the liturgical office and mass of *Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces* to the ordinaries of the world who, along with Belgium, petitioned for it.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Pope St. Pius X, Encyclical, *Ad diem illum*, 1904; cf., St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Serm. De temp., in Nativ. B.V. de Aquaeductu*, n. 4; St. Bernadine of Siena, *Quadrag. de Evangelio aeterno*, *Serm. X*, a. 3, c.3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, (emphasis mine).

<sup>15</sup> Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922), Apostolic Letter, *Inter Sodalicia*, *AAS* 10, 1918, p. 182. For other papal references to Mediatrix of all graces by Benedict XV, cf. Encyclical Letter, *Fausto appetente die*, *AAS* 13, 1921, p. 334; Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, *AAS* 10, 27 April 1917, p. 182; *Allocution at Decree Reading for Canonization of Joan of Arc*, *Actes de Benoit XV*, v. 2, 1926, p. 22; *Letter to American Hierarchy concerning the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception*, *AAS* 11, 1919, p. 173.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *La Vie Diocesaine*, v. 10, 1921, pp. 96-106, *Rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Rites*, 12 January 1921. Based on the Mass and Office of Mediatrix of all Graces of 1921, the Congregation for Divine Worship approved a Mass of the Blessed Virgin

*Pope Pius XI* continues the rich papal tradition of Mediatrix by recalling this universal mediatorial function of Mary with the Mediator in numerous Church teachings. “We have nothing more at heart than to promote more and more the devotion of the Christian people towards the *Virgin who is treasurer of all graces with God.*”<sup>17</sup>

In 1929 Encyclical, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, Pius XI references Mary as Mediatrix of grace: “...Confiding in her intercession with Jesus, ‘the one Mediator between God and man’ (1 Tim 2:5), who wished to associate his own Mother with himself as the advocate of sinners, as *dispenser and mediatrix of grace.*”<sup>18</sup>

*Pope Pius XII* made his own, and the Church’s, the classic expression of St. Bernard: “And since, as St. Bernard declares, ‘it is the will of God that we obtain all favors through Mary,’ let everyone hasten to have recourse to Mary;”<sup>19</sup> and in a 1946 Fatma address states: “Having been associated, as Mother and Minister, with the King of Martyrs in the ineffable work of human Redemption, she remains always associated with him, *with an almost measureless power, in the distribution of graces flowing from the Redemption.*”<sup>20</sup>

The Second Vatican Council refers to the legitimacy of invoking Mary under the title of “Mediatrix” in *Lumen Gentium* 62, as well as her continued active role in brings to the gifts of eternal life to humanity:

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Mary, Mother and Mediatrix of Grace in 1971, cf., *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, v. 1, Sacramentary, Catholic Book Co., New York, 1992. The new liturgy refers to Mary as the “treasure- house of all graces”, Entrance antiphon, p. 223.

<sup>17</sup> Pope Pius XI (1922-1939), Apostolic Letter, *Cognitum sane*, *AAS* 18, p. 213.

<sup>18</sup> Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, *AAS* 20, 1928, p. 178 (emphasis mine).

<sup>19</sup> Pope Pius XII (1939-1957), *Superiore anno*, *AAS* 32, 1940, p. 145. For usage of same expression by Pius XII, cf., *AAS* 45, 1953, p. 382 (emphasis mine).

<sup>20</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Radio message to Fatima*, 13 May 1946, *AAS* 38, p. 266. For other references to Mediatrix of graces by Pius XII, cf., *Mystici Corporis*, *AAS* 35, 1943, p. 248; *L’Osservatore Romano*, April 22-3, 1940, p. 1; *Decree of Sacred Congregation of Rites on Canonization of Louis M. de Montfort*, *AAS* 34, (emphasis mine).

“Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office, but *by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation.*”<sup>21</sup>

Since the Council and in a post-conciliar hermeneutic of continuity with the pre-conciliar papal magisterium, Pope St. John Paul II will refer to Mary as “mediatrix of all graces” on eight separate occasions,<sup>22</sup> and in his 1987 encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*, clearly establishes the foundation for our Lady’s participation in the mediation of Christ: “Thus there is a mediation: Mary places herself between her son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs, and sufferings. She *puts herself “in the middle”*, that is to say *she acts as a mediatrix, not as an outsider, but in her position as mother.*”<sup>23</sup>

Mindful of the authentic liturgical maxim, *lex orandi lex credendi*, the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship, at the request of St. John Paul II, approved and published in 1986 the liturgy of the Blessed Virgin as the “Mediatrix of grace” as contained in the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*<sup>24</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI offers this remarkably maximalist formulation of the Mediatrix of all graces doctrine in this May 11, 2007 homily in Brazil “*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>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 62 (emphasis mine).

<sup>22</sup> For all specific references, see “Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces in the Papal Magisterium of John Paul II” by Msgr. Arthur B. Calkins: <https://www.motherofallpeoples.com/post/mary-mediatrix-of-all-graces-in-the-papal-magisterium-of-pope-john-paul-ii>.

<sup>23</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Congregation for Divine Worship, *Collection of the Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Approval, Pope St. John Paul II, 1986.

<sup>25</sup> Benedict XVI, In his May 11 2007 homily at Campo de Marte, São Paulo, for the canonization of Frei Antônio de Sant’Ana Galvão (May 11, 2007): [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20070511\\_canonization-brazil.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20070511_canonization-brazil.html), (emphasis mine).



Moreover, Benedict XVI, in a 2013 letter to Archbishop Zimowski, the Holy See’s representative to the World Day of the Sick, specifically used the title of “Mediatrice of all graces” (*Mediatrice omnium gratiarum*).<sup>26</sup>

In a May 13, 2023 letter to the Archbishop of Sardinia, Pope Francis positively referenced the Mediatrice of all graces title as one of her “ancient titles.”<sup>27</sup>

*Thirteen popes, including five encyclical teachings, and two Vatican approved liturgies over four centuries—this perennial collection of magisterial statements irrefutably establishes the Mediatrice of all graces role and title as an authoritatively taught doctrine of the modern papal magisterium.*

### **Problem with Marian Coredemption?**

The DDF in its Rosa Mystica commentary, as well as other recent apparition commentaries<sup>28</sup>, seems to also have difficulties with messages of Our Lady that refer to her unique role with Jesus in the Redemption:

Finally, certain expressions appear in the *Diaries* that Pierina does not explain, such as “Mary the

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<sup>26</sup> Benedict XVI, letter to Archbishop Zimowski (January 10, 2013): [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/la/letters/2013/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20130110\\_card-zimowski.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/la/letters/2013/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20130110_card-zimowski.html).

<sup>27</sup> See the May 13, 2023 Message of Pope Francis to Archbishop Gian Franco Saba, Archbishop of Sassari, Sardinia (Italy), on the 80th anniversary of the Festa del Voto. In this message, Pope Francis refers to one of the most ancient Marian titles as precisely, the “Mediatrice of All Graces”: <http://www.arcidiocesisassari.it/2023/05/28/festa-del-voto-il-messaggio-del-santo-padre/>.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. also, for example, July 11, 2024 DDF *Statement on Amsterdam Apparitions*, as well as May 17, 2024 DDF *Norms* document.

Redemption,<sup>29</sup> “Mary of Grace,” “Mary Mediatrix,” and so on. Bearing in mind that such expressions are often not interpreted in a convenient way, one must remember that *Jesus Christ is our only Redeemer, because only his humanity, hypostatically united to the Person of the Word, can offer to the Father the sacrifice that obtains salvation for us: “the sacrifice of the Cross, offered in a spirit of love and obedience, presents the most abundant and infinite satisfaction due for the sins of the human race”* (Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas* [15 May 1956], no. 35). The revealed Word affirms that “there is but one God, one also is the mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:5-6) [emphasis mine].<sup>30</sup>

Is the statement, “one must remember that Jesus Christ is our only Redeemer” to be understood as a possible corrective against the subordinate role of Marian coredemption, or perhaps more specifically, the Marian title, “Co-redemptrix”?

Certainly, there is the absolutely foundational Christian truth that Jesus Christ is the only divine Redeemer of humanity through his infinitely meritorious passion, death, and resurrection. Yet, the truth that Jesus is our only divine redeemer *must not be interpreted as a prohibition nor denial of the unique human cooperation of the Immaculate Virgin with and under Jesus, in the historic accomplishment of Redemption.*

The quintessential soteriological truth that Jesus Christ is our only divine Redeemer must never be threatened by any gravely erroneous concept of another equal or parallel redeemer, as his divine redemptive victory is infinitely beyond the merits of any creaturely act. Yet, as an expression of his love for humanity, God the Father has willed that his human creatures living in his grace would have the great privilege of sharing in the Redeemer’s work of human salvation through the

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<sup>29</sup> N.B. Mary’s role in Redemption was legitimately referred to in the renowned 6<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Akathist hymn, “*Hail, Redemption of the tears of Eve,*” Strophe 1, PG 92, 1337 A.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

mysteries release of redemptive graces. St. Paul tells us that Christians are called to “make up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church” (Col. 1:24); and, further, that we must be “co-workers with God” (1 Cor:3:9) in the work of salvation. St. John Paul II beckons the same Christian call to become “co-redeemers in Christ.”<sup>31</sup> Based upon the selfsame principle of participation, Pope Benedict XVI invoked the sick at Fatima to “become redeemers with the Redeemer:”

Dear friends who are sick, entrust to him [Jesus] every setback and pain that you face, so that they become—according to his design—a means of redemption for the whole world. You will be *redeemers with the Redeemer*, just as you are sons in the Son. At the cross...stands the mother of Jesus, our mother.<sup>32</sup>

The DDF quotes Pope Pius XII in explaining the infinite satisfaction accomplishing by the Redeemer at Calvary. Yet, Pius XII also clearly teaches the active possibility for all members of the Church to participate in the release of a “rain of heavenly gifts” of redemption upon humanity:

Our zealous love for the Church demands it, as does our brotherly love for the souls she brings forth in Christ. For although our Savior’s cruel passion and death merited for His Church an infinite treasure of graces, God’s inscrutable providence has decreed that these graces should not be granted to us all at once; but

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<sup>31</sup> Pope St. John Paul II,

Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Allocution to the Sick at the Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God, April 5, 1981*, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., April 13, 1981, p. 6; *Address to the Sick following General Audience, January 13, 1982*, Inseg. V/1, 1982, 91; *Address to the Bishops of Uruguay, May 8, 1988*, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., May 30, 1988, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Sick*, Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, Portugal, May 13, 2010.

their greater or lesser abundance will depend in no small part on our good works, which draw down on the souls of men a rain of heavenly gifts freely bestowed by God.<sup>33</sup>

Since this participation in the salvific mission of Jesus can be true for all those baptized in Christ, it must be *emphatically and definitively be true of the immaculate human mother of Jesus.*

When popes, saints, theologians, doctors, and mystics down the centuries refer to Mary as the Co-redemptrix<sup>34</sup>, this must be understood as a single term which denotes Mary's unique participation with and under Jesus Christ in the historic work of Redemption. The Co-redemptrix term refers to Mary, the human New Eve, with and under Christ, the divine and human New Adam, in the universal salvific act of restoring supernatural life to souls. Never as an idolatrous "divine equal," but always as a human immaculate handmaid, Mary cooperates with the Redeemer like no other creature—not only in the release of grace possible for all Christians, but also in the *historic obtaining of grace*, as the following popes will testify.

Once again, the doctrinal status of Marian coredeemption cannot be left to theological opinion, but rather grounded upon the authoritative teachings of the papal Magisterium.

Pope Leo XIII in his 1895 encyclical, *Adjutricem populi*, refers to the Blessed Virgin as the "cooperatrix" (literally, "female co-worker") with Christ in the Redemption of humanity, and therefore the principal cooperator in the distribution of redemptive graces: "...she who had been the cooperatrix in the sacrament of man's Redemption, would be likewise the cooperatrix in the dispensation of graces deriving from it."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Pope Pius XII, Encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, n. 106.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. M. Miravalle, *With Jesus: The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix*, Goleta, Ca, Queenship Publications, 2003; J.B. Carol, *De Corredemptione B. V. Mariae disquisitio positiva*, Civitas Vaticana, , 1950, 600 pages.

<sup>35</sup> Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter, *Adjutricem populi*, 1895, *ASS.* v. 28, p. 130, (emphasis mine).

In 1885, Leo XIII also approved a prayer to Jesus and Mary which refers to the Virgin Mother as “*co-redemptrix of the world*” (Italian, *corredentrica del mondo*; Latin, *mundo redimendo coadiutrix*).<sup>36</sup>

Pope St. Pius X, in his 1904 renowned encyclical, *Ad diem illum* designates Mary as “chosen by Christ to be His partner in the work of human salvation” and specifies Mary’s coredemptive merit in the order of fittingness (*de congruo*) in union with Christ’s *de condigno* meriting in strict justice:

*Owing to the union of suffering and purpose existing between Christ and Mary, she merited to become most worthily the reparatrix of the lost world, and for this reason, the dispenser of all the favors which Jesus acquired for us by His death and His blood. Nevertheless, because she surpasses all in holiness and in union with Christ, and because she was chosen by Christ to be His partner in the work of human salvation, she merits for us de congruo, as they say, that which Christ merits for us de condigno,<sup>37</sup> and she is the principal dispenser of the graces to be distributed.<sup>38</sup>*

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<sup>36</sup> Pope Leo XIII, Congregation for Indulgences and Sacred Relics, ASS, 18 [1885], p.93 (emphasis mine).

<sup>37</sup> *Meritum de condigno* (condign merit) *ex toto rigore justitiae* (equality between the meritorious action and its reward, as well as between the persons giving and receiving the reward) is a type of merit (“a right to a reward”) that can be obtained only by Jesus Christ in light of his divine nature. The redemptive act by Jesus Christ on the cross was both satisfactory (removing the relationship of guilt between the human race and God) and meritorious (establishing a right to a reward from Almighty God, which is always at the same time presupposing a gift of grace from God).. *Meritum de congruo* (congruous merit) is a right to a reward based on its appropriateness or fittingness, along with the generosity of the person granting the reward. In light of Mary’s unique participation with Christ in Redemption and the graciousness of the Father, such *de congruo* merit is rightfully attributed by St. Pius X to Mary. Cf. Council of Trent, D 799, D 809, 810; cf also for example, J. B. Carol, O.F.M., “Our Lady’s Coredemption” in *Mariology*, Bruce Pub., 1957, v. 2, p. 410.

<sup>38</sup> Pope St. Pius X, Encyclical Letter, *Ad diem illum*, 1904, ASS., v. 36, 1903-1904, p. 453 (emphasis mine).

Pope Benedict XV in his 1918 apostolic letter, *Inter Sodalicia*, emphatically concludes to Mary's historic co-redemptive role by explicitly stating that "together with Christ, *she* [Mary] redeemed the human race."

...The fact that she was with her Son crucified and dying, was in accord with the divine plan. To such extent did she [Mary] suffer and almost die with her suffering and dying Son; to such extent did she surrender her maternal rights over her Son for man's salvation, and immolated Him – insofar as she could – in order to appease the justice of God, that ***we may rightly say that together with Christ she redeemed the human race.***<sup>39</sup>

Pope Pius XI is the first pope to specifically use the title of Co-redemptrix, and does so on three occasions, as for example in this 1935 allocution at the end of the Holy Year of Redemption:

O Mother of love and mercy who, when thy sweetest Son was consummating the Redemption of the human race on the altar of the cross, did stand next to Him, *suffering with Him as a Coredeptrix*...preserve in us, we beseech thee, and increase day by day the precious fruit of His redemption and the compassion of His Mother.<sup>40</sup>

Pius XI explains and defends the Co-redemptrix title and the sound theology behind it in this 1933 allocution:

"From the nature of His work the Redeemer ought to have associated His Mother with His work. *For this reason we invoke her under the title of*

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<sup>39</sup> Pope Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter, *Inter Sodalicia*, 1918, *AAS* 10, p.182 (emphasis and bold mine).

<sup>40</sup> Pope Pius XI, Prayer of the Solemn Closing of the Redemption Jubilee, April 28, 1935, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29-30 April 1935, p. 1(emphasis mine).For other papal statements in relation to the doctrine of Coredeptrix by Pius XI, see *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 November 1933; *AAS*, v. 15, 1923, p. 105; v. 20, 1928, p. 178; Papal Address to Pilgrims from Vicenza, 30 Nov. 1933, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 Dec. 1933.

*Coredemptrix*. She gave us the Savior, she accompanied Him in the work of Redemption as far as the Cross itself, sharing with Him the sorrows of the agony and of the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of mankind. And immediately beneath the Cross, at the last moments of His life, she was proclaimed by the Redeemer as our Mother, the Mother of the whole universe.”<sup>41</sup>

Pius XII teaches Marian coredemption with encyclical level authority and integrates the Patristic understanding of Mary as the New Eve with her coredemptive offering of Jesus at Calvary: “It was she [Mary] who, always most intimately united with her Son, *like a New Eve, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father, together with the sacrifice of her maternal rights and love, on behalf of all the children of Adam, stained by the latter’s shameful fall.*”<sup>42</sup>

Again, Pius XII identifies Mary as Christ’s “associate” in the work of Redemption, leading to an “almost unlimited power in the distribution of graces: “For *having been associated with the King of Martyrs in the ineffable work of human redemption, as Mother and cooperatrix*, she remains forever associated with Him, with an almost unlimited power, in the distribution of graces which flow from the Redemption.”<sup>43</sup>

The Second Vatican Council teaches Our Lady’s coredemption with Jesus repeatedly and in a certain fashion. The specific Co-redemptrix title is not included in the document, as it was removed from the first Marian schema (draft) before ever reaching the Council fathers by a sub-commission of theologians. In their *praenotanda* (pre-note), the subcommittee designated the Co-redemptrix title as being “absolutely true in itself” [*quae licet in se verissima*] but “which may be misunderstood by the separated brethren, in this case, Protestants.”<sup>44</sup> If this same

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<sup>41</sup> Pope Pius XI, Papal Allocution to Pilgrims of Vicenza, 30 November 1933, *L’Osservatore Romano*, 1 Dec. 1933 (emphasis mine).

<sup>42</sup> Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, *AAS* 35, 1943, p.247 (emphasis mine).

<sup>43</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Radio Broadcast to Pilgrims at Fatima*, 13 May 1946, *AAS* 38, 1946, p. 266 (emphasis mine).

<sup>44</sup> *Acta Synodalia Consilii*, vol 1, pt 4; cf Besutti, *Lo Schema Mariano*, p. 41.

zealous ecumenical standard, i.e., possible Protestant misunderstanding, was universally used at the Council for the elimination of terms, one wonders how the conciliar treatments on Liturgy, Eucharist, Papal Authority, and Priesthood would have fared?

Nonetheless, the Marian coredemption doctrine is undeniably present in Vatican II teachings. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 56 testifies to Mary's role as the New Eve (the patristic type of Marian coredemption) and her active, not passive, participation in her Son's work of salvation:

Committing herself wholeheartedly and impeded by no sin to God's saving will, she devoted herself totally, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, under and with him, serving the mystery of Redemption, by the grace of Almighty God. Rightly, therefore, the Fathers see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperated in the work of man's salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race."<sup>45</sup>

*Lumen Gentium*, n. 57 expresses Mary's lifetime work in union in the salvific mission of Jesus: "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...".<sup>46</sup>

*Lumen Gentium*, n. 58 identifies Mary's coredemptive participation in the intensity of Christ's suffering at Calvary, as well as her "consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her":

Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in union with her son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting

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<sup>45</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, 56; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III, 22, 4: PG 7, 959 A, Harvey, 2, 123.

<sup>46</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 57.



to the immolation of this victim which was born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to his disciple, with these words: “woman, behold your son” (Jn. 19:26-27).<sup>47</sup>

*Lumen Gentium*, n. 61 refers to the Mother of Christ as the “loving associate of the Redeemer” [*alma socio redemptoris*] which denotes the Virgin’s unique role with Christ in Redemption, and then proceeds to state her singular cooperation “in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls,” which in turn constitutes the foundation for her consequential role as spiritual mother “in the order of grace.”

She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, shared her Son’s sufferings as he died on the cross. Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason, she is a mother to us in the order of grace.<sup>48</sup>

Pope St. John Paul II dynamically continues and expands papal teaching on Marian coredemption. Not only does he specifically use the Co-redemptrix title on seven occasions, but he also teaches the doctrine within a great frequency and diversity of documents.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 58

<sup>48</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 61.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. for example, Pope St. John Paul II, *Allocution to the Sick, September 8, 1982*, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, Vol 3, 1982, 404; General Audience, Nov. 4, 1984, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., Nov. 12, 1984, p. 1; *Homily at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Alborada*, Guayaquil, Ecuador, Jan. 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., March 11, 1985; World Youth Day Allocution, May 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., April 9, 1985, p. 12; Allocution to the Volunteers for the Sick at Lourdes, March 24, 1990, *Insegnamenti*, XIII/1, 1990, 743:1; *Allocution on Sixth Centenary Canonization of St. Brigid of Sweden*, October 6, 1991, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., October 14, 1991, p. 4. Cf. for example, Msgr. Arthur Calkins, “John Paul II’s Teaching on Marian Coredemption” in *Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations II*, Goleta, Ca., Queenship Publishing, 1997, pp. 113-139.

For example, in this 1985 homily, the Totus Tuus pontiff provides a synthetic theology of Coredemption based on Lumen Gentium 58:

Mary goes before us and accompanies us. The silent journey which begins with her Immaculate Conception and passes through the “yes” of Nazareth, which makes her the Mother of God, find on Calvary a particularly important moment. There also accepting and assisting in the sacrifice of her Son, Mary is the dawn of Redemption...Crucified spiritually with her crucified son, (cf. Gal. 2:20), she contemplates with heroic love the death of her God, she “lovingly consented to the immolation of the victim which she herself 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...In fact, Mary’s coredemptive role did not cease with the glorification of her son.<sup>50</sup>

In his 1984 apostolic letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, St. John Paul refers to Mary’s sufferings as a historic “contribution to the Redemption of all:”

In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way, that they were not only a proof of her unshakable faith, but also a contribution to the Redemption of all...It was on Calvary that Mary’s sufferings, besides the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view, but was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, Homily at Our Lady of Alborada Shrine, Quayaquil, Ecuador, Jan. 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, March 11, 1985, p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, February 11, 1984, n. 25.

In his April 9, 1997 audience, John Paul II makes a critically important distinction between the coredemptive call of all Christians in the release of redemptive grace, from the unique role of Mary with Jesus in the *objective obtaining of the graces of Redemption*:

The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to share by prayer and sacrifice. Mary, instead, cooperated in the event itself and in the role of mother; thus her cooperation embraces the whole of Christ's saving work. She alone was associated in this way with Christ's redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of all mankind. In union with Christ and in submission to him, she collaborated in obtaining the grace of salvation.

...Although God's call to cooperate in the work of salvation concerns every human being, the participation of the Savior's mother in humanity's redemption is a unique and unrepeatable fact.<sup>52</sup>

In this one sentence addressing the sick in a 1982 allocution, Pope St. John Paul II captures the essence of the Catholic doctrine of Mary as Co-redemptrix: "*Mary, conceived and born without the stain of sin, participated in a marvelous way in the sufferings of her divine Son, in order to be Co-redemptrix of humanity.*"<sup>53</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI confirms Marian coredemption in this 2009 allocution: "We are accompanied in this itinerary by the Blessed Virgin who silently followed her Son, Jesus to Calvary, taking part with deep sorrow in his sacrifice and thus cooperating in the mystery of the Redemption and becoming Mother of all believers."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, Audience, April 9, 1997, *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 16, 1997, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, Greeting to the Sick after September 8, 1982, *Insegnamenti*, V/3, 1982, p. 404 (emphasis mine).

<sup>54</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *General Audience*, April 8, 2009.

Pope Francis extends the contemporary papal teaching on Marian coredemption. In his October 23, 2013 allocution, he speaks of Mary's "martyrdom of her heart" in union with her Son and his sacrifice on Calvary:

This union finds its culmination on Calvary: here Mary is united to the Son in the martyrdom of her heart and in the offering of his life to the Father for the salvation of humanity. Our Lady shared in the pain of the Son and accepted with him the will of the Father, in that obedience that bears fruit, that grants the true victory over evil and death.<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, Pope Francis conveys the indispensable role of Mary in human salvation during his January 1, 2020 homily when he teaches that there is "no salvation without a woman": "Mary will forever be the Mother of God. She is both woman and mother: this is what is essential. From her, a woman, salvation came forth and thus there is no salvation without a woman."<sup>56</sup>

With this surplus of official teachings from the Papal Magisterium, which extend from the nineteenth through the twenty-first century, *can there truly be a valid objection from within the Church regarding the undeniable doctrinal truth of Marian coredemption?*

It must be reiterated that Marian coredemption denotes Mary's unique cooperation with and under Jesus Christ, the only divine Redeemer in the historic accomplishment of human Redemption, and *the title, Co-redemptrix, denotes exactly the same truth.* Why then, is the title causing such contemporary controversy?

There can certainly be a danger in isolating the Co-redemptrix title from its proper theological meaning, in which case it could be misunderstood to connote an equality between the divine Jesus and

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<sup>55</sup> Pope Francis, *General Audience*, October 23, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Pope Francis, *Homily for the Solemnity of the Mother of God*, St. Peter's Basilica, January 1, 2020.

the human Mary. In this case, proper theological instruction is required to communicate Mary's absolute subordination to her divine Son in the redemptive act. Could this, perhaps, be the concern of our present Holy Father with the present use of this title?

Why, then, use a Marian title which could potentially be misunderstood? We have only to look at the example of the first great Marian dogma and its respective title, "Mother of God." This title, outside of its proper explanation and meaning, could easily be misunderstood, perhaps even more easily than the Co-redemptrix title. "How can God have a mother?" "Does this denote Mary as "Mother of the Father," or "Mother of the Holy Spirit?" Why then did the Church dogmatically declare the Mother of God title? *Because of the Christian truth it powerfully expresses in one title: that Mary is true human mother of God the Son incarnate, which ultimately points to and protects the sublime Christocentric mystery of the hypostatic union—the divine nature and human nature in the one divine person of Jesus Christ.*

So, too, *the title, Mary Co-redemptrix, powerfully points to Jesus Christ, the only divine Redeemer* and his infinite act of Redemption, without which her title has absolutely no meaning. This Marian title also points to and fulfills the plan of the Heavenly Father that a woman have an integral role with Jesus in the reversal of Eve's disobedience through an immaculate woman's heroic obedience to her divine Redeemer.

Some theological minds may prefer to use a different term than Co-redemptrix for this role, one which does not share the same etymological root (*redimere*) as "Redeemer" since, as has been reiterated in DDF commentaries, there is only one divine Redeemer in Jesus Christ.

Could we not raise the same objection about using the term "priest" for anyone except Jesus Christ, the one divine Priest?

The Letter to the Hebrews reveals that we have one "great high priest" (Heb 4:14), Jesus Christ, only one divine Priest who offers one single

sacrifice for the sins of the world (cf. Heb. 4:14; 8:1; 14:28; 10:10). Should the Church then stop using the term, “priest” for anyone except Jesus, our one and only divine Priest?

The Church has rather chosen to use the same term for the one and only divine Priest and various human priests, and to make distinctions for those human persons who participate in different degrees in the one divine Priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Church also use the same term with further distinguishes between “ministerial priests” and “royal priesthood of the laity”, based on their different degrees of participation in the life and mission of one divine High Priest.

We therefore must also recognize the legitimacy of using the same term “redeemer” to indicate Jesus Christ, as the one and only divine Redeemer; Mary’s unique and subordinate participation as human Co-redemptrix in the mission of the Redeemer; and the further subordinate human participation in the mission of the one divine Redeemer by all Christian faithful as “*co-redeemers in Christ*.”<sup>57</sup> Using the same root word, furthermore, dynamically expresses the intimate mystical body union between the divine Redeemer, the human Co-redemptrix, and all co-redeemers in Christ.

Ultimately, three centuries of papal teachings on Marian coredeemption, including its positive teaching at the Second Vatican Council clearly validates its authentic doctrinal integrity. The use or approval of the Co-redemptrix title likewise assures its doctrinal legitimacy. Such should be reflected in all relevant statements by the Vatican’s doctrinal dicastery.

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<sup>57</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, cf. Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Allocution to the Sick at the Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God, April 5, 1981*, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., April 13, 1981, p. 6; *Address to the Sick following General Audience*, January 13, 1982, *Inseg.* V/1, 1982, 91; *Address to the Bishops of Uruguay, May 8, 1988*, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., May 30, 1988, p. 4.

## Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the one divine mediator between God and man (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5) and the one and only divine Redeemer of humanity. Yet, it is the will of God that Mary Immaculate should participate and cooperate like no other creature in both the mediation of Jesus as Mediatrix of all graces, and in the Redemption of Jesus as human Co-redemptrix. These Marian titles and their respective doctrines should not only be faithfully taught by the contemporary Church, but should also be championed for the truth they express, albeit with the necessary articulation of their human subordination to the divine soteriological roles ultimately accomplished by Jesus Christ.

The denial of Marian mediation in the distribution of graces not only runs contrary to centuries of papal teachings, but it also poses as a proximate theological threat to the mediation of the Church and of the ministerial priesthood in the distribution of grace.

With a true spirit in service of the Church of seeking the best possible articulation of these authentic Marian truths by the Church's highest doctrinal commission (cf. DV 30) and in sincere respect for their invaluable service in seeking to safeguard the *depositum fidei*, I would hope for a corrective clarification regarding the Rosa Mystica theological commentary which appears to negate Mary's true role in the mediation of graces. I would also hope that present and future Mariological commentary properly reflect the rich traditional and contemporary papal and conciliar teaching on Marian coredemption and the theologically legitimate use of the title, Co-redemptrix.

Happily (after the completion of this article but before its publication), Pope Francis, during his recent August 5, 2024 homily at St. Mary Major's Basilica in celebration of the memorial of Our Lady of the Snow, offered a key papal corrective to this issue by stating that "***she[Mary] is the Mediatrix of the grace that flows always and only through Jesus Christ, by the action of the Holy Spirit*** (*lei è la mediatrice della grazia che sgorga sempre e solo da Gesù Cristo, per opera dello*

*Spirito Santo*).<sup>58</sup> Since, in fact, *all sanctifying grace* originates in Jesus Christ and comes to us through the power of the Holy Spirit, and she is the Mediatrix of this grace, this reiteration of Our Lady's doctrine as Mediatrix of grace can also imply the full role and title of Mediatrix of *all graces*.

*Deo et papae gratias.*

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August 15, 2024, Solemnity of the Assumption

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<sup>58</sup> Pope Francis, *Omelià Della Celebrazione Dei Secondi Vespri In Occasione Dell'Anniversario Della Basilica Papal de Santa Maria Maggiore e Della Solennità Della Madonna Delle Neve*, (Homily of the Celebration of Second Vespers on the Occasion of the Anniversary of the Papal Basilica of St. Mary Majors and the Solemnity of the Lady of the Snows), Rome, August 5, 2024.