

In Defense of the Legitimacy of the Title of Our Lady Co-redemptrix

MARY MOORE

When Jesus appeared to St. Faustina in the 1930s, he told her to “prepare for great battles. Know that you are now on a great stage where all heaven and earth are watching you.”¹

Such a statement warrants feelings of consternation. Yet we see St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Anthony of the Desert and St. Ignatius of Loyola allude to the same point: that “we are in the midst of a spiritual battle, whether we acknowledge it or not. And perhaps the most dangerous of all places is to be in the midst of a spiritual battle and not to know it.”² Yet, Jesus reminds Faustina, that even in the midst of such terrible combat: “Fight like a knight, so that I can reward you. Do not be unduly fearful, because you are not alone.”³ Who, then, will be our ally? Who, then, has God presented to us by which the victory is to be won? It must be none other than His very own Mother, the ‘Woman’ of Revelation 12 who battles the deadly dragon on behalf of her children. The Lady. *Our Lady*: the Co-redemptrix.

Revelation 12:15 says, “The serpent vomited water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood.”⁴ This water, according to His Eminence Alfons Cardinal Stickler interprets that the water that threatens to drown Our Lady represents the incorrect theological theories that attempt to undermine her crucial role in salvation history. As she said at Akita, “I alone am able to save you from the calamities that approach. Those who place their confidence in me will be saved.”⁵ Our Lady, because of her role as Co-

¹ Faustina Kowalska, *Diary* (Stockbridge: Marians of the Immaculate Conception, 1999), 626.

² Mark Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights on a Fifth Marian Dogma*, (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2000), 42.

³ Faustina Kowalska, *Diary*, 626.

⁴ Revelation 12:15

⁵ Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights*, 48.

redemptrix is the one through whom all graces are mediated to Earth and “the more we acknowledge her, the more she can mediate the grace of Redemption, peace and mitigation for our troubled world.”⁶ It is vital then, for the Church to officially recognize her role so that she can unleash the flood of graces into those souls dying of thirst. It is “only when our Holy Father, in his freedom as Vicar of Christ, proclaims this Marian doctrine on the highest level of revealed dogmatic truth, will Our Lady then be released to mediate the special graces necessary for our present human situation.”⁷ She will not force herself upon us, so it is up to us to decide if we will give her free range as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of All Graces and help us in the most important battle we will ever fight.

This title of Mary as Co-redemptrix is one of the most heavily-disputed theological doctrines the Church has ever seen, but what is it about this title that causes so much controversy? Mostly it comes from those who assume that it means Mary was an equal collaborator with Jesus in the Redemption of the world at Calvary. However, this assumption is totally and altogether incorrect, and has been set straight by thousands of years of Sacred Tradition and, within the last two centuries, Magisterial teaching. Their cultivation of this doctrine over the centuries instructs that the word ‘Redemptrix’ means ‘to buy back’, and the suffix ‘-trix’ signifies a female involvement. When the prefix ‘co-’, meaning ‘with’ (not ‘equal’ as some would assume) is added, the word Co-redemptrix is defined as a ‘woman who buys back with’. In this case, it is obvious that the woman in question can be no other than the ‘Woman’ who stood strong by Jesus’ side throughout His entire life, His Mother, the Mother of God and the Mother of all peoples. Therefore, it can be said in total confidence and without doubt that this term refers to Mary who ‘buys back with’ Jesus in the work of Redemption.

But how, exactly, did the Blessed Mother redeem humanity alongside Jesus, and in what manner? In Catholic teaching, it is explained that

⁶ *Ibid*, 48.

⁷ *Ibid*.

Christ Jesus earns what is called a condign merit, or *meritum de condigno*, which is an obligation of the Father to reward the work of the Son by His own virtue in the order of justice; while Mary's merit is what is called congruent merit, or *meritum de congruo*, which is "based on the appropriateness of recompense for her joint suffering with Jesus, coupled with the generosity of the Eternal Father for the Virgin Daughter's sacrifice of love and obedience offered to Him for the world's salvation."⁸ While Jesus paid the full price of Redemption through His physical and spiritual offering to the Father to redeem humanity, the Blessed Mother participated in a subordinate, secondary manner through her spiritual suffering. "In essence, Mary merited in the order of fittingness that which Jesus merited in the order of justice and equality between himself and the Father."⁹ Mary, though subordinate in the Redemptive merit, does not mean that she was simply an accessory, but rather "had an exceptional worth beyond the human mind to conceive..." and marked "a quasi-participation in the infinite worth of the Savior's merits."¹⁰ For God has willed that all men participate in the Redemption of the Cross in a remote and subordinate manner by uniting their own sufferings to His. While Jesus is the One, True Mediator between God and humanity, all Christians are called to cooperate collaterally in His mediation through redemptive suffering. In this we are reminded that any participation in the Redemption by a creature is only possible because of the goodness and the openness of God to allow human collaboration, so that, as Pius X taught, "the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful."¹¹ That being said, it is only because of God's initial stirring in the heart of men that Christians can even make the choice to offer up their little crosses alongside the One at Calvary. With Mary, it is the same; she owes everything to God, as all humans do, and it is only because He first moves, that she can follow. Yet, God desired that she participate in the work of Redemption in a special way so that she

⁸ *Ibid*, 155.

⁹ *Ibid*, 119.

¹⁰ Mark Miravalle, *Mariology: A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians and Consecrated Persons* (Goleta, Queenship Publishing, 2007). Kindle Edition. 8150.

¹¹ Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights*, 154.

would have the right to distribute those graces that she worked so intimately in obtaining. It is because she is first Co-redemptrix that she is able to operate as Mediatrix of all graces.

Genesis 3:15

Mary's role as Co-redemptrix is one of the most heavily supported doctrines in Scripture. Mary is first introduced as the 'Woman' in Genesis 3:15. Though Mary is not explicitly named, it has been well established in the Catholic Tradition that she is the woman whose seed shall crush the head of the serpent. The verse reads, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; she will crush your head, and you will bruise her heel."¹² In this verse, God is addressing the serpent who just entered into the Garden of Eden, paradise on earth, and tempted Adam and Eve with enough cunning and deceit to bring about the downfall of humanity in one catastrophic moment. Yet, despite the disappointment, God immediately promises to send a savior. He doesn't specify who the savior will be or when the savior will come, but what God does make sure to mention is that he will be born of a woman who will be united with him in complete and total enmity of the serpent.

This woman must be something extraordinary; someone who is radically antithetical to the serpent. If the serpent is prideful, the woman must be humble; if the serpent is disobedient and self-serving, the woman must be obedient and self-sacrificing; if the serpent is full of sin, the woman must be full of grace; and if the serpent is instrumental in the ruination of humanity, the woman must be instrumental in the redemption of humanity. This enmity between the serpent and the woman is crucial to the Church's understanding of Mary's role in the saving work of Christ. She participates with her offspring in the crushing of the head of Satan in the work of Redemption. For as she is antithetical with the serpent, so too are the seeds of the woman and the serpent. For the woman, the Magisterium interprets that her offspring is Christ the Savior, whereas for the

¹² Genesis 3:15.

serpent, his offspring is sin and death. It is clear that from the beginning of Scripture, at the dawn of time, God the Father prophecies about the woman and her seed, and within this prophecy lies the mariological truth that “the Woman was to intimately share in the complete redemptive triumph over Satan.”¹³

Isaiah 7:14

In the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, the ‘Woman’ from Genesis 3:15 is identified further: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.”¹⁴ Isaiah reveals two things regarding the woman and her seed. First, in using the word ‘*almah*’ in Hebrew and the word ‘*parthenos*’ in Greek, this mother will remain an intact virgin. Secondly, the son born to her will be called Emmanuel, ‘God with us’. If we look further into the prophecies of Isaiah concerning this Emmanuel, it is evident that this savior will be a suffering servant. Isaiah 53:5 says, “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.”¹⁵ From this it is clear that not only will the seed of the woman, Emmanuel, suffer on behalf of humanity, but that “the mother of the Suffering Servant was also, by nature of her maternal relation, destined to suffer.”¹⁶

Luke 1:38

In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel greets Mary as “full of grace”.¹⁷ In the Greek, it is the word ‘*kecharitomene*’, a perfect participle that is used, indicating that Mary has already been made immaculate in the past and is identifying her present state.¹⁸ This is

¹³ Mark Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate* (Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing, 1993), 2.

¹⁴ Isaiah 7:14.

¹⁵ Isaiah 53:5

¹⁶ Miravalle, *Mary*, 3.

¹⁷ Luke 1:28

¹⁸ Miravalle, *Mary*, 4.

important to Mary's role as Co-redemptrix because, as John Paul II says, "The fullness of grace allowed her to fulfill perfectly her mission of collaboration with the work of salvation: it gave the maximum value to her cooperation in the sacrifice."¹⁹ When Gabriel asks Mary to be the mother of God, she gives her 'yes' or her 'fiat'. Mary's consent to the Will of God gives Jesus the instrument by which the saving work of Redemption is completed. Her cooperation in this alone makes her unique and worthy of the title 'Co-redemptrix'. For it is by Christ's body, the flesh and blood given to him by Mary, that the human race was redeemed. As Hebrews 10:10 says, "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."²⁰ Mary gave her flesh to the 'Word made flesh' and therefore "constitutes an inner participation in the work of Redemption that no other creature in heaven or on earth could ever reach"²¹ Lumen Gentium 58 confirms that the "Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered with her Son unto the Cross."²² Mary's 'yes' was not a blind 'yes', for, as John Tauler, the German mystic of the tenth century says, her 'yes' "tells us of Mary's foreknowledge of her co-suffering with Jesus, in which she would share in all his Redemptive merits and afflictions."²³ In other words, Mary accepted everything, the joys and the sorrows of Christ's mission, and it is precisely because Mary was preserved from sin that she was "capable of co-operating in the Redemption."²⁴

Luke 2:35

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Mary Immaculate the First Marvel of Redemption*, Papal Address at General Audience, 7 December 1983, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Issue n. 50, 1983, p. 1, quoted in Miravalle, *Mary*, 4.

²⁰ Hebrews 10:10.

²¹ Miravalle, *Mary*, 8.

²² *Ibid*, 8.

²³ John Tauler, *Sermo pro festo Purificat B.M. Virginis; Oeuvres completes*, ed. E.P. Noel, Paris, vol. 5, 1911, p.61, Quoted in Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus": *The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix* (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 97.

²⁴ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, November 1, 1995, p.11, Quoted in Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 203.

The prophet Simeon, at the Presentation of Our Lord Jesus at the Temple, prophecies about Jesus causing the rise and fall of many and that he will be a sign of contradiction. In this, he tells Mary that “a sword will pierce through your own heart too.”²⁵ This is a sign that she will participate in the sufferings of Jesus’ life, confirming the Suffering Servant narrative prophesied by Isaiah. Redemption was bought with a price; the price of suffering. When Mary gave her fiat, she opened her arms to everything that God was planning: the good and the difficult. Mary is ever at the side of her Son, bearing and “pondering in her heart”²⁶ everything that he endures. In this, Mary has a tendency to precede her Son in things. “Just as Mary preceded her Son’s stainless entry into the human family by her Immaculate Conception, so too did the Mother go before her Son in the order of suffering that would lead to the climax of the Redemption on the Cross.”²⁷ It is her maternal right to accompany her Son through all the moments of his life, from his birth, to his public ministry and even through the brutality of his passion and death. Mary suffered with Jesus all her life, as is laid out in her seven sorrows. She is no stranger to suffering and it is important to understand that she suffers in the way that all Catholics understand it: redemptively.

John 19:25-27

In Jesus’ final moments as he hung in agony on the cross, about to expire, he volitionally says to his mother: “Woman, behold your son.”²⁸ Again, the ‘Woman’ of Genesis 3:15 is recalled as Mary, the ‘Woman’ at the foot of the cross, is given to John the Beloved, the representative of humanity, as the Mother of all peoples. *Lumen Gentium* comments that “Mary shared the intensity of the suffering of Christ in her heart and that she shared in the immolation of that of the victim born to

²⁵ Luke 2:35.

²⁶ Luke 2:19.

²⁷ Miravalle, *Mary*, 10.

²⁸ John 19:26.

her.”²⁹ She is not passive, but is, as John Paul II claimed, “spiritually crucified at Calvary” along with her Son. Her role as a willing participant in the spiritual suffering at Calvary is willed by God the Father because of its “mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful” merit.³⁰ She becomes mediatrix of all graces because she first participated in the winning of graces during the redemption of humanity as Co-redemptrix.

Sacred Tradition

Mary’s role as Co-redemptrix as evidenced in Sacred Scripture has flourished in the Sacred Tradition of the Church by bishops, saints and Church Fathers who have uncovered the seeds of this marian truth and have enriched them over the centuries with the soil of Tradition in order for it to blossom into what we know today.

According to the patristics, there are two principles of Redemption that must first be mentioned in order to understand the standpoint of these saints, bishops, mystics and Doctors of the Church. The first principle is that of Recapitulation, meaning that Christ came to ‘go over’ the first creation by uniting within Himself all of the aspects from the original state so as to put forth a new creation in order to redeem the debts of the world to the Father.³¹ In this model, Jesus Christ becomes a New Adam, come to do what Adam could not. The second patristic principle of Redemption is Recirculation which teaches that Jesus as the New Adam must recirculate, or imitate that which was done by Adam but in an antithetical way.³² It is in the principles of Recapitulation and Recirculation that the patristics found purpose to name Mary as the New Eve. “It was a natural and logical development for the sub-Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr (+c.165), Irenaeus of

²⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican. Accessed August 5, 2020.

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, 58.

³⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, n. 25.

³¹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 97.

³² *Ibid*, 65.

Lyons (+c.202) and Tertullian (+c.220), to see Mary as the ‘New Eve’, the God-given helpmate of the ‘New Adam’.”³³

In the second century, St. Justin Martyr was the first to compare Mary antithetically with Eve: “For Eve, being a virgin and undefiled conceiving the word from the serpent, gave birth to disobedience and to death. The Virgin Mary, however...of her He was born... through whom God overthrows the serpent and angels and men like to the serpent.”³⁴

St. Irenaus, Bishop of Lyons and first mariologist, in the beginning of the third century said:

Just as she... having disobeyed, became the cause of death for herself and for the entire human race, so Mary...being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the entire human race...thus the knot of Eve’s disobedience received unloosing through the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve bound by unbelief, the virgin Mary unfastened by belief.³⁵

Irenaus proposes that Mary was not the “essential or ‘formal’ cause of salvation but as an instrumental cause anti-parallel to Eve’s instrumental causality in Adam’s formal loss of grace for humanity.”³⁶ “With Irenaeus, the Eve-Mary parallel is not simply a literary effect nor a gratuitous improvisation, but an integral part of his theology of salvation.”³⁷

In the latter part of the fourth century, St. Ephraem, Doctor of the Church, wrote that “Eve wrote a bill of death, and the Virgin paid the

³³ Miravalle, *Mariology*, Kindle Edition. 7777.

³⁴ St. Justin, *Dialogues cum Tryphone*, ch. 100; PG 6, 709-712, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 66.

³⁵ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, vol. 3, ch. 22, n. 4, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 67.

³⁶ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 67.

³⁷ Miravalle, *Mariology*, Kindle Edition. 7786.

debt.”³⁸ He continued on, describing that the Virgin Mary was chosen by God to be the “instrument of our salvation” and that she is the “price of redemption for captives”.³⁹ St Ambrose, another Doctor of the Church and mentor to St. Augustine, taught that Mary “brought forth Redemption for the human race,” and “bore in her womb the remission of sins”.⁴⁰

Saint Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, kicked off the fifth century by writing rather eloquently that “since Eve brought the cause of death to the human race, through which death entered the world, Mary furnished the Cause of life, through whom life was produced for us.”⁴¹ In the middle of the fifth century St Peter Chrysologus said that “all men merited life through a woman.”⁴² Proclus of Constantinople also addressed Mary: “you who alone carry the Redemption of the world.”⁴³ Later on in the fifth century, St. Augustine, one of the most prominent Doctors of the Church, formed a lot of his teachings about Mary around the model of her as the second Eve. He said:

It is a great sacrament that, as death came to us by a woman, life was born to us by a woman; so that in both sexes, feminine and masculine, the devil, being conquered, might be tormented, as you are glorified in the downfall of both. He would not have been adequately punished had both sexes been freed, but we

³⁸ St. Ephraem, *On the Institution of the Church*, n. 11, J.T. ed. Lamy, Mechliniae, 1889, t. 3, 978, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 70.

³⁹ St. Ephraem, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Assemani, vol. 3, Rome, 1832, p. 528, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 70.

⁴⁰ St. Ambrose, *De institutione virginum*, ch. 13, n. 81, *PL* 16, 339, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 71.

⁴¹ St. Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses*, 1. 3, t. 2; *PG* 42, 729, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 71.

⁴² St. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* 142; *PL* 52, 580, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 71.

⁴³ Proclus of Constantinople, *Sermo* 5, art. 3; *PG* 65, 720 C, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 72.

have not been freed by both.”⁴⁴ He further writes, “a woman handed the poison to the man who was to be deceived. A woman hands salvation to the man to be restored. A Woman, by bringing forth Christ, compensates for the sin of the man deceived by a woman.”⁴⁵

The first five centuries brought about a very strong mariological tradition within the Church concerning Mary’s Co-redemptive role in the salvation of humankind: “the Father’s proclaim that Mary is always central, always instrumental, always an essential part of God’s plan “with Jesus” to reverse the sin of Adam and Eve.”⁴⁶ This is found in the ancient Christian liturgy where “there is evidence that the Coptic, Ethiopian, and Mozarabic liturgies ‘pray the doctrine of Mary in salvation’ and in the Armenian liturgy they specifically addressed Mary as ‘salvatrix’ and ‘liberatrix’.”⁴⁷ As St. Jerome put it simply, “death through Eve; life through Mary”.⁴⁸

Moving on into the 6th century, an Eastern akathist hymn addresses Mary: “Hail, Redemption of the tears of Eve.”⁴⁹

In the seventh century we get the first instance in which Mary is referred to as one who redeems with the one Redeemer. St. Modestus of Jerusalem said that through Mary, we have been “redeemed from the tyranny of the devil.”⁵⁰

⁴⁴ St. Augustine, *De agone christ.*, ch. 22; PL XL, 303, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 71.

⁴⁵ St. Augustine, *Sermo 51 de concord, Matth. Et Luc.*, n.2; PL 38, 335, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 72.

⁴⁶ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 73.

⁴⁷ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 70.

⁴⁸ St. Jerome, *Epist. 22, 21*; PL 22, 408, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 73.

⁴⁹ *Akathist Hymn*, Strophe 1; PG 92, 1337 A, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 77.

⁵⁰ *Enconium in B. Virginem*, VII; PG 86, 3293 B, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”: *The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix* (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 79.

In the eighth century, St Andrew of Crete said, “in you, we have been redeemed from corruption,” and that “all of us have obtained salvation through her.”⁵¹ In the same century St. John Damascene, Doctor of the Church, said that it is Mary “through whom we were redeemed from the curse.”⁵²

In the ninth century, Alcuin, the Abbot of Tours, tells Mary that “the whole world rejoices that it has been redeemed through you.”⁵³ Saint Theodore the Studite, said in like fashion that Mary is the “Ransom of the world.”⁵⁴

John the Geometer, a Byzantine monk, in the 10th century taught that Mary was close to Jesus throughout his entire work of redemption: “...she even suffered with him... terribly sundered, she would have wished a thousand times to suffer the evil she saw her Son suffering.”⁵⁵ In the same century, the word “Redemptrix” was used in reference to Mary in a French Psalter in a petition which implored, “Holy Redemptrix of the world, pray for us.”⁵⁶ It's important to note that this title of ‘Redemptrix’, even without the ‘co-’ has always been used contextually in subordination to the One Redeemer, and is justified as a legitimate title of the Mother of God.

St. Peter Damian in the eleventh century articulates the attitude of the Church in saying that “... we are debtors to the Most Blessed Mother of God, and... after God we should thank her for our Redemption.”⁵⁷

⁵¹ St. Andrew of Crete, *Canon in B. Annae conceptionem*, PG 97, 1307, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 79.

⁵² St. John Damascene, *Homilia in Annuntiationem B.V. Mariae*, PG 96, 657, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 79.

⁵³ Alcuin, *s. de Nativ.*; PL 101, 1300 D, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 79.

⁵⁴ St. Theodore the Studite, *Triodium Dominicae abstinentiae*, ode y, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 80.

⁵⁵ John the Geometer, *Life of Mary*, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 81.

⁵⁶ *Litanies des saintes*, in a Psalter of French origin, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 82.

⁵⁷ St. Peter Damian, *Sermo 45 in Nativitate Beatissimae Virginis Mariae*; PL 144, 743, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 84.

The twelfth century was dominated by the one of the greatest mariologists the Church has ever seen, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. The Marian title of Co-redemptrix was further developed by him when he taught that Mary offered Jesus as a victim to the Father in recompense for the sins of the world. Bernard was also the first to say that Mary underwent a “co-suffering” with Jesus. Bernard's disciple St. Arnold of Chartres went on to use the very important term “Co-crucified” in reference to Mary’s sacrifice at Calvary and that she “Co-died” with him, not in a physical way, but, “what they did in the flesh of Christ with nail and lance, this is the co-suffering in her soul.”⁵⁸

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, many theologians, saints and mystics came forward to defend and promote Mary as Co-redemptrix.⁵⁹ St. Bridget of Sweden received a series of visions from Jesus and Mary in which Mary's role as Co-redemptrix had been supernaturally affirmed and revealed.⁶⁰ St. Bridget received a vision of Our Lady of Sorrows who said that “My Son and I redeemed the world as with one heart.”⁶¹ Jesus later came to St. Bridget to confirm this in saying, “My Mother and I saved man as with one heart only, I by suffering in my heart and my flesh, she by the sorrow and love of her heart.”⁶² Given the wide acceptance of Saint Bridget’s private revelations, these statements from Jesus and Mary catapulted Mary's role as Co-redemptrix forward into the teachings and doctrines of the Church. St. Bonaventure, another great saint from the thirteenth century, articulates that “that woman (namely Eve) drove us out of paradise and sold us; but this one (Mary) brought us back again and bought us.”⁶³ St. Albert the Great confirms Bonaventure's teachings by saying that Mary “participated in all of his same acts.”⁶⁴ John Tauler in the fourteenth century said that “God accepted her oblation as a

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”: 93.

⁶⁰ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 96.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ St. Bonaventure, *de don. Sp.* 6; 14, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 95..

⁶⁴ St. Albert the Great, *Comment. In Matt. I*, 18; *Opera Omnia*, vol. 37, p. 97, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 95.

pleasing sacrifice, for the utility and salvation of the whole human race... So that, through the merits of her sorrows, she might change God's anger into Mercy.”⁶⁵ To close those two great mariological centuries. St. Catherine of Siena calls Mary the “Redemptrix of the human race because, by providing your flesh in the Word, you redeem the world. Christ redeemed with His passion and you with your sorrow of body and mind.”⁶⁶

In the sixteenth century, Jesuit priest Alphonsus Salmaron, heroic theologian of the Council of Trent, became a champion of the title. He says that Mary was created Immaculate so that “she would be Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Cooperatrix of the salvation of mankind.”⁶⁷ Salmaron reflects the theological disposition at the time that the term ‘Redemptrix’ was slowly giving way to the term ‘Co-redemptrix’.

By the 1600s, references in Sacred Tradition of Our Lady’s participation in the work of Redemption with her Son had reached well over three hundred instances, but it wasn’t until the seventeenth century that the Golden Age of Mary Co-redemptrix came about and the foundations were laid for this title to become an official doctrinal teaching of the Church.⁶⁸ St. Lawrence of Brindisi took a rather soteriological route referring to the “spiritual priesthood” of Mary:

The spirit of Mary was a spiritual priest, as the cross was the altar and Christ the sacrifice; although the spirit of Christ was the principal priest, the spirit of Mary was there together with the spirit of Christ; indeed it was one spirit with him as one soul in two bodies. Hence the spirit of Mary together with the spirit of Christ performed the Priestly office at the altar of the Cross

⁶⁵ John Tauler, *Sermo pro festo Purificat. B. M. Virginis; Oeuvres completes*, ed. E.P. Noel, Paris, vol. 5, 1911, p. 61, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 97.

⁶⁶ St. Catherine of Siena, *Oratio XI*, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 98.

⁶⁷ Alphonsus Salmeron, *Comentarii in Evangel.* Tr. 5, Opera, Cologne. Ed. Hierat, 1604, t. III, pp. 37b-38a, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 107.

⁶⁸ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 113.

and offered the sacrifice of the cross for the Salvation of the world to the Eternal God.⁶⁹

St. Robert Bellarmine continues in this Golden Age to develop this titular seed by saying: “She alone cooperated in the mystery of the Incarnation; she alone cooperated in the mystery of the passion, standing before the Cross, and offering her Son to the salvation of the world.”⁷⁰ Another aspect of this Golden Age of Mary Co-redemptrix is the idea of Marian ransoming, which comes about in two ways: the first in that Mary paid the same price as her Son in a subordinate, spiritual manner to appease the justice of God, and secondly that Mary sacrifices her own merit in union with that of her Son’s on the cross on behalf of Humanity.⁷¹

By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the title Co-redemptrix became the most popular title used in reference to Mary’s participation in the Redemption of humanity, and is used hundreds of times by theologians, saints and mystics.⁷² St. Louis De Montfort in the beginning of the eighteenth century emphasized that Jesus Christ chose to depend on Mary throughout his entire life from his conception to his death, “in order that He might make with her but one sacrifice, and be emulated to the Eternal Father by her consent, just as Isaac of old was offered by Abraham’s consent to the will of God. It is she who nursed him, supported him, brought him up, and then sacrificed him for us.”⁷³ St. Alphonsus Ligouri continues this tradition of calling Mary Co-redemptrix and teaches that it is because of her co-redemption that she becomes the spiritual “mother of our souls”.⁷⁴ Father Faber teaches three reasons why Mary should be called

⁶⁹ St. Lawrence of Brindisi, *Mariale; Opera Omnia*, Patavii, 1928, vol. 1, pp. 183-184, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 115.

⁷⁰ St. Robert Bellarmine, *Cod. Vat. Lat. Ottob.* 2424, f. 193, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 116.

⁷¹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 117.

⁷² Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 131.

⁷³ De Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, n.18, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 132.

⁷⁴ St. Alphonsus Ligouri, *La Glorie di Marie, discorso sulla Salve Regina*, ch. 1, *Opera Ascetiche*, Rome, 1937, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 133.

the Co-redemptrix above all co-redemptive Christians: the first is because of her cooperation with the Lord “in a singular and superlative degree”, the second is because of “the indispensable cooperation of her maternity,” and lastly because of the intensity of her “dolors”.⁷⁵

Magisterium

It was the popes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that propelled the title of Mary Co-redemptrix into the realm of Magisterial teaching as a legitimate and deserved title of Our Lady.⁷⁶ It is important to understand that even when a pope does not speak *ex cathedra*, the faithful are still required to lend a “loyal submission of will and intellect”.⁷⁷ *Lumen Gentium* makes it clear when it is especially important to recognize when a pope is exercising teaching authority by “the character of the documents...the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which a certain document is formulated.”⁷⁸ With this in mind, the popes in the last two centuries have exercised all three of these easily identifiable requirements for papal instruction. The manner of the ‘documents in question’ have been manifested to the faithful through encyclicals, Apostolic letters, exhortations and general addresses.⁷⁹ In addition to this, the title has been used frequently by the recent petrine successors so that by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, “all the conciliar criteria for the ordinary teachings of the papal Magisterium are fulfilled.”⁸⁰

The first pope to refer to the Co-redemption of Mary was Pius IX, who, in his 1854 bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, defining the Immaculate Conception as dogma, he refers to Mary as a Reparatrix. He says: “Also did they declare that the most glorious Virgin was the Reparatrix of

⁷⁵ Faber, *The Foot of the Cross or the Sorrows of Mary*, Peter Reilly, 1956, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 136.

⁷⁶ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 149.

⁷⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, 25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 150.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

her first parents, the giver of life to posterity, that she was chosen before the ages, prepared for Himself by the Most High...that she has crushed the poisonous head of the Serpent.”⁸¹

In the last part of the nineteenth century, Pope Leo XIII called Mary the “cooperatrix in the sacrament of man’s Redemption,” and “would be likewise cooperatrix in the dispensation of the graces deriving from it.”⁸² In his encyclical, *Jucunda Semper*, Leo instructs about Mary’s role as Co-redemptrix without using the official title:

When Mary offered herself completely to God together with her Son in the temple, she was already sharing with him the painful atonement on behalf of the human race... [at the foot of the Cross] she willingly offers Him up to Divine Justice, dying with Him in her heart, pierced by the sword of sorrow.⁸³

Leo XIII became the first pope to give official approval to the title Co-redemptrix for Mary. On July 18, 1885, he approved a series of praises (*laudes*) to Jesus and Mary with an indulgence of 100 days granted by the Congregation for Indulgences and Sacred Relics. Mary is referred to as “co-redemptrix of the world” (*corredentrice del mondo*) in the Italian version of the praises. In the Latin version, she is referred to as the “*mundo redimendo coadiutrix*”). Leo XIII, however, approved both the Italian and Latin versions of the prayer (*Acta Sanctae Sedis* [ASS] 18 [1885] p. 93).

St. Pius X imitated his predecessors in teaching the doctrine of Mary Co-redemptrix without actually using the title publicly. In his 1904 encyclical, *Ad Diem Illum*, Pius refers to the “union of suffering and purpose existing between Christ and Mary” as what earns her the

⁸¹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 151.

⁸² Leo XIII, ASS 28, 1895-1896, pp. 130-131, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*Jesus*”, 151.

⁸³ Leo XIII, Encyclical *Jucunda Semper*, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 152.

worthy title “reparatrix of the lost world”.⁸⁴ He also goes on to say that “she was chosen by Christ to be His partner in the work of human salvation”.⁸⁵

During the pontificate of Pius X, the Holy See three times gave approval to prayers invoking Mary as co-redemptrix (cf. *Acta Sanctae Sedis* [ASS] 41 [1908], p. 409); *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* [AAS] 5 [1913], p. 364; *AAS* 6 [1914], pp. 108–109). These approvals show “the appropriateness of the title as part of authentic Catholic devotion.”⁸⁶ As Cardinal Lepicier said, “after the Mother of God, the title of Co-redemptrix is the most glorious that can be granted to the Virgin”.⁸⁷

Pius X’s successor, Benedict XV wasted no time in propelling the Co-redemptrix title further when he taught that Mary “redeemed the human race together with Christ.”⁸⁸ He also articulated rather eloquently that:

To such extent did [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 rightly say she redeemed the human race together with Christ.⁸⁹

After Benedict XV, the doctrine of Mary as Co-redemptrix became more understood, so that by the time Pius XI ascended to the Holy See, the faithful were ready for him to become the first pope to

⁸⁴ St. Pius X, Encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*; *ASS* 36, p. 453, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 153.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter *Inter Sodalicia*; *AAS* 10, pp. 181-182, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 157.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

officially use the title in a papal address.⁹⁰ On November 30, 1933, Pius XI addressed the pilgrims of Vicenza: “By necessity, the Redeemer could not but associate His Mother in His work. For this reason we invoke her under the title of Co-redemptrix.”⁹¹ Pius also implores that all people are called to be co-redeemers in Christ when he addressed the youth of the Spanish pilgrims that “they too must make a great effort to be co-redeemers”.⁹²

Pius XII never officially used the title, but taught the doctrine nevertheless. He makes use of the ancient models of Recapitulation and Recirculation when he said, “It was she who, always most intimately united with her Son, like a New Eve, offered Him up 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.”⁹³ He opens up the point of Mary’s ‘maternal right’, something every mother has the right to in protecting their child from harm, and Mary willingly gives this up, as tortuous as it was, for humanity’s Redemption. This is one of the reasons why her offerings gained so much merit.

Vatican II

By the time the Second Vatican Council convened in 1962, there had been an influx of petitions from among the faithful and clergy alike in the hopes that the fifth Marian dogma of Mary as Co-redemptrix would be defined. However, John XXIII, the convener of the council and reigning pontiff at the time, made it clear that this was to be a pastoral council, not a defining one. Thus hopes for the definition of the final Marian dogma were crushed; but not completely. The Council, though not explicit in its terminology of Mary as Co-

⁹⁰ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 158.

⁹¹ Pius XI, *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 1, 1933, p.1, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 158.

⁹² Pius XI, *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 25, 1934, p.1, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 159.

⁹³ Ven. Pius XII, *Encyclical Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943; *AAS* 35, 1943, p. 247, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 160.

redemptrix, put forth an extraordinary amount of synthesized content of the doctrine of Mary as Co-redemptrix.⁹⁴ In fact, the first schema, or draft for the Marian chapter contained in *Lumen Gentium* did use “Co-redemptrix”, as well as “Mediatrice” and “Dispensatrix of all graces”, but were not included in the final draft.⁹⁵ Many have questioned why this would be so, considering how much historical, Scriptural, Traditional and Magisterial support the title, among others, had. The subcommission wrote a *praenotanda*, or an explanatory note, revealed that when the schema was distributed among those present at the Council, “certain expressions and words used by Supreme Pontiffs have been omitted, which, in themselves are absolutely true, but which may be understood with difficulty by separated brethren (in this case, Protestants).”⁹⁶ Yet hope remained as a result of the disclaimer put in chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*: “this chapter on the Blessed Virgin in no way constitutes a complete doctrine on Mary.”⁹⁷ With this, it continues to say that “those opinions therefore may be lawfully retained which are propounded in Catholic schools concerning her...”⁹⁸ In other words, the Council recognized and encourages theologians around the world to continue studying and teaching mariological truths concerning Our Lady’s spiritual maternity, and considering the fact that the dominant marian topic at the time was Mary as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrice, it is safe to say that the Council in no way condemns these titles, nor the promotion of them in schools around the world. “This is why any idea that the Second Vatican Council sought to put an end to the doctrinal development of Mary Co-redemptrix is simply an erroneous contradiction of the Council’s own words and teachings.”⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the Marian chapter in *Lumen Gentium* was brimming with doctrinal evidence for the confirmation of Mary as Co-redemptrix. *Lumen Gentium* 56 states: “The Father of mercies willed that the

⁹⁴ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 168.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 170.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 171.

⁹⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, ch. 8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹⁹ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 173.

Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in bringing about death, so also a woman should contribute to life”.¹⁰⁰ Paragraph 56 continues: “...the Fathers see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating in the work of man’s salvation through faith and obedience.”¹⁰¹ The Council is very clear that Mary was completely dedicated to the work of Redemption during her entire life, as most of the Fathers of the Church have taught. In this, they share Traditional evidence for Mary as a sharer in the work of Redemption.

Perhaps the most profound statements regarding Mary’s role at Calvary come from paragraph 58:

Thus 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, enduring with her only-begotten Son the intensity of His suffering, associated herself with His sacrifice in her mother’s heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her.¹⁰²

Here it is evident that the Council confirms just about everything the title stands for without using the explicit terminology. The document continues: “[Mary] 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”.¹⁰³ The Council then further clarifies: “This, however, is so understood that it neither takes away anything from, nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ as the One Mediator.”¹⁰⁴ In a word, the Council teaches

¹⁰⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 56.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁰³ Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 179.

¹⁰⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, 62.

virtually every aspect of what the title of Mary as Co-redemptrix means, but without the title.

Pope St. John Paul II: The Pope of Mary Co-redemptrix

If there was one pope who could have made up for the lack of usage of the Co-redemptrix title during the Second Vatican Council, it could be none other than the 'Pope of Mary Co-redemptrix' himself, Pope St. John Paul II. He used the title very frequently in official documents more so than any other pope, affirming that the title is legitimate and cannot be overlooked.¹⁰⁵ The first instance in which John Paul used the title was in his address to the sick on September 8, 1982. He says that Mary "participated in a marvelous way in the sufferings of her divine Son, in order to be Co-redemptrix of humanity."¹⁰⁶ The next instance happens two years later during a general audience. "To Our Lady - the Co-redemptrix," he begins, continuing with the words of St. Charles Borromeo, "You will endure much greater sorrows, O Blessed Mother and you will continue to live; but life will be a thousand times more bitter than death. You will see your innocent Son handed over into the hands of sinners...you will see the blood that you gave him spilling. And nevertheless you will not be able to die!"¹⁰⁷ These haunting words provide a visual spectacle for what Our Lady endured at the foot of the Cross. It is evident that John Paul II "affirms the authenticity of the Co-redemptrix title within the Church, both in the context of doctrinal treatments and in the order of prayerful invocation by the Church."¹⁰⁸ John Paul said that "Redemption was the work of her Son. Mary was associated with it on a subordinate level. Nevertheless, her participation was real and demanding."¹⁰⁹ In his Apostolic letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, John Paul explains that Mary's place at

¹⁰⁵ Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 189.

¹⁰⁶ John Paul II, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1978-, V/3, 1982, 404, quoted in Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 190.

¹⁰⁷ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, November 12, 1984, p. 1, Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 191.

¹⁰⁸ Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 194.

¹⁰⁹ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, May 9, 1983, p. 1, Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus", 195.

the foot of the Cross is “not only proof of her unshakeable faith but also a contribution to the Redemption of all.”¹¹⁰ Perhaps the most striking comment John Paul makes concerning Mary in this role is when he addressed the crowd at Vicenza that Mary’s “very self, her heart, her motherhood” were “crucified” in the greatest “dark night” in history.¹¹¹ In 1997, John Paul again revisited the important concept of redemptive suffering for all Christians when he called Mary a “type of the Church”.¹¹² He compares her cooperation with the rest of humanity by saying, “The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to spread by prayer and sacrifice. Mary instead cooperated during the event itself and in the role of mother.”¹¹³

Support from Apparitions

Our Lady appeared in Akita, Japan to Sr. Agnes Sasagawa starting in 1974. Numerous mystical experiences were witnessed in Akita over the course of many years. One of the most extraordinary instances occurred when a wooden statue of Our Lady, sculpted after the likeness of Our Lady of All Nations, wept 101 times consecutively. It was revealed to Sr. Agnes by an angel that the number 101 signified that “sin entered the world through a woman and it is also through a woman that the grace of salvation came to the world” and the zero represents “God who exists from all eternity until eternity.”¹¹⁴ On another occasion, the angel presented Sr. Agnes with a Bible that was opened to Genesis 3:15. The angel then described the relationship between the ‘Woman’ who crushes the head of the serpent and the weeping, wooden statue of Mary. This apparition has proved to be critical in the moving forward of this doctrine as the apparitions at Lourdes were helpful in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

¹¹⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Dolores*, 25, John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, April 9, 1985, p. 12, Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 197.

¹¹¹ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, September 16, 1991, p. 4, quoted in Mark Miravalle, “*With Jesus*”, 198.

¹¹² *Lumen Gentium*, 63.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights*, 241.

The apparitions in which Our Lady has revealed herself as Co-redemptrix are the apparitions known as ‘The Lady of All Nations’.* These messages, though not approved by the Church, contain a wellspring of information about her role as Co-redemptrix, evidenced by the many instances in which she calls herself by that very title. She speaks about an era of peace that will accompany this, the fifth and final Marian dogma to be proclaimed. This makes theological sense considering the first four pertained to her earthly life, while the fifth would pertain to her role that continues even after her Assumption. She affirms that she was chosen to be Co-redemptrix from the moment of her *fiat* at the Annunciation by the Father and the Son, and that it is their wish that she ushers in a revitalization of Catholic spirituality in these modern times, imploring humanity to return to God before disaster strikes.¹¹⁵ Whether these messages are of supernatural origin or not, the heart of the messages remain true, that it would please Our Lady very much to recognize her title officially so as to give her permission to distribute the graces of the Redemption to the world which so desperately needs it.

This title of Co-redemptrix is not newly revealed but is as ancient as the work of Redemption itself and has been uncovered by the Tradition of the Church in the last two millennia; it is now up to the leaders of the Church to give humanity the opportunity it so desperately needs to receive the unprecedented graces promised by declaring the fifth Marian dogma. “With every battle there is loss of more than life; there is the loss of grace, the loss of souls. This is the battle Our Lady Co-redemptrix wages for us, not just historically at Calvary but right now. And the question remains for each one of us: are we willing to put on our battle array with her?”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Ida Peerdeman, *The Messages of the Lady of All Nations*, ed., Josef Kunzli (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 1996), 58.

¹¹⁶ Miravalle, *Contemporary Insights*, 42.