

Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli/Pius XII on Mary as Co-redemptrix

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Was Pope Pius XII (r. 1939–1958) opposed to using the Marian title, co-redemptrix? According to a declaration of the theological commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy [PAMI]—formed as an *ad hoc* group during the August 1996 PAMI Congress held in Częstochowa, Poland—“There is evidence that Pius XII intentionally avoided using it.”¹ The “evidence” for this claim is apparently found in the lack of the use of the title, “Co-redemptrix,” during his pontificate. This claim can be challenged in two ways: first, by the explicit use of the title by Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli—the future Pius XII—before his 1939 election as Pope; and secondly, by Pius XII’s reference to Mary as co-redemptrix in his 1949 discourse to the Director of the General Secretariat of Marian Congregations.²

Cardinal Pacelli’s use of the Marian title, co-redemptrix

Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII, served as the Vatican’s Secretary of State from February 7, 1930 until being elected to the papacy on March 2, 1939. It was during Cardinal Pacelli’s time as Secretary of State, that Pius XI became the first Pope to refer to Mary publicly as co-redemptrix, a title he used on three separate occasions.³ Did Cardinal Pacelli ever speak of Mary as co-redemptrix during his time as Secretary of State? The answer is yes. There are four uses of this Marian title by Cardinal Pacelli found in

¹ This declaration was published in *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition (June 4, 1997), p. 12; it can be found at: <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/m/mediatrix-coredeptrix-and-advocate-declaration.php>.

² Father Paolo Siano makes reference to this discourse in his article, “La ‘Corredentrice’ nel ‘900, al tempo di Pio XII,” *Corrispondenza romana* (12 Maggio 2021): <https://www.corrispondenzaromana.it/la-corredentrice-nel-900-al-tempo-di-pio-xii/>.

³ Pius XI referred to Mary as co-redemptrix on November 30, 1933 (*Discorsi di Pio XI*, 2, p. 1013); he did so again on March 23, 1934 (*L’Osservatore Romano* [OR] 25 March 1934, p. 1); and once again on April 28, 1935 (OR 29–30 April 1935 p. 1).

his *Discorsi e Panegerici (1931-1938)* published in 1956.⁴ In a Latin exhortation to priests at Lourdes on April 26, 1935, he refers to Mary as "Co-redemptrix" (*Corredemptricem*).⁵ In a French discourse given at Lourdes on April 28, 1935 for the solemn closing of the world jubilee of human redemption, he refers to Mary as "our Coredemptrix" (*notre Corédemptrice*).⁶

In a November 28, 1937 discourse given at the Church of St. Louis of the French in Rome (*la Chiesa di S. Luigi dei Francesi*), Cardinal Pacelli asks Mary to offer to the celestial Father "your tears of Coredemptrix" (*vos larmes de Corédemptrice*).⁷ In the same discourse, Cardinal Pacelli says that Christ gave to Mary "the title and the rights of Co-redemptrix" (*le titre et les droits de Corédemptrice*).⁸ It is clear from these four explicit references to Mary as co-redemptrix, that the future Pius XII believed it was appropriate to call Our Lady the co-redemptrix.

Pius XII and Mary as Co-redemptrix during his pontificate

The great Mariologist, Fr. Gabriele Roschini OSM (1900–1977), believed that Cardinal Pacelli as Pius XII never used the title, co-redemptrix, "but he expressed in a clear way the doctrine that it signified" (*Ha espresso tuttavia in modo chiaro la dottrina da esso significata*).⁹ There is no doubt that Pius XII clearly taught the doctrine of Mary as co-redemptrix. In his October 11, 1954 encyclical, *Ad Caeli Reginam*, he states:

From these considerations, the proof develops on these lines: if Mary, in taking an active part in the

⁴ Eugenio Card. Pacelli, *Discorsi e Panegerici (1931–1938)* Second Edition (Vatican City: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1956).

⁵ *Discorsi e Panegerici*, 405

⁶ *Discorsi e Panegerici*, 440.

⁷ *Discorsi e Panegerici*, 644.

⁸ *Discorsi e Panegerici*, 645.

⁹ G. Roschini, *Maria Santissima nella storia della salvezza, vol. II* (Isola del Liri: Tipografia Editrice M. Pisani, 1969), 126; cited by Siano in "La 'Corredentrica' nel '900, al tempo di Pio XII."

work of salvation, was, by God's design, associated with Jesus Christ, the source of salvation itself, in a manner comparable to that in which Eve was associated with Adam, the source of death, so that it may be stated that the work of our salvation was accomplished by a kind of "recapitulation" (S. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.*, V, 19, 1: PG VII, 1175 B), in which a virgin was instrumental in the salvation of the human race, just as a virgin had been closely associated with its death; if, moreover, it can likewise be stated that this glorious Lady had been chosen Mother of Christ "in order that she might become a partner in the redemption of the human race (*ut redimendi generis humani consors efficeretur*)" (Pius XI, epist. *Auspiciatus profecto*: AAS XXV, 1933, p. 80).¹⁰

This passage of Pius XII clearly affirms Mary as the co-redemptrix without using the term. According to Roschini, "The title Co-redemptrix of the human race means that the most holy Virgin cooperated with Christ in our reparation as Eve cooperated with Adam in our ruin" (*Il titolo Corredentrica del genere umano significa che la Vergine SS. ha cooperato con Cristo alla nostra riparazione, come Eva aveva cooperato con Adamo alla nostra rovina*).¹¹ There is no doubt Pius XII affirmed what the title, co-redemptrix, means.

Many, though, have wondered why Pius XII never publicly referred to Mary as "co-redemptrix" during his pontificate (even though he used the title as Cardinal Pacelli). Is it true, though, that Pius XII never used the title "co-redemptrix" as Pope? Father Paolo Siano, in his 2021 article, "La «Corredentrica» nel '900, al tempo di Pio XII"

¹⁰ Pius XII, encyclical, *Ad Caeli Reginam* (October 11, 1954), no. 38; available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_11101954_ad-caeli-reginam.html.

¹¹ Padre Gabriele Maria Roschini, *Chi è Maria? Catechismo Mariano* a cura di Carlo DiPietro (Pignola: Sursum Corda, 2017) domanda 83, p. 47.

[The Coredemptrix in the 20th century up to the time of Pius XII],¹² points to a recent discovery of his. He notes that on pages 623-625 of the 1954 book, *Doctrina Pontificia. IV. Documentos marianos*,¹³ a speech by Pius XII from 1949 is reproduced (though unfortunately neither day nor month is specified) “to the director of the Secretary General of Marian Congregations” (p. 623). In that speech Pius XII says,

Do you not see in the whole world what an example of love, of extraordinary fervor, of what we might call holy madness, there is for the Mother of God, **for the mediatrix of all things, for the co-redemptrix of the human race**, for the divine governess, for the one who holds the keys of all grace, of every perfect gift, of every good that comes down from heaven? What has always been true; what has always been a Catholic dogma is lived now more than ever; it is the palpitation of millions of children of the Virgin Mary, who love her, who venerate her;...” (p. 625: emphasis added).¹⁴

[In the Spanish] *No ves en el mundo entero qué lección de amor, de fervor extraordinario, íbamos a decir de santa locura, por la Madre de Dios, **por la medianera de todas las cosas, por la corredentora del linaje humano**, por la divina gobernadora, por la que tiene las llaves de toda gracia, de todo don perfecto, de todo bien que desciende del cielo? Lo que siempre ha sido verdad; lo que siempre ha sido un dogma católico, se vive ahora más que nunca; es la palpitación de millones de hijos de la Virgen maria, que la aman, que la veneran [...]* (p. 625).

¹² Fr. Siano’s article is published in *Corrispondenza romana* (May 12, 2021), pages 10-15.

¹³ See *Doctrina Pontificia. IV. Documentos marianos*” (Edición preparada por el P. Hilario Marin S.J., Pontificia Universidad de Salamanca (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos (BAC), La Editorial Catolica, 1954), pages 623-625.

¹⁴ The translation is mine from the Spanish text cited by Fr. Siano.

Fr. Siano points out that this passage confirms something noted by Father Juniper B. Carol OFM in volume 2 of his three volume work, *Mariology* (1955–1961). Writing in 1957, Fr. Carol says: “While the present Holy Father, Pius XII, has not yet employed the term ‘Coredemptrix’ in any of his official documents, nevertheless, his mind on this Marian prerogative is quite clear from several utterances of his.”¹⁵ In a footnote (no. 24) to this sentence, Fr. Carol writes: “Cf., however, the words of the Holy Father to A. Carrillo de Albornoz, S.J., as reported in the latter’s article *La pensée du Pape*, in *Marie*, Vol. 3, March–April 1950, p. 59.” The words of the Holy Father to A. Carrillo de Albornoz, S.J. (the director of the Secretariat General of Marian Congregations) are the same as those found above in the passage cited above from the 1954 book, *Doctrina Pontificia. IV. Documentos marianos*. Fr. Siano mentions that on p. 623 of this book the editor provides a footnote explaining that this discourse was given in French, but it was published in a Spanish translation in the journal *Marie*, vol. III pages 58–59.

It is true that the 1949 discourse of Pius XII, in which he refers to Mary as “the co- redemptrix of the human race,” is not found in the official acts of the Holy Father. Nevertheless, its appearance in two publications and its mention by Fr. Juniper Carol O.F.M. provide evidence for believing that Pius XII did, in fact, refer to Mary as “co- redemptrix” at least one time during his pontificate (and this in a public discourse). If Pius XII as Cardinal Pacelli referred to Mary as co- redemptrix at least four times, there is no reason to believe that he suddenly found the term unacceptable as the Roman Pontiff. Both Fr. Roschini and Fr. Carol are correct that Pius XII explicitly taught the doctrine of Marian coredemption without using the title co- redemptrix (and he did so in major documents such as *Munificentissimus Deus* [1950] and *Ad Caeli Reginam* [1954]).¹⁶ The 1996 declaration of the theological commission of PAMI claims that “There is evidence that Pius XII intentionally avoided using it [co-

¹⁵ Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., S.T.D., “Our Lady’s Coredemption” in *Mariology Volume 2*, edited by Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M. (Milwaukee, WI, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1957), 384.

¹⁶ See Carol, “Our Lady’s Coredemption,” 385–386

redemptrix].” This claim, though, is open to challenge. There is actually evidence showing that Pius XII did *not* intentionally avoid using the term co-redemptrix during his pontificate. At least in one cited discourse of 1949, he referred to Our Lady as “the co-redemptrix of the human race” (*la corredentora del linaje humano*).