

The Crisis of Woman and the Proclamation of the Mother

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The concept and role of woman in western society is most certainly in a state of crisis. Recently, not only have biological males been named, “Woman of the Year” by national publications in the United States and Great Britain, but they have also won national women’s beauty contests, and continue to break women’s sport records internationally.¹ The United States Congress has prohibited the term “mother” from being used in certain legislative texts.² In an opposing spectrum, a national outcry was voiced by secular commentators when a National Football League Player at a Catholic college commencement address praised the fulfillment of womanhood in the traditional roles of “wife” and “homemaker.”³

Whenever ethics loses its foundations in metaphysics, there is grave danger that the subject in question will be acting against their nature and, consequently, seriously harmed. When actions are not grounded in being, and determinations of right and wrong for a given subject are not based on what or who the subject is, then a precarious Pandora’s box has been opened. Such, I believe, is the contemporary *status quaestionis* regarding women.

The journey towards remedy begs the ontological question: *who is woman?* While contemporary philosophical and anthropological efforts to answer this question can be helpful, their *principia mulieris* can also be tainted by the passing ethics of the present moment, which only fuels a vicious circle rather than lead to authentic philosophical, theological and anthropological foundations.

¹ Cf. Rachel Lewis, “2022 Woman of the Year” *USA Today*, March, 2022; Dylan, Mulvaney, “2023 Woman of the Year” *Attitude Magazine*; Lia Thomas, nominated by NCAA as “Woman of the Year,” University of Pennsylvania, July, 2022; NCAA National Championship in women’s swimming, March, 2022; Rikkie Kollé, 2023 Miss Netherlands, National Dutch Beauty Pageant, July, 2023.

² Cf. U.S. Congress voted to restrict “mother” to more gender inclusive language, in texts of Standing rules in House, Jan. 6, 2021.

³ Harrison Butker, Kansas City Chiefs placekicker, Commencement speech to the graduating class of 2024 at Benedictine College, Atchison, Kansas, May 11, 2024.

Ultimately, I believe, to “get woman right”, we will need to go to Revelation, far beyond the chronolatry of our own day, and as well to a historical figure who “did woman” perfectly.

I. Who is Woman?

In his Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope St. John Paul II describes the essence of woman in relation to her primary feminine charism: *the order of love in relation to persons*. He explains:

The significant comparison in the Letter to the Ephesians [5:21-33] gives perfect clarity to *what is decisive for the dignity of women*—both in the eyes of God—the Creator and Redeemer—and *in the eyes of human beings*—men and women. In God’s eternal plan, woman is the one in whom *the order of love in the created world of persons takes first root...the dignity of women is measured by the order of love.*⁴

According to the *Totus Tuus* pontiff, unless we begin with identifying the quintessential feminine act of loving and caring for human beings, then we will fail to identify the *sine qua non* of women’s dignity and vocation:

Unless we refer to this order and primacy of love [1Cor:13:13], we cannot give a complete and adequate answer to the question about women’s dignity and vocation. When we say that the woman is the one who receives love in order to love in return, this refers not only and above all to the specific relationship of marriage. It means something more universal, based on the very fact of her being a woman within all the interpersonal relationships which, in the most varied ways, shape society and

⁴ St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*. August 15, 1988,29 (emphasis mine).

structure between all persons—men and women. In this broad and diversified context, a woman represents a particular value by the fact that she is a human person, and, at the same time, this particular person, by the fact of her femininity⁵... “A woman’s dignity is closely connected with the love she receives by the very reason of her femininity; it is likewise connected *with the love she gives in return*... Woman can only find herself by giving love to others.”⁶

In fact, the “who” of woman can only be truly answered in the sublime task providentially entrusted to her *to love and care for God’s images, his highpoints of creation—the human person*: Again from St. John Paul: “...*The true order of love constitutes woman’s own vocation*... The moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that God entrusts the human being to her in a special way.”⁷

To love after receiving love, and to care for God’s sacred images on earth are at the heart of the accentuated mission of woman. In a historical moment when society has drastically lost its respect for the human person, coupled with a world replete with ubiquitous loneliness and woundedness, we can see St. John Paul’s urgent plea for women to *become what you are*: “Our time in particular awaits the manifestation of that “genius” which belongs to women, and which can ensure sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance: because they are human! -and because the greatest of these is love (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13).”⁸

Does this unique feminine *munus* for the love and caring of persons appear to some as insignificant or secondary? It should not for the Christian who truly believes the words of St. Paul that properly

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., n. 30.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

designate the summit of the hierarchy of human acts: “the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13).

Woman is, then, by her feminine nature, particularly directed to the concrete loving and nurturing of persons. Edith Stein, i.e., St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, who is presently being considered by the Holy See as a potential Doctor of the Church (“Doctor Veritatis”), states that “woman naturally seeks to embrace that which is living, personal and whole. To cherish, guard, protect, nourish and advance growth is her natural and maternal longing.”⁹ While Stein, as does St. John Paul II, identifies this sublimely radical personalism of woman by her very nature, and not therefore dependent on the vocation of physical motherhood, both authors speak of motherhood as essentially connected with the charism of femininity, in all of its physical and spiritual manifestations. To be a “mother”, Stein states, means to “protect and safeguard true humanity and to bring it to full development.”¹⁰

American theologian, Dr. Monica Migliorino Miller, develops an understanding of “maternal authority” as a dynamic manifestation of womanhood in relation to motherhood. The term, *authority* comes from the Latin *auctores*, meaning to be author or creator of something: “A person, therefore, has authority precisely by giving life... Authority is the power to give life, but equally as important, authority is entirely bound up with rights and responsibilities that are connected to this power so that the life that has been brought forth may come to its proper fulfillment.”¹¹

Since a woman plays a primary role in bringing human life into the world through conception, gestation and birth, she therefore acquires

⁹ Lucy Gelber and Romaeus Leuven, editors, *Essays on Woman, Collected Works of Edith Stein*, Volume 2, Second Edition Revised, Washington, D.C., ICS Publications, 2010, p. 45.

¹⁰ Edith Stein, as quoted by I. Guardini, “On the Education of Women,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, March 6, 1969, English Edition, p. 9.

¹¹ Monica Migliorino Miller, *The Authority of Women in the Catholic Church*, Steubenville, Ohio, Emmaus Road Publishing, 2015, p. 19.

a legitimate maternal authority in overseeing that human life in order that he or she receive its proper fulfillment. This accentuates her role as loving and caring for human beings, especially her own children. It likewise extends to the spiritual maternity of participating in bringing human beings into the spiritual life of faith in Jesus Christ, Priestly Head of the Church and the New Covenant:

Christ is the Head of a new humanity because he is the New Adam whose death is the source of the Church. This is his authority because this is how Jesus is the source of life and redemption. But women also possess authority, as they are the source of life in relation to Him [Christ] in the completion of the New Covenant. The authority of women is based on what women have been specifically entrusted with, according to the meaning of their gender, for the world's salvation.¹²

St. Teresa of Calcutta teaches that the greatest manifestation of woman's unique charism of love is seen in motherhood. In a message to the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, St. Teresa writes: "The special power of loving that belongs to a woman is seen most clearly when she becomes a mother. Motherhood is the gift of God to women."¹³

Venerable Fulton Sheen speaks of womanhood's lofty role as "protectress of culture," particularly within the context of her motherhood:

Culture derives from woman—for had she not taught her children to talk, the great spiritual values of the world would not have passed from generation to generation. After nourishing the substance of the body to which she gave birth, she then nourishes the

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹³ St. Teresa of Calcutta, *Letter to the Fourth World Conference on Women*, Beijing, 1995.

child with the substance of her mind. As guardian of the values of the spirit, as protectress of the morality of the young, she preserves culture, which deals with *purposes and ends*, while man upholds civilization, which deals only with means...¹⁴

Ultimately, the nature of woman is most profoundly found and rooted in the revelation of *the Woman of Scripture*, the “Woman-Mother of God,” without which today’s woman, I believe, will not find her full meaning and greatest fulfillment. Contemporary woman will not fully know “who she is” or be able to “become what she is” without the biblical revelation of the Woman of Scripture. As St. John Paul emphatically states:

This reality [of the Woman-Mother of God] also determines the essential horizon of reflection on the dignity and vocation of women. In anything we think, say or do concerning the dignity and the vocation of women, our thoughts, hearts and actions must not become detached from this horizon... Mary, the woman of the Bible, is the most complete expression of this dignity and vocation.¹⁵

II. The Woman of Scripture

We turn to Mary, the Woman of Scripture, to find the *whole truth about woman*. Five times in Scripture, Mary is referred to as “woman” either prophetically or personally, which collectively unveil the genius of woman in its greatest feminine and maternal personification.

The Woman of Genesis

Mary is the Woman of Genesis. “I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed (Gen. 3:15).” As the

¹⁴ Fulton Sheen, *The World’s First Love*, Ignatius Press, 1996, p. 184.

¹⁵ *Mulieris Dignitatem*, n.5.

victorious seed of the woman must ultimately be Jesus Christ, the woman-mother must ultimately be Mary (cf. Gen. 3:15). The woman of Genesis will be put by God the Father in total and perpetual enmity with the serpent, Satan, which will manifest the parallel opposition which will exist between the future Redeemer and the seed of evil. The woman's perpetual opposition to Satan and sin is positively embodied in an Immaculate Conception and a fullness of grace, eventually to be solemnly defined as such by Blessed Pius IX in 1854.

Following the revelation of her absolute enmity with the Devil, the Father immediately reveals the woman's future role in the plan of Redemption, "She will crush your head and you will lie in wait for her heel (Gen. 3:15)." Regardless as to whether the more Jeromian "*ipsa*" (she), or the more contemporary "*ipse*" (he) translation is used, or consideration of their respective Greek and Hebrew antecedents,¹⁶ the overall passage reveals that the woman will actively participate in the battle and ultimate redemptive victory of Christ over Satan. The role of Mary as the human Co-redemptrix with the divine Redeemer is first prophetically revealed in the first Good News.

In Genesis, chapters 2-3, Eve is only twice referred to by her name¹⁷, but is referred to as "woman" nine times,¹⁸ for she foreshadows Mary, *the* Woman of Scripture. Adam names the woman, "Eve," because she is "mother of all the living" (Gen. 3:20), which inseparably connects womanhood with motherhood. As well as being called "woman" because she was "taken out of man" to be his unique human companion within all creation (Gen 2:23), Eve will show her unique feminine ability to bring forth children after her union with Adam: "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord (Gen. 4:1)."

¹⁶ Cf. Stefano Manelli, F.I., "The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Old Testament," in M. Miravalle, ed., *Mariology: A Guide For Priests, Deacons, Seminarians and Consecrated Persons*, Santa Barbara, California, Seat of Wisdom Publications, p. 10.

¹⁷ Cf. Gen. 3:20; Gen. 4:1.

¹⁸ Cf., Gen. 2:22; Gen. 2:23; Gen. 3:1; Gen. 3:4; Gen. 3:6; Gen. 3:1`3; Gen. 3:15; and Gen 3:16.

The first woman predicts the greatest woman. The original mother of all the living in the order of nature foreshadows the perpetual Mother of all the living in the order of grace. The old Eve anticipates the New Eve. St. John Henry Newman confirms this most ancient Christian teaching: “What is the great teaching of Antiquity from its earliest date concerning her?...She is the Second Eve.”¹⁹

The Woman of Galatians

Mary is the Woman of Galatians. “In the fullness of time, God sent his son born of a woman (Galatians 4:4).” The Father predestined that a *new Woman* would be actively involved with Christ, the new Man, in the greatest act of human history—its Redemption. Just as a man, a woman and a tree would be the essentially involved in humanity’s fall, God the Father willed, as a manifestation of divine omnipotence, that a man, a woman, and a tree would be essentially involved in humanity’s redemption.

“Be it done unto me according to your word” (Lk. 1:38). These free, faithful, and feminine words from a young Jewish woman brought the human race its Redeemer. It remains a wonderment of nature that a creature should bring forth her creator as a true human mother. Yet, the young Mary was no surrogate mother. Her intimate participation with her son in Redemption began with the Incarnation and birth, but would continue uninterruptedly unto Calvary and beyond, extending for the entirety of his redemptive mission and her earthly life.²⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas is correct in saying Mary’s “yes” is uttered “in the name of all human nature.”²¹ St. Augustine is also right in saying, “God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us,”²² and thus the providential appropriateness of a woman’s free consent for human salvation.

¹⁹ St. John Henry Newman, *The New Eve*, Great Britain, Samuel Walker Publishers, reprinted by Newman Press, Westminster, 1952, p. 13.

²⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, n. 58, 62.

²¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 30, a. 1.

²² St. Augustine, *Sermo 169*, 11,13:PL 38, 923.

The mystery of a woman intrinsically cooperating in the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ will always remain a mystery. Yet, it nevertheless reveals God's requirement of free human participation for our salvation and for the salvation of others. St. John Paul II's expression, "co-redeemers in Christ"²³ likewise serves this mystery, as does St. Paul's call to be "co-workers with God" (1 Cor. 3:9), and as well to "make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, for the sake of his body which is the Church" (Col. 1:24).

Still, the unparalleled role of the Immaculate Theotokos in giving flesh to the Word in order to redeem the world is the unfathomable accomplishment of the woman revealed in Galatians. For this alone— her free, active, feminine cooperation in the redemptive Incarnation, Mary already merits the title of human Co-redemptrix, though it in no sense stops with the Annunciation.

The Woman of Cana

Mary is the Woman of Cana. "Woman, what is this to me and to you? My hour has not yet come?" (Jn. 2:4). The words of Jesus to his mother after her intercessory petition for a miracle ("they have no wine"), convey a question leading to grace, not a punitive correction. Often mistranslated, the Greek, "*Ti emoi kai soi*" is a leading question from the New Adam to the New Eve, the Redeemer to the Co-redemptrix, as if to communicate something like the following: "You know that if I perform this miracle, we are on the quick road to Calvary, and all that my "hour" entails. Are you ready for this? Are you ready to begin my public ministry here at Cana, which will end with my death at Calvary?" The woman of Cana's final words of Scripture, delivered to the attendants, convey her perpetual fiat to Jesus and his redemptive mission: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2:5).

²³ Cf. for example, Pope St. John Paul II, *Papal Address to the Sick at the Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God*, Rome, April 5, 1981, L'Osservatore Romano, English edition, April 13, 1981, p. 6.

Although the Woman of Scripture already revealed her role as Mediatrix at the Annunciation, she underscores her moral mediation at Cana. With her historic fiat, Mary mediates Christ the one mediator into the world (cf. 1 Tim 2:5). She is the *Mediatrix of the Mediator*, Jesus Christ, divine source and author of all graces. At Cana, she manifests her explicitly willed intercession as Mediatrix of all graces for humanity. St. John Paul II expounds on Mary's motherly mediation at Cana:

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 as a mother. She knows that as such she can point out to her Son the needs of mankind, and in fact, she has the "right" to do so.²⁴

It is noteworthy that the newly married couple are not recorded as disciples of Jesus, thus manifesting the *universality* of Mary's role as Mediatrix for all humanity, not only for Christians, but for all peoples. Most every pope from Benedict XIV in the mid-eighteenth century²⁵ to Pope Francis in 2023 have taught this doctrine, with Pope Francis referring to "Mediatrix of all graces" as "an ancient Marian title."²⁶

The Woman of Calvary

Mary is the Woman of Calvary. "When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, Behold, your mother! (Jn. 19:26-27)." Here the New Eve, the New Woman,

²⁴ St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, March 25, 1987, n. 21.

²⁵ Cf. Pope Benedict XIV, (107-1758), Mary is "the celestial stream through whom all graces flow" *Op. Omnia*, V. 16, ed., Prati, 1846, p. 428.

²⁶ Pope Francis, *Papal Address to the Diocese of Sassari*, Sardinia, May 13, 2023, <http://www.arcidiocesisassari.it/2023/festa-del-voto-il-messaggio-del-santo-padre/> (accessed July 13, 2023).

joins in mind, heart, and purpose with the redemptive mission of her son at its most climactic moment. Monica Miller emphasizes the unquestionably active role of Mary in the redemptive sacrifice at Calvary as manifestation of her role as Co-redemptrix, and as appropriate exercise of Mary's maternal authority:

As the New Eve, Mary is the Co-redemptrix....This woman of Cana is the Woman of Calvary, where Mary accomplished by her maternal authority the covenantal role of the New Eve, whose work, united to the sacrifice of her Son, serves as the origin of man's regeneration....²⁷At Calvary, Mary is not a passive onlooker. The crucifixion of her Son is not just something that just "happens" to her. Mary actively participates in the sacrifice by offering up her Son. It is a mother's sacrifice, the sacrifice of the New Eve. Her sacrifice is different from Christ's, but is in covenantal union with it. Without her sacrifice, the new creation would not be established...without woman, the covenant of Redemption would not be fulfilled."²⁸

The now classic conciliar text of *Lumen Gentium* 58 describes the intimate union of hearts between Son and mother in their unified obtaining of the graces of Redemption:

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 divine Son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his suffering in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus

²⁷ Miller, *The Authority of Women in the Catholic Church*, p. 98.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 104-105.

dying on the cross as a mother to his disciple, with the words: Woman, behold thy son (Jn. 19:27).”²⁹

St. John Paul II adds this commentary to the conciliar testimony to Mary’s co-suffering:

...Crucified spiritually with her crucified Son (cf. Gal. 2:20), she contemplated with heroic love the death of her God, she “lovingly consented to the immolation of the victim which she herself had brought forth” (*Lumen Gentium*, 58)...In fact, at Calvary she united herself with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church...Having suffered for the Church, Mary persevered to become Mother of all the disciples of her Son, the Mother of their unity...In fact, Mary’s coredemptive role did not cease with the glorification of her Son.³⁰

Mary offers her son and herself in obedience to the Father’s plan, as the New Adam and the New Eve, who jointly complete the mission of Redemption, though each, of course, on their own level—Jesus qua God, Mary qua human. This unified redemptive act of Son and Mother is mystically articulated in the classic *Revelations* of Jesus and Mary to St. Bridget of Sweden, where Mary conveys, “My Son and I redeemed the world as if with one heart,”³¹ followed by the words of Jesus, “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.”³²

The Second Vatican Council further teaches with certainty the unique coredemptive cooperation of Mary with Christ, which constitutes the

²⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, n. 58.

³⁰ St. John Paul II, *Papal Homily at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Alborada*, Quayaquil Ecuador, Jan. 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, March 11, 1985, p. 7.

³¹ St. Bridget of Sweden, *Revelationes*, ed. Rome, ap S. Paulinum, 1606, L., I., c. 35.

³²*Revelationes*, IX, c. 3.

causal foundation of her consequent role as Spiritual Mother of all peoples:

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.³³

Pre-conciliar popes repeatedly refer to the New Woman's unique role in Redemption at Calvary. For example, Pope Benedict XV stated in his 1918 Apostolic letter, *Inter Sodalicia*: "...we may rightly say that Mary redeemed the human race together with Christ."³⁴ Pope Pius XI specifically uses and directly defends the Co-redemptrix title:

By necessity, the Redeemer could not but associate [*non poteva, per necessità di cose, non associare*] his Mother in his work. For this reason, we invoke her under the title of Co-redemptrix. 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.³⁵

The post-conciliar papacy of St. John Paul II continued to use the Co-redemptrix title on at least six occasions, and consistently generously taught the doctrine of Marian coredemption on numerous occasions,³⁶ as for example, in this excerpt from *Salvifici Doloris*:

³³ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, n. 61.

³⁴ Pope Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter, *Inter Sodalicia*, 1918, AAS 10, p. 181-182.

³⁵ Pope Pius XI, Papal Allocution to the Pilgrims of Vicenza, November 30, 1933, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 1, 1933, p.1.

³⁶ Cf. Msgr. Arthur Calkins, "Pope John Paul II's Teaching on Marian Coredemption" in M. Miravalle, ed., *Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate Theological Foundations II, Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical*, Santa Barbara, Queenship Publishing Company, 1996, pp. 113-148.

In her [Mary], 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 of the Redemption of all...It was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view, but which was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world.³⁷

We see here the appropriate “hermeneutics of continuity” between pre-conciliar and post-conciliar Mariological teaching as most certainly implemented by St. John Paul II.

The cooperating role of the Woman of Calvary was a central though subordinate sharing with Jesus in the Father's eternal plan of human salvation. Pope Francis succinctly confirms this Marian truth in his January 1, 2020 homily: “From her, a woman, salvation came forth, and thus there is no salvation without a woman.”³⁸

The Woman of Revelation

Mary is the Woman of Revelation. “A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child...” (Rev. 12:1). As St. John Henry Newman expounds: “No one doubts that the ‘man-child’ is an allusion to our Lord: why then is not the ‘Woman’ an allusion to his Mother? This surely is the obvious sense of the words...they are not personifications but Persons. This is true of the Child, therefore it is true of the Woman.”³⁹

She is the woman clothed with the sun, i.e., in sanctified union with Christ her Son, who engages in the battle against the ancient dragon.

³⁷ Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, 1984, n. 25.

³⁸ Pope Francis, *Papal Homily, Mass of the Solemnity of the Mother of God*, Jan 1, 2020.

³⁹ Newman, *The New Eve*, p. 31.

The dragon is angry with the woman and therefore “makes battle on the rest of her offspring” (Rev. 12:17). Humanity is the “rest of the offspring” of this woman, the New Eve, who now fulfills the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 by leading the spiritual battle in the name of Christ to crush the serpent’s head and defeat the Dragon.

The Woman of Revelation has a crown with twelve stars, for she is mother of the king, and thus Queen in his kingdom. Mary’s queenship is as universal as Christ’s kingdom. The Old Testament *Gebirah* or “Queen Mother” of the Davidic kingdoms held the high office and consequent duty of both dynastic succession and principal advocate for the people of Israel.⁴⁰ This intercessory power of the queen-mother constituted the exercise of a dynamic feminine authority, based upon her maternal relation to the king (cf. 1 Kings 2:19).

The Woman of Revelation possesses and exercises the same dynamic maternal authority and advocacy for the People of God today. I believe it is time for the Church to honestly ask ourselves a critical question: Do we properly acknowledge Mary’s queenly and maternal authority in the Church today? Is she recognized, by both hierarchy and laity, as *leading* the contemporary cosmic battle against Satan for souls in virtue of her powerful maternal authority given her by Christ? Or is she sometimes given a passing devotional nod by members of the hierarchy or laity, with perhaps a concluding Marian hymn or procession, after we ourselves seek to be our own remedies through new synods or norms, to be our own leaders in the present spiritual battle against the Ancient Foe? Is it also possible that for certain members of the hierarchy, the idea would be problematic that the major problems facing the Church today could better be solved by a woman—by Mary, the Woman of Scripture and Mother of all peoples?

⁴⁰ Cf also Edward Sri, “Advocate and Queen,” in *Mariology for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians and Consecrated Persons*, Santa Barbara, Seat of Wisdom Publications, 2007, pp. 467-501.

In truth, we have neither the authority nor the power given by God to spiritually lead today's Church against the ubiquitous attacks coming from the Dragon, as it has been that uniquely granted to Mary, Queen and Advocate. As a corrective, I believe it would greatly benefit the Church to solemnly recognize and proclaim the maternal authority of Mary, the Woman of Revelation, for the greatest possible protection and defense for the "rest of her offspring."

III. Woman in the Church Today: Marian Principles

In what ways does Mary, the Woman of Scripture, shed light on the role of woman for all ages, including our own? We must avoid any modern temptation which would falsely maintain that while Mary may have been a model for past women, she no longer holds relevance for today's woman. The essential nature of womanhood has not changed, nor has Mary as its perfect exemplar.

Returning to the wisdom of *Mulieris Dignitatem*, St. John Paul II highlights the imperative for woman to fully exercise the royal priesthood of the laity: "If the human being is entrusted by God to women in a particular way, does this not mean that *Christ looks to them for the accomplishment of the "royal priesthood"* (1 Pet 2:9), which is the treasure he has given to every individual?"⁴¹

The Christian woman of today, after the model of Mary, is called to co-redeem with Christ. All Christian women are called to "make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church (Col 1:24)." Does the exceptional personalism and receptivity of a woman make her especially proficient in coredeemptive suffering? Is her accentuated empathy for the needs of the individual person in particular and humanity in general make her specifically capable to share as a co-redeemer in Christ, and to fulfill on the level of the priesthood of the laity the call of St. Peter to

⁴¹ *Mulieris Dignitatem*, n. 30.

“offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:4-5)?

Critical distinctions are necessary between Mary’s exemplary exercise of the royal priesthood of the laity and the rest of humanity, including all women. Once again, St. John Paul II provides us the necessary distinctions. The clarity of these papal texts merit their extended quotations:

... We pause to reflect on the Mother’s involvement in her Son’s redeeming Passion, which was completed by her sharing in his suffering. Let us return again... to the foot of the Cross where the Mother endured “with her only-begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim which was born of her” (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 58). With these words, the Council reminds us of “Mary’s compassion”; in her heart reverberates all that Jesus suffers in body and soul, *emphasizing her willingness to share in her Son’s redeeming sacrifice and to join her own maternal suffering to his priestly offering*. The Council text also stresses that her consent to Jesus’ immolation is not passive acceptance but a genuine act of love, by which *she offers her Son as a “victim” of expiation for the sins of all humanity*.⁴²

The sacrifice of Mary as mother is joined to the sacrifice of Christ as priest in order to jointly redeem the world—New Adam and New Eve, the Redeemer and Co-redemptrix. The Mother exercises her maternal authority when she “offers the Son as a ‘victim’ of expiation” for the world’s Redemption.

⁴² Pope St. John Paul II, “Mary Unites Herself to Jesus’ Suffering”, Papal Audience, April 2, 1997, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, p. 3 (emphasis mine).

Again from St. John Paul II:

When the Apostle Paul says: “For we are God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor 3:9), he maintains the real possibility for man to co-operate with God. The collaboration of believers, which obviously excludes any equality with him, is expressed in the proclamation of the Gospel and in their personal contribution to its taking root in human hearts.

However, applied to Mary, the term “co-operator” acquires a specific meaning. The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to spread by prayer and sacrifice. Mary, *instead, co-operated during the event itself and in the role of mother; thus her co-operation embraces the whole of Christ’s saving work.* She alone was associated in this way with the 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 for all humanity...* Although God’s call to co-operate 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.*⁴³

Classically stated, Mary alone participated in objective redemption by her unique cooperation in the acquisition of the graces of Redemption through her unified suffering with Jesus, and through her active offering of Jesus to the Father. Mary alone, as the Pope states, “co-operated in the event herself” and “collaborates in the obtaining of the grace of salvation for all humanity.”

⁴³ Pope St. John Paul II, “Mary’s Cooperation Is Totally Unique” Papal Audience, April 9, 1997, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, p. 3 (emphasis mine).

Although not as an ordained ministerial priest, Mary nonetheless had a unique sharing in the one divine Priesthood of Jesus Christ: an unparalleled participation in the obtaining of redemptive graces through her maternal offering of Christ, the Divine Victim, along with her own maternal self-offering, which leads to the obtaining of the graces of Redemption. It is precisely this acquisition of grace by the Redeemer and the Co-redemptrix upon which all other and later forms of ministerial priesthood depend for the dispensation of redemptive graces. In this sense, her immaculate maternal participation in the Priesthood of her Son is superior to all later forms of ordained priesthood, since she alone cooperates in the historic obtaining of the redemptive graces, whereas post-Calvary ministerial priesthood participated in the distribution of the graces of redemption.

Mary, therefore, as feminine and maternal Co-redemptrix, provides the ultimate example for all Christian women of today in exercising their royal priesthood, who by their prayers and offerings, participate in the mysterious release of redemptive graces for human salvation.

The Christian woman of today, after the example of Mary, is also called to mediate with Christ. Women's sensibility and openness to *things spiritual* make her specifically disposed to the spiritual nurturing and forming of human beings. A woman's gift of mediation is dynamically, even if not exclusively, manifest in her role as wife and mother in the *ecclesia domestica*. If a mediator (*mesitis*) is a "go-between", a person who intervenes between two other persons or parties for the sake of union, how many times does the typical wife and mother perform maternal mediation at the service of her family daily between children, as well, oftentimes between husband and children. A mother's domestic mediation also includes repeated daily nurturing and educating. When done in union with Christ all these individual acts of maternal mediation bring grace and peace to the members of her domestic Church.

A woman's participation in the one mediation of Christ in service to the Church can, of course, go beyond her family to her parish, her

diocese, and ultimately to the universal Church. Women's nurturing strength would factor favorably in programs of religious education and preparation of sacramental life. A woman's gift for mediation in the arenas of formation, education, and administration can reach all levels of the Church and all areas of service which do not require ordination. For example, having women on parish, diocesan, and even Vatican commissions would add an invaluable component of feminine and maternal focus for all dialogues, decisions, and policies, in utilizing the special feminine charism of insuring that individual persons, and not only policies, be always respected. While it is critically important that women appointed to ecclesiastical commissions would exercise a "religious assent and mind and will to the manifest mind of the Pope"⁴⁴ and overall magisterial teachings, the same necessary criterion should hold true for men, both ordained and lay, on the same respective commissions.

The Christian woman, after the example of Mary, is called to advocate with Christ. Returning to her particular strength of caring for persons, the female presence helps to ensure the uncompromised prioritizing of human beings over factors of productivity, financial gain, or even project expediency, and as such would be a much needed and refreshing contribution on all levels of Church life. With particular accentuation, woman can serve the Church as a "feminine conscience" in fostering ultimate respect for the human person on all ecclesiastical levels, especially regarding children, the elderly and the marginalized. If women were included on commissions concerning cases of clerical sexual abuse of children, for example, is it not probable that children would be more consistently protected, as well those guilty would have less possibility of inappropriate tolerance?

While these three categories of feminine contribution to the life of the Church are in no sense exhaustive, they nonetheless offer a general template for ways in which women can model the Woman-Mother of Scripture in her roles as feminine and maternal Co-

⁴⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25.

redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate in providing unique and invaluable service to the modern Church.

Misdirected, and doctrinally impossible calls for women's ordination tragically distract from the proper recognition of women's vitally needed role in today's Church, in authentic appreciation of woman's uniquely feminine and maternal gifts.

IV. The Recognition of Woman and the Proclamation of the Mother

Women will not be properly recognized in the multiform ways through which their particular gifts can richly benefit the Church until *the Woman-Mother* is solemnly recognized. Simply put, I believe that only with the papal proclamation of Mary, the Spiritual Mother of all peoples, inclusive of her threefold maternal functions as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces and Advocate, will the proper and critically needed role of women in the Church be fully recognized and utilized. When we fail to recognize the perfect biblical revelation of the feminine and maternal Mediation of Mary, how can we expect to recognize the proper feminine and maternal mediation of all women in the Church?

Mary uniquely cooperated in the redemptive mission of Christ, not as priest, but as woman, and was through her unique feminine fiat, as St. Irenaeus stated in the second century, "the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race." Can we not proclaim the same truth now, solemnly and dogmatically, for all the world to appreciate? Would it not benefit all peoples to know that they have Christ's mother as their own spiritual mother, as a personal gift from the crucified Christ at Calvary to every member of the human race?

Mary is the universal spiritual mother, who is "all-powerful by grace"⁴⁵ and humanity's greatest human Advocate for world peace. Over one hundred years ago in 1915, the renowned Belgian scholar

⁴⁵ Cf. St. John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 2001, n. 16.

and prelate, Cardinal Desire Mercier, initiated an ecclesial petition drive to the popes for the solemn papal definition of Our Lady's Spiritual Motherhood, precisely as a remedy for the historic travesty of World War I. Mercier's rationale was simple: that a public declaration from the Roman pontiff would fulfill the providential condition of free human consent for a historic release of grace and peace for humanity through Our Lady's motherly intercession. Well over 1200 bishops and 8 million lay petitions later, the world still remains in grave need for a supernatural remedy for the *grave contemporary threats to world peace*.

The Mother of all humanity has also revealed through the secondary domain of Church approved private revelation that there are unprecedented challenges approaching humanity, and that, as she states respectively at authentic apparition sites like Fatima and Akita, "...only she can help you"⁴⁶ and "I alone can save you from the calamities that approach."⁴⁷ Only through the *full exercise* of her powerful maternal intercession, enacted through humanity's consent as expressed by the Vicar of Christ in a solemn definition, can the Mother of all peoples fully intercede for peace, *true peace for the world*.

As in the Church, so with the world, it would be naïveté to believe that humanity can remedy itself from the endless geopolitical entanglements that are presently propelling major nations of power toward a third world war. Theology need not be ignorant nor dismissive of contemporary politics. The present aggression of Russia in Ukraine, with the strong possibility of intended belligerent expansion into eastern and even western Europe; the Israeli-Palestine war, with its potential for a full Middle Eastern conflict; China's hegemonic desires for Taiwanese domination and well beyond; not to mention the United States- Great Britain-NATO-Israel alliance in

⁴⁶ Our Lady of the Rosary, July 13, 1917 message, Sr. Lucia, *Memoirs*, Fourth Memoir.

⁴⁷ October 13, 1973 message of Our Lady at Akita, mystical phenomena approved by Bishop John Ito as *constat de supernaturalitate*, April 22, 1984; Cf. July 13, 1917 message of Our Lady of Fatima, Fourth Memoir, Robert Fox, ed., *Documents on Fatima and the Memoirs of Sr. Lucia*, Fatima Family Apostolate, 1984, p. 401.

opposition to the Russia-China-North Korea-Iran alliance all speak boldly of a potential global conflict, which would certainly at some point would become tragically nuclear.

Here, too, the world needs a supernatural remedy. The world needs the powerful intercession of a Woman: a universal Mother, a Mediatrix of grace, a Queen-Advocate of Peace.

May the Church soon proclaim the whole truth about the Woman of Scripture and the “Mother of us all,”⁴⁸ (to use a favored expression of Pope Francis,) and thus dogmatically recognize Mary, the greatest of all women, upon whom all women, the Church, and all of humanity desperately depend. We conclude with the endearing filial Marian testament of St. John Henry Cardinal Newman:

...Vindicate the glory of your Mother Mary, whom the world blasphemes, in the very face of the world...She is the beautiful gift of God which outshines the fascination of a bad world, and which no one ever sought in sincerity and was disappointed. She is the personal type and representative image of all spiritual life and renovation in grace, “without which no one will see God.”⁴⁹

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⁴⁸ For example, Pope Francis, *Homily on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, Dec. 12, 2019, *L’Osservatore Romano*, p. 1. Cf. Also M. Miravalle, “Mary, “Mother of Us All”: Global Ramifications for a World in Crisis, *Ecce Mater Tua International Journal of Mariology*, vol. 9, February 17, 2024, www.eccematertua.com/current-issue.

⁴⁹ Newman, *The New Eve*, p. 90; Heb. 12:14.