

***Spouse of the Holy Spirit: A Defense of Mary, Coredemptrix***

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In recent months, the question regarding the orthodoxy of the Mary, Coredemptrix title has come into serious contention in light of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's backtracking on the approval of Bishop Jos Punt of the Diocese of Haarlem-Amsterdam's authorization of the public veneration of Our Lady of All Nations. Proponents of the Fifth Marian Dogma of Mary as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate, including the lay movement Mother of All Nations, propose that concern over the title "Coredemptrix" may be the reason.<sup>2</sup> Dispute over the title of Mary, Coredemptrix, is not new. Indeed, Pope Francis himself has spoken out against the Marian title of Coredemptrix in his General Audience on March 24, 2021. Speaking *extempore*, the Pope affirms that Jesus entrusted the Church to Mary "not as a goddess. Not as a co-redemptrix. As a mother."<sup>3</sup> The pontiff went on:

It's true that Christian piety has always given beautiful titles to her, like a son to the mother... how many beautiful things does a son say to the mother? But pay attention: the things that the Church, the saints, say to Mary, take nothing away from Christ's uniqueness as a redeemer... He [Christ] is the only redeemer. They [Marian titles] are expressions of love like a son to the mother, sometimes exaggerated, but we know love always makes us do exaggerated things. Lovesickness.<sup>4</sup>

Francis is not alone in his concerns about the title Coredemptrix. At the Second Vatican Council, there was a calling for the definition of a Fifth Marian Dogma. The claim was shot down for two reasons: the pastoral focus of the council and concerns over the ecumenical effects of such a proposal. Even Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, in affirming the preeminence of Christ's saving work, expressed that, "The word 'co-redemptrix' would obscure this [Christological] origin [of salvation]. A correct intention being expressed in the wrong way."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Fastiggi, Robert. "Questions on the Recent Judgment Concerning the Lady of All Nations." Mother of All Peoples, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> San Martín, Inés. "Once Again, Pope Francis Says Mary Is Not the 'Co-Redemptrix'." Crux Now. March 24, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

While there is always disagreement and dialogue present at the heart of doctrinal development, there is far greater authoritative weight present in the evidence supporting the Coredemptrix title than discouraging it. In order to demonstrate the reasonability of the proposed Fifth Dogma, this paper will engage Francis' key claims proposed in his general audience in March of 2021: namely (1) that the Coredemptrix title is borne of infatuation and is not a reasonable conclusion drawn from scripture and tradition, (2) that the title Coredemptrix distracts from or minimizes Christ's preeminence in salvation, and (3) that Mary's motherhood over the Church, which the pontiff does recognize, is separate from the Coredemptrix title. This response will also rely on Maximillian Kolbe's pneumatology as the interpretive key through which the title must be viewed in order to appreciate Mary's instrumentality and humility through the third person of the Trinity. In doing so, this paper will aim to establish the means of dialogue which the Church must consider in order to arrive at an authoritative determination.

In order to address the primary concern—that is, the reasonability of the Coredemptrix title—one must first define its theological terms and, secondly, demonstrate the scriptural, traditional, and Magisterial foundations of the title itself. Put simply, the title of Mary, Coredemptrix is granted to her “in light of Mary’s unique and intimate cooperation with the Redeemer, both at the Incarnation (cf. Luke 1:28) and at the work of Redemption at Calvary (cf. John 19:26).”<sup>6</sup> That is, Mary’s willing participation in the mystery of Christ’s birth as well as Christ’s passion merit for her a title exceeding the recognized “co-redeemer” title associated with all Christians; she is only one in all history who *uniquely participated* in the mystery of salvation. How is this? Namely, by fact of her maternity to the Savior himself, which “assumes a universal extension, which differentiates it from that of any other”<sup>7</sup> via subjective redemption, which will be discussed in detail below, as well as a directly performative reality in the act of objective redemption. Namely, it was by her personal cooperation that objective redemption could be realized. In this fact, it was Mary’s spousal relationship with the Holy Spirit that made her the channel of all grace; the unity expressed in the joint actions of the Blessed Mother and the third person of the Trinity lend an absolutely singular character to Mary’s role in the work of salvation. For all of these reasons, she

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<sup>6</sup> Miravalle, Mark. *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*. Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1993, xv.

<sup>7</sup> Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 2002, 11.

is recognized for her exceptional, cooperative role in the redemption of mankind through her son and savior, Jesus Christ.

Before we consider these two pivotal events in salvation history which define Mary's coredemptive role, let us turn to very beginning of that same *oikonomia*, the Old Testament, to trace the origins of the Coredemptrix title. Within the *protoevangelium*, we discover a prophecy of Mary's coredemptive participation. After man's Fall from grace, God declares to the serpent deceiver, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and my seed; she shall crush your head and you shall lie in wait for her heel." (Gen 3:15) The import of this passage cannot be overstated: the voice of the Church unwaveringly recognizes this moment as illustrative of the decisive battle between Satan, the deceiver, and Jesus Christ, the Savior. This battle not only prophesizes Christ's ultimate triumph over Satan, but illustrates how the woman—the mother of the victorious "seed," the Messiah—is inseparably involved in this battle.<sup>8</sup> The Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium* testifies to this very fact, stating that Mary is here "prophetically foreshadowed in the promise of victory over the serpent which was given to our first parents after their fall."<sup>9</sup> Pope Pius IX confirms this fact in *Ineffabilis Deus*:

The merciful Redeemer of mankind, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was clearly foretold; that His most blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was prophetically indicated; and at the same time, the very enmity of both against the Evil One was significantly expressed. Hence, just as Christ, the Mediator between God and man, assumed human nature, blotted out the handwriting of the decree that stood against us, fastened triumphantly to the cross, so the most holy Virgin, united with Him by a most *intimate and indissoluble bond*, was, *with Him and through Him*, eternally at

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<sup>8</sup> Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Vatican II. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964) §55, Vatican Web Archive, accessed April 5, 2021, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)

enmity with the evil Serpent, and most completely triumphed over him. [my emphasis]<sup>10</sup>

It is via this “indissoluble bond” that irrevocably links the realities of the Messiah’s person and mission to his Blessed Mother. For now, it is sufficient to speak of this “bond” in the abstract, as a key component of the Messianic prophecy.<sup>11</sup> Note, however, that from the very beginning, the Mother’s involvement in redemption *through* the work of her Redeemer-Son is present. It is for this reason that Mary is recognized from the earliest ages of the Church as the ‘New Eve’ through whom the ‘New Adam,’ Christ, is brought into the world in order that the first Eve and all her children might be saved.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, as Fr. Stefano Manelli, F.I. recognizes in his work on Mary in the Old Testament, “the personal cooperation of Eve in the fall with Adam into original sin (Gen 3:6) was redeemed by the personal, active and immediate cooperation of Mary in the redemption wrought by Christ.”<sup>13</sup>

One further point must be made regarding the translation of *ipsa*, the feminine ‘she’ translation made by St. Jerome in the line “she shall crush your head” (Gen 3:15). While recent scholarship has called into question the validity of the feminine form of the noun, the comprehensive quality of St. Jerome’s translation, the *Vulgate*, ought to be maintained as the standard translation, considering its enduring reliability which the Church’s tradition testifies to.<sup>14</sup> In maintaining the feminine form, the Coredemptive role of the Blessed Mother is clarified, indicating in her “a cooperation so direct and immediate that she herself (*ipsa*), with her ‘*immaculate foot*,’ will crush the head of the serpent, by the power of her divine Son.”<sup>15</sup> The force of this statement

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<sup>10</sup> Pope Pius IX, The Immaculate Conception *Ineffabilis Deus* (December 8, 1854), Papal Encyclicals Online, accessed April 5, 2021, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9ineff.htm>

<sup>11</sup> In subsequent pages, the Pneumatological character of the bond between Mother and Son will be illustrated.

<sup>12</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 22, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Miravalle, Mark. *Mariology: a Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, and Consecrated Persons*. Goleta, CA: Seat of Wisdom Books, a division of Queenship Publishing, 2007, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 30 September 1943, 1, [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_30091943\\_divino-afflante-spiritu.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_30091943_divino-afflante-spiritu.html)

<sup>15</sup> Miravalle, *Mariology*, 11.

clarifies what reason concludes based on the primordial enmity between the woman and her son versus the serpent tempter. Without a doubt, Gen 3:15 indicates the indispensable, active role which Mary played in the work of redemption, choosing life where Eve had first chosen death. It is for this reason that St. Jerome is famously known to have written: “*Per Evam mors, vitam per Miriam*” (*Death through Eve, life through Mary*).<sup>16</sup>

A second Old Testament prophecy must also be recommended: the mother of the suffering servant in the book of Isaiah. In Is 7:14 there is written, “Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel.” Readers later hear in Isaiah that this son born of a virgin, the Messiah, would be “despised and rejected among men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole.” (Is 53:3-5) Within the context of the *protoevangelium*, which establishes the immutable bond between mother and son, it is reasonable to conclude that whatever the Messiah undergoes is shared in by the one who is united in his mission—the one who bore him into the world, His mother. Further, if the Messiah saves through this sacrificial suffering, the same must then also be true of his co-worker. Fr. Settimo Manelli, F.I. links the expression Mary uses to describe herself as “handmaid of the Lord” in Lk 1:38 as indicative of the bond between the suffering servant and the handmaid. He explains that the term “handmaid of the Lord” is precisely the female equivalent of the term “servant of Yahweh.” Based on this, he can draw two principles: (1) that the “servant” and the “handmaid” are intimately united in some way and (2) the two figures must share in the “suffering” of the Messianic “servant” described in the Isaiahan prophecy. It thus becomes clear that in Lk 1:38 Mary offers herself as a humble co-worker in redemption, demonstrative of the role already typified of her in the book of Isaiah.<sup>17</sup>

It bears a mention at this point there have been few serious qualms about the identity of the suffering servant and the virgin who bears him, as Matthew himself certifies in his description of the miraculous events leading up to the Nativity: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall

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<sup>16</sup> St. Jerome, *Epistula 22 ad Eustochium*, 21.

<sup>17</sup> Manelli, Stefano, *All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed: Biblical Mariology*, Academy of the Immaculate, New Bedford MA, 2005, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 180.

be called Emmanuel.” (Mt 1:22-23) While some ancient Jewish and some modern exegetes have called this into question, the insurmountable authoritative weight of Church tradition unanimously confirms the Marian interpretation of the suffering servant prophecy.<sup>18</sup>

We turn now to the New Testament and those examples of Scripture which demonstrate contemporaneous evidence of Mary’s coredemptive role in salvation. Once again, in Lk 1:38, Mary offers up the words which set in motion the saving of the human race: “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to your word.” This statement stands as one of the foundations of Mary’s Coredemptive role, as well as her status as spouse of the Holy Spirit, which will be discussed below. Here, she accepts the role of mother of the Messiah, taking on all the responsibilities inherent within it, including the active cooperation in his life’s work. Inherently linked to this reality is Mary’s immaculate nature, which both conformed her will perfectly to that of her Creator and made her fit to be the holy vessel which was to nourish the body of the divine Messiah during the first nine months of his earthly presence. Pope St. John Paul II recognized this fact at a general audience in December of 1983: “We must above all note that Mary was created immaculate in order to be better able to act on our behalf. The fullness of grace allowed her to fulfill perfectly her mission of collaboration with the work of salvation: it gave her maximum cooperation in the sacrifice.”<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Mark Miravalle offers a concise explanation of the profound gravity which Mary’s *fiat*, found here in the first chapter of Luke, has on her coredemptive role:

At the Annunciation, Mary begins her role as the *Coredemptrix with the Redeemer*. Her *fiat mihi* to the angel is a free ‘let it be done to me’ to the giving of a human body to the Redeemer, who would fulfill the saving messianic role referred to in Mary’s own Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55), which ‘rejoices in God my Savior’ (Lk 1:47). It is a free ‘let it be done to me’ in cooperating with the Redeemer so intimately that Mary Coredemptrix gave to the Savior the

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<sup>18</sup> F. Ceuppens, *De Mariologia Biblica*, Rome 1951, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Pope 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, 1.

very instrument of Redemption—his human body—for ‘we have been sanctified through the offering of *the body* of Jesus Christ once for all’ (Heb 10:10).<sup>20</sup>

Thus, we can see that it is only through Mary’s *yes* that Christ is able to enter the world, having been gifted a human body through his human mother. Mary’s role is totally unique in this respect. While there have been many called to great apostolic missions for God’s kingdom throughout salvation history, none—save Mary—have been called to so high a role as the Mother of God. This is because she is the only one who, being immaculately conceived, is therefore the vessel of consummate grace. By this same fact, she necessarily “will participate in the redemptive mission of the Son via the oblation of her own maternal suffering.”<sup>21</sup>

Mary’s immaculate nature compels her to actively cooperate in the work of redemption through her maternity to the Messiah. This fact is clarified in Lk 2:35 as Mary and Joseph present Jesus at the temple and the aged Simeon prophesies of the child’s messianic future—and his mother’s integral role in that expectation. Taking the child in his arms and turning to Mary, Simeon proclaims, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your [Mary’s] own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.” (Lk 2:34-35) In this prophecy the unity of the mission of Mother and Son, New Eve and New Adam, is highlighted. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, this moment reveals Mary’s association with Christ’s obedience unto death and, therefore, “she, too, in her immaculate soul, must be pierced by the sword of sorrow, thus showing how her role in the history of salvation is not finished with the mystery of the Incarnation, but is consummated in the loving and sorrowful sharing in the death and Resurrection of her Son.”<sup>22</sup> And this should be no surprise; how often do we see the pains and joys of a child reflected in equal measure in the face of his or her mother? Is there not something in the nature of maternity which binds mothers, out of love, to the rising and falling of their children? How much greater this must be then in the case of the Immaculata, bound by the fullness of grace to her divine Son. As Dr. Mark Miravalle notes: “Just as Mary anticipated her Son’s stainless entry into the human family by her Immaculate Conception, so too

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<sup>20</sup> Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Miravalle, *Mariology*, 76.

<sup>22</sup> Benedict XVI, *Homily for Liturgical Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the Day of Consecrated Life*, February 2, 2006.

did the Mother go before her Son in the order of suffering that would lead to the climax of Redemption on the Cross.”<sup>23</sup> Yet note that the prophecy is addressed first to Christ and only secondarily, though indispensably, to Mary. Mary’s cooperation in the work of “contradiction” does not impede or distract from Christ’s primary role. In this way, Simeon’s message is not a revelation of new information, but a foretelling of the consummation of what began in the Incarnation and the unity of Christ’s and Mary’s roles as Redeemer and Coredeмпtrix. Indeed, Mary’s role is not completed with the bearing and raising of Jesus into adulthood; her participation in Christ’s mission in the work of salvation has only just begun.

John 19:26 is perhaps the most striking moment in sacred scripture which points to Mary’s Coredeмпtive role. After enduring His brutal Passion and, at last, being hung upon a cross, the Lord, seeing John and his Blessed Mother standing at his feet, calls out: “Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Son, behold, your mother!’...After this, knowing that all was now finished...he said, ‘It is finished’; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (Jn 19:26-28, 30) Firstly, it must be noted that the use of “Woman” is a clear reference to the “Woman” of Gen 3:15, the mother of the living, the New Eve, associated with the redeemer who will “crush” the serpent’s head.<sup>24</sup> Thus we see fulfilled at Calvary not only the sacrificial offering of the New Adam – the Messiah, the Redeemer – but also the New Adam’s female counterpart and cooperator whose participation, though secondary, is the means of a fallen race’s salvation. Inherently linked to Mary’s role here as the New Eve is also her maternity as the new mother of all the living—given restored and elevated meaning. While she is not mother of all biologically speaking, as Eve was, she is so in the order of grace. That is, having overcome the death incurred by humanity’s first mother, the offering of her Son on Calvary, to which she united her own soul, snatched man back from the grip of death, earning for Mary the maternity of all the living in a spiritual sense. Her complete maternal solicitude towards her Son, united to his universal saving mission, is thereby extended over all the earth, once more restoring the role rejected by Eve.

Within the covenantal context of Christ’s passion and death, it seems unreasonable to suggest that Mary would not also be associated via the natural ties of kinship which bound her to the divine Savior. In her obedience

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<sup>23</sup> Miravalle, *Mary: Coredeмпtrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 12.



to the will of God, Mary freely participated in the “ransoming back” of humanity from sin even here in the Gospel of John: “in keeping with the divine command, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, [Mary] associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart and lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim who was born of her.”<sup>25</sup> The covenantal context which grounds the scope of the Divine Economy necessitates that familial, kinship bonds tie those who are ransomed and those who do the ransoming, as in the Old Testament where the notion of a “redeemer” was one who, bound by the *hesed* of a covenant, ransomed back a family member from slavery.<sup>26</sup> If this is the case, it seems difficult to defend the idea that Mary, mother by blood of Christ the Redeemer, and New Eve, Spiritual Mother of all humanity, was somehow not intimately bound to the “ransoming” enacted by her son on behalf of her sons and daughters. Indeed, this fact is highlighted by Christ’s words to the disciple, symbol of the Church: “Son, behold, your mother.”

While I have already noted a number of Magisterial sources throughout the discussion of the scriptural foundation for Mary’s Coredemptrix role, focus must now be given to the scope of Magisterial support present at the heart of tradition for the proposed dogma. Before doing so it should be noted that the following pronouncements draw upon a rich history upholding the notion of Marian participation in the redemption. The fathers and doctors of the Church, including St. Bernard of Clairvaux,<sup>27</sup> St. Bonaventure,<sup>28</sup> and St. Albert the Great,<sup>29</sup> among others,<sup>30</sup> have all participated in the development

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<sup>25</sup> Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

<sup>26</sup> Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Miravalle for his extensive footnotes in *Mary: Coredemptrix...*, particularly pages 12-13, from which I draw the following information for footnotes 28, 29, and 30. Consultation of Miravalle’s footnotes would benefit those looking for further specifics on the patristic contribution to the Mary, Coredemptrix title. In this case, consider St. Bernard of Clairvaux’s *Hom. II super Missus est*, PL 183, 62; *Sermo III de Purificatione Beatae Mariae*, PL 183, 370; *Sermo II in Festo Pentecostes*, PL 183, 328.

<sup>28</sup> Relevant works include St. Bonaventure’s *Collatio 6 de deonis Spiritus Sancti*, n. 5, 15, 16, 17; *Opera Omnia, (Ad Claras Aquas)*, vol. 5, p. 486; *Sermo 3 de Assumptione, Opera Omni*, vol. 9, p. 695; *III Sent.*, dist. 4, a. 3, qu. 3, concl.; *Opera Omnia*, v. 3, p. 115.

<sup>29</sup> Relevant works include St. Albert’s *Comment. In Matth.*, I, 18; *Opera Omnia*, ed. Borgnet, Vol. 20, Paris, 1898, 36; St. Albert of “Pseudo-Albert”, *Mariale Q. 42, Opera Omnia*, vol. 37, 81; Q. 150, 219; Q. 51, 97.

<sup>30</sup> See also John Tauler’s *Sermo pro festo Purificationis Beatae Mariae Virginis; Oeuvres completes*, vol. 6, Paris, 1911, ed. E.P. Noel, 253-255, 256, 259.

of the Church's understanding of the Coredemptrix title, the foundation upon which the following Magisterial pronouncements are grounded.<sup>31</sup> The unity of authorial weight and individual development of the premise in the sources present a veritable bounty of evidentiary support.

Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, we discover unambiguous declarations of Mary's Coredemptive merit. Leo XIII (1878-1903) describes in his encyclical letter *Jucunda Semper* (1894) how the Blessed Virgin's offering of her son at the temple is culminated in the offering of him upon the cross. By these means she joined Christ in his excruciating suffering, unified in the co-passion of redemption:

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. It is certain, therefore, that she suffered in the very depths of her soul with His most bitter sufferings...Finally, it was before the eyes of Mary that the Divine Sacrifice which she had borne...was to be finished...we see that there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother, who in a miracle of charity, so that she might receive us as her sons, willingly offered Him up to divine justice, dying with Him in her heart, pierced by the sword of sorrow.<sup>32</sup>

The unity between the Presentation at the Temple and Christ's Passion expressed here by Leo XIII affirms the two key events which the Coredemptrix title confirms. We find in this passage an authoritative ratification of the notion that Mary's life was dedicated to the same mission for which her Son was sent by the Father. In giving him up in a maternal offering—truly, the highest offering a mother can make—she immolated herself “in her heart, pierced by the sword of sorrow,” as the aged Simeon foretold, earning for herself the name of Mary, Coredemptrix.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pope St. Pius X highlights this unity of “suffering and purpose” between Christ and his Blessed Mother. Due to this profound

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<sup>31</sup> For a more detailed exposition of the tradition of Coredemptrix theologies from the Patristic era to the Middle ages consult: Roschini, *Maria Santissima Nella Storia Della Slavezza*, 179; J.B. Carol, *De Corredemptione Beatae Virginis Mariae*, 151.

<sup>32</sup> Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter, *Jucunda Semper*, 1894, *Acta Sanctae Sedis* (ASS) vol. 27, 178.

consonance between them, Mary's obedience to the triune God expressed itself in her Coredemptive sharing in Christ's suffering and death:

Owing to the union of suffering and purpose existing between Christ and Mary, she merited to become most worthily the reparatrix of the lost world, and for this reason, the dispenser of all the favors which Jesus acquired for us by His death and His blood. Nevertheless, because she surpasses all in holiness and in union with Christ, and because she was chosen by Christ to be His partner in the work of human salvation, she merits for us *de congruo*, as they say, that which Christ merits for us *de condigno*, and she is the principle dispenser of the graces to be distributed.<sup>33</sup>

This selection calls attention to the issue of *de condigno* versus *de congruo* merit. Put simply, this distinction clarifies that in the work of redemption, it is Christ who merits salvation for man in the order of justice, whereas Mary merits salvation for man in the order of fittingness.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, Mary's participation in the mission of Christ does not displace him in the order of justice nor fittingness, but recognizes that Mary's participation was indeed *through* Christ and *according* to his divine plan. The Christian faithful follow thirdly in this order, uniting themselves through the sacrifice of the Mass towards the same end, in union with Christ and His Blessed Mother.

Shortly thereafter, Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922), consonant with his predecessors, made clear the far extent to which Mary cooperated in redemption with her Son:

The fact that she was, with her Son crucified and dying, was in accord with the divine plan. To such extent did she suffer and almost die with her suffering and dying Son; to such extent did she surrender her maternal rights over her Son for man's salvation, and immolated Him – insofar as she could – in order to appease the justice of God, that we may rightly say she redeemed the human race together with Christ.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Pope St. Pius X, Encyclical Letter *Ad diem illum*, 1904, ASS, vol. 36, 1903-1904, 453.

<sup>34</sup> Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 20.

<sup>35</sup> Pope Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter *Intersodalicia*, 1918, AAS 10, 1918, 182.

The mystery of Mary's maternity, defined as it is by her immaculate nature, results in an intimacy and unity with the Savior so profound that she herself almost died in her co-suffering with Christ! Note that her Coredemptive action is a performance inherently and irrevocably linked to her motherhood; it is only because Christ was, in a sense, her own—borne of her own body—that she had the humble ability to offer him to the Father. Further, in offering her Son, she was given in return the sons and daughters of Eve in her capacity as Spiritual Mother of the Church. Mary, Coredemptrix, as Benedict XV illustrates, is inseparable from Mary, Mother of God and universal Spiritual Mother of all the living.<sup>36</sup>

Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) offers the very first Magisterial recognition of Mary explicitly under the title of Coredemptrix in his prayer of the Solemn Closing of the Redemption Jubilee in 1935. He implored,

O Mother of love and mercy who, when thy sweetest Son was consummating the Redemption of the human race on the altar of the cross, did stand next to Him, suffering with Him as a Coredemptrix...preserve in us, we beseech thee, and increase day by day the precious fruit of His redemption and the compassion of His Mother.<sup>37</sup>

By these words, Pius XI's recognition of the reality present in the work of his predecessors and the tradition of the Church is a climax in the history of the Coredemptrix development. His words highlight that Mary's suffering is strictly underneath and in union with her son on the Cross—not, as opponents might claim, in conflict or competition with Christ's preeminence. Indeed, how strange it sounds to even suggest that the Mother of God, who is all sweetness and humility, could possibly do anything that would take away from the preeminence of her Son. Mary, Coredemptrix asserts the authority and sovereignty of Christ Jesus. The pontiff confirms this fact in another example, offered as a papal allocution to pilgrims at Vicenza:

From the nature of His work the Redeemer ought to have associated His Mother with His work. For this reason, we

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<sup>36</sup> This fact is important in consideration of the proposed Fifth Marian Dogma, which recognizes Mary's Spiritual Motherhood under the three auspices of Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate.

<sup>37</sup> Pope Pius XI, Prayer of the Solemn Closing of the Redemption Jubilee, April 28, 1935, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29-30 April 1935, p. 1.

invoke her under the title of Coredemptrix. She gave us the Savior, she accompanied Him in the work of redemption as far as the Cross itself, sharing with Him the sorrows of the agony and of the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of mankind. And immediately beneath the Cross, at the last moments of His life, she was proclaimed by the Redeemer as our Mother, the Mother of the whole universe.<sup>38</sup>

The concluding sentence calls particular focus to the words of Christ in his last moments, when he gave to humanity, in the symbol of his beloved disciple, his mother as their own. (Jn 19:26) Christ himself recognizes the work of the New Eve in salvation as Coredemptrix in the final lingering moments of his earthly life; in loving response to her total offering of self and son, Christ gives to Mary his infant Church, comprised of the wandering children of Eve, so in need of a new spiritual mother.

Pius XII (1939-1958) continues to uphold the papal teaching affirming Mary as Coredemptrix in her spiritual maternity over the Church. He calls attention to the Patristic conception of Mary as New Eve, united with the New Adam in the work of saving the fallen Adam and Eve's children down through the ages. It was Mary "who, always most intimately united with her Son, like a New Eve, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father, together with the sacrifice of her maternal rights and love, on behalf of all the children of Adam, stained by the latter's shameful fall."<sup>39</sup> Thus we see once more that Mary's submitting of her "maternal rights" over Christ and in union with him are offered on the altar of sacrifice merits her a sharing in the co-passion of the savior. In this act, the New Adam and New Eve are united in the work of redemption, wondrously giving spiritual rebirth to the people descended from their fallen parents. Again, Pius XII summarizes: "For having been associated with the King of Martyrs in the ineffable work of human redemption, as Mother and cooperatrix, she remains forever associated with Him, with an almost unlimited power, in the distribution of graces which flow from the Redemption."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Pope Pius XI, Papal Allocution to Pilgrims of Vicenza, 30 November 1933, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 Dec. 1933.

<sup>39</sup> Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, AAS 35, 1943, 247.

<sup>40</sup> Pope Pius XII, Radio Broadcast to Pilgrims at Fatima, 14 May 1946, AAS 38, 1946, 266.

The Second Vatican Council, acting under the jurisdiction of Pope John XXIII (1958-1962) and, later, Pope Paul VI (1963-1978), offered conciliar authority to the Coredemptrix teachings of their modern predecessors. *Lumen Gentium*, the council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, offers one of the clearest and most detailed defenses of the Coredemptive role of Mary, if not in explicit name. While the council, in obedience to the late Pope John XXIII's wishes, did not promulgate doctrine in order to prioritize the council's pastoral focus, its words regarding Mary's role in redemption were a turning point in the development of the Coredemptrix dogma in defining, in a conciliar context, the reality of Mary's intimate and active participation in the work of Christ.<sup>41</sup> While yet being a descendent of Adam, the document recognizes that Mary willingly consented to that indispensable role requested of her and became Christ's mother:

Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption. Rightly, therefore, the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she 'being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.'<sup>42</sup>

The document goes on to confirm how the unity between Mother and her Son in the work of salvation is seen in all the Marian events detailed in sweep of the Gospels: the greeting of Elizabeth, who is sanctified along with her unborn child, John the Baptist, by the unborn Christ within the womb of Mary; the virginal birth of Christ; the prophecy of Simeon which foretold that Mary's child was to be a "sign of contradiction" and that a sword would pierce her own heart as well; the child Jesus preaching in the Temple; her intercession at Cana for the first of Christ's miracles; her reception of the proclamation of the Kingdom her Son preached; even the grievous cross, where she, "uniting herself with a maternal heart with His sacrifice... lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought

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<sup>41</sup> See Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* 58, 61, as noted above.

<sup>42</sup> Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 56

forth.”<sup>43</sup> Before Christ departed his earthly body at Golgotha, he affirmed her motherhood over his disciples as well: “Woman, behold thy son.” (Jn 19:26) Further, she continued to serve the Mystical Body of Christ, even after His glorious resurrection. At Pentecost, she perseveres in prayer with the infant Church, her children, and is “overshadowed” by that same Holy Spirit which alighted upon and within her at the Annunciation.<sup>44</sup> At last, she was taken up both body and soul into heaven, where she is now and for all time “exalted by the Lord as Queen of the universe, that she might be more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and the conqueror of sin and death.”<sup>45</sup> The harmony between the Son and the Mother throughout all the events detailed in the Gospels is to such a degree that it could only be formed through a relationship like that which existed between them—a unity which is beautifully demonstrated through the illustration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Indeed, Mary’s heart, exposed in perpetual adoration to the Lord of hosts during her pregnancy, is so united that it is difficult to imagine their hearts separately. *Lumen Gentium* thus offers a clear foundation for the Coredemptrix title, drawing from scripture and tradition to define the intimate character of Mary’s Coredemption which, while the explicit term is not used in the document, the content clearly points to Mary’s coredemptive responsibility.

Finally, there was a climax of Marian devotion and development in the pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II (1978-2005), the “Pope of Mary the Coredemptrix.”<sup>46</sup> The frequency and vigor with which the late pontiff and saint confirmed the reality of the Coredemptrix title aided the Church-wide knowledge of and openness to the power of this Marian role. In union with his predecessors, John Paul II recognized that the sufferings which Mary underwent on Calvary, offered in union with her son, the Christ, contributed essentially to the work of redemption:

In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that they were not only a proof of her unshakable faith, but also a contribution to the Redemption of all...It was on Calvary that Mary’s

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 58

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 59

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 59

<sup>46</sup> Mark Miravalle, “Lecture 25: Coredemptrix Papal Magisterium,” THE655OLA: Mariology I: Dogma, Doctrine, & Devotion (class lecture, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville, OH, Spring 2021).

sufferings, 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. Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the cross together with the beloved disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son.<sup>47</sup>

Truly, the profundity of Mary's suffering, emphasized here by the saint, allocates to her a unique role above all others in relation to Christ and the redemption. In her nearly unfathomable complete abandonment to the will of the Father, even to point of offering her Son and her own body, which "completed in her flesh" what was and is already present in her heart, Mary's immaculate state distinguishes her from the rest of human history.<sup>48</sup> This is a significant commentative shift in that the subject of Mary suffering in the flesh was secondary, if not silent, in many of the St. John Paul II's forebearers.<sup>49</sup> It serves to demonstrate the depth to which Mary's obedience would go—pointing, as the saint professes, to the "all-pervading...influence of the Holy Spirit and his light and power!"<sup>50</sup>

John Paul II did much to expand the Church's conception of the relationship between the Blessed Mother and the Holy Spirit. While St. Maximilian Kolbe had written his Mariological-pneumatology in the nineteen-thirties and forties, John Paul's Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* in particular illuminated how the Holy Spirit, through whom Mary was conceived immaculately in order that she could offer this same nature to her divine son, was again the same spirit by which that son was conceived within her. (Lk 1:28, 1:35) Proceeding from this, by the spiritual fruitfulness which the Holy Spirit continually enlivened within her soul, Mary was empowered to consummate her role as Coredemptrix on Calvary, as foretold by Simeon in the temple years before.<sup>51</sup> (Lk 2:35) Thus, from Leo XIII to St. John Paul II, there exists an unbroken chain of Magisterial recognition of the orthodoxy of the Coredemptrix title.

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<sup>47</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 21.

<sup>50</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Mater*, 18.

<sup>51</sup> Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 22.



Having considered the foundations of the Coredeptrix title in scripture and tradition, it is necessary to affirm what the title is not, particularly in consideration of Pope Francis' claim that Mary's Coredeption in some way detracts from the one redemption of Christ. It must be absolutely confirmed—and often repeated—that offering Mary the title of Coredeptrix does not in any way place her on equal or superior terms to that of Jesus Christ:

The prefix “co” does not mean equal, but comes from the Latin word, ‘cum,’ which means ‘with’. The title of Coredeptrix applied to the Mother of Jesus never places Mary on a level of equality with Jesus Christ, the divine Lord of all, in the saving process of humanity’s redemption. Rather, it denotes Mary’s singular and unique sharing with her Son in the saving work of redemption for the human family. The Mother of Jesus participates in the redemptive work of her Savior Son, who alone could reconcile humanity with the Father in His glorious divinity and humanity. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, redeems the human family, as the God-man. Mary, who is completely subordinate and dependent to her redeeming Son even for her own human redemption, participates in the redemptive act of her Son as his exulted human mother.<sup>52</sup>

Mary’s role as Coredeptrix in no way distracts nor takes away from Christ’s primary role in redemption. Rather, just as a mother cannot help but be intimately bound up with the successes, failures, and dreams of her child, so too Mary cannot help—particularly in fact of her Immaculate Conception—but be united to her Son in his mission of salvation. Mary’s enduring presence at the heart of the Church, the heart and means of Christ’s mission, attests to this reality. Through her own free will, she unhesitatingly works towards the realization of her son’s calling, while never usurping his divine place. It is for this reason that many of the faithful have, in obedience to scripture and tradition, offered Mary worship and supplications under the Coredeptrix title. Yet, as with all the Marian cults, the Coredeptrix devotion, under the title of Spiritual Motherhood, “differs essentially from the cult of adoration

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<sup>52</sup> Miravalle, *Mary: Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, xv-xvi.

which is offered to the Incarnate Word, as well to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and it is most favorable to it.”<sup>53</sup>

It is this point of the worship due to Mary, Coredeptrix which Francis’ concern touches upon. Indeed, is it not inappropriate to worship Mary under a title which seems to only belong to Christ in a formal sense? Would that not make her a “goddess” as the pontiff claims? It is helpful here to first emphasize the difference between the notion of *latria* and *dulia* forms of worship. While this distinction is most often called upon to address the issues of Marian devotion in the broader sense, it is essential here as well in order to distinguish that just as Marian worship is separate from and lesser than the worship offered to Christ, so too is her role in redemption a secondary one, united in submission to the one sacrifice of the Redeemer. As Dr. Mark Miravalle explains, *latria* is the “manifestation of submission and acknowledgment of dependence shown towards the excellence of an uncreated person” and thus, given to God and to God alone. *Dulia*, on the other hand, is the “manifestation of submission and reverence shown towards the excellence of a created person,” namely the saints, angels, and the Blessed Mother.<sup>54</sup> In fact, Mary is the sole recipient of *hyperdulia*, a singular type of devotion offered to her by merit of her Immaculate Conception, status as Mother of God and thus Mother of the Church, and her perfect obedience to the Lord.<sup>55</sup> When the faithful reverence and call upon Mary as Coredeptrix, it is in light of this essential distinction between the devotion owed to her versus the devotion owed to the Trinitarian God. However, while description facilitates a separation between the two, there is only one redemption in Christ, to which Mary grafts on her own work, as branches grafted to the one vine of Christ;<sup>56</sup> Mary’s work as Coredeptrix is inseparable from the saving work of Christ, the Redeemer. Indeed, as Paul VI affirms in *Lumen Gentium*, her effect on salvation “flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 66

<sup>54</sup> Miravalle, Mark, “Lecture 12: Mary in the Early Church,” THE655OLA: Mariology I: Dogma, Doctrine, & Devotion (class lecture, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville, OH, Spring 2021).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Rom 11:24

<sup>57</sup> Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 60

The second and more pointed issue at play here is the difference between objective and subjective redemption as articulated by German Catholic theologian Matthias Joseph Scheeben and others. Objective redemption is that ascribed only to Christ through his passion, death, and resurrection; that is, “the work which has acquired for mankind all the graces of salvation.”<sup>58</sup> By this means all men may be saved, regardless of their place in time, via subjective redemption. This subjective redemptive grace, experienced in the highest form within the Christian life as one grows in spiritual maturity through sacramental living within the heart of the Church, is merited through the once-and-for-all objective redemption of Jesus Christ.<sup>59</sup> In this same way, all Christians may become “co-redeemers” in Christ, entwining their daily sufferings and trials to the redeemer’s one cross through the grace he reaped and the grace he sacramentally bestows. Coredemptrix proponents assert that Mary is cooperatrix both in the subjective sense, in affiliation with all the faithful, but also, according to some, in the objective sense, through the high degree of intimacy only Mary could exert in her involvement in the life of Christ. In either case, it is not solely of her own power or merit that she participates in the work of redemption, but by fact of her intimate union with the Holy Spirit, far surpassing that of all other Christians who have not been immaculately conceived. Calls against the Coredemptrix title often conflate the two forms of redemption, but if this were the case, the Mass itself—in which Christians come to offer their works, joys, and sufferings upon the altar of sacrifice in union with their Lord and Savior—would lose its essential, participatory character. Being both the mother of Jesus and conceived full of grace, Mary is empowered and purified far above all other men in such a way that allows her to more fully espouse herself to Christ’s sacrificial offering. Indeed, as *Lumen Gentium* affirms, “the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.”<sup>60</sup>

A note must also be made about the concern about the “one redemption” if there are truly two objective redeemers.<sup>61</sup> Rev. Jean Galot, S.J., Professor of Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, explains the nature of Marian preservative redemption, the means to Mary’s participation in objective redemption:

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<sup>58</sup> Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 11.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 62

<sup>61</sup> “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.” (1 Tim 2:5-6)

The first intention of the redemptive sacrifice was concerned, according to the divine plan, with the ransom of Mary, accomplished in view of our ransom. Christ first ransomed his own mother, then with her collaboration the rest of mankind...Mary was ransomed only by Christ, so that mankind could be ransomed by Christ with the collaboration with his mother.<sup>62</sup>

In this way, having been ransomed before all humanity, Mary was empowered through God's divine omnipotence to be an active participant in the salvation of her people. Indeed, this fact of her Immaculate Conception, through which she was knit together without the stain of sin in the womb of her mother, is a guarantee and anticipation of her active cooperation with Christ in the work of redemption.<sup>63</sup> Mary's Coredemptrix title bears witness to both kinds of cooperation, both subjective and objective, in their respective fields, based upon her preservative redemption which occurred prior to both.

Finally, Francis' concerns draw attention to the essential question at the heart of the Coredemptrix issue: if Mary is mother, how is she also Coredemptrix? Is there a relationship between the two titles and, if so, how does one balance and resolve them? By virtue of her sex and position, Mary's offering is necessarily not priestly in character, as Christ's is. But rather, as it is profoundly maternal in character, it has its own *raison d'être* as Rev. Galot describes: "It offers a specific contribution to the human aspect of the drama of the Passion...[Mary] offers a cooperation so necessary to the priestly work of Christ that the Father, in his sovereign design, required this feminine presence in order to grant salvation to the world."<sup>64</sup> Further, the merit of grace which Mary offers in the act of redemption is fundamentally maternal. Mary's motherly mediation is the grounding element of her coredemptive role, the object of her merit, by which she becomes the channel of all grace as universal Spiritual Mother of the human race, an elevation of her status as the New Eve.<sup>65</sup> In this way, her role is fundamentally different from Christ's. That is, just as Christ acted in a paternal and priestly manner, offering himself as both sacrifice and priest on the altar of the cross, so Mary acted in a maternal manner, offering her son and uniting herself so completely that she

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<sup>62</sup> Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 16-17.

<sup>63</sup> Ps 139:13

<sup>64</sup> Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 18-19.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

joined “herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart.”<sup>66</sup> Understood in this way, there is no confusion over any lack or excess of merit on her part in comparison to Christ. Rather, it affirms that Mary's feminine, maternal character was altogether separate, though active and integral, in its participation in redemption.

What's more, the effect of Mary's participation in Coredemption empowers her in her role as universal Spiritual Mother of the Church. Fr. Galot poetically notes that as “Mother of God, Mary possessed a motherhood open to the infinite.”<sup>67</sup> In this case, it is an infinity applied to the openness of her maternal heart to care and intercede on behalf of all of her spiritual children. This motherhood is, strikingly, a consequence of her Coredemptive action. That is, having given her own son upon the cross, she receives in return the sonship of all of humanity. Indeed, Christ himself proclaims this very fact while hung upon the cross, calling to his mother concerning his beloved disciple, symbol of the infant Church: “Woman, behold your son.”<sup>68</sup> Were Mary not an integral part of Christ's mission, it would be strange to bestow on her such a title. It seems only reasonable that the woman who united herself so perfectly to Christ's divine vocation, offering herself in union with his passion, should then be deserving of being the Church's mother.<sup>69</sup> If one recognizes Mary's universal motherhood, as Francis does in his most recent remarks, in which he affirms that Mary is given to the church “as a mother,”<sup>70</sup> one must likewise recognize her Coredemption. In calling upon her as mother, asking for her intercession, and meditating on the mysteries of Christ in her rosary, Christians receive the gift of Mary's maternal care owing to “the sacrifice offered on Calvary by the Mother of the Redeemer.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 58

<sup>67</sup> Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 22-23.

<sup>68</sup> Jn 19:26

<sup>69</sup> Consider St. Albert the Great's words on the subject in Pseudo-Albert, *Mariale super Missus est; Opera Omnia*, q. 150 : “To her [Mary] alone was given this privilege, namely, a communication in the Passion; to her the Son willed to communicate the merit of the Passion, in order that He could give her the reward; and in order to make her a sharer in the benefit of Redemption, He willed that she be a sharer in the penalty of the Passion, in so far as she might become the Mother of all through re-creation even as she was the adjutrix of the Redemption by her co-passion. And just as the whole world is bound to God by His supreme Passion, so also it is bound to the Lady of all by her co-passion.”

<sup>70</sup> San Martín.

<sup>71</sup> Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 23.

Having reviewed the scriptural and Magisterial foundations of the Coredeptrix title, demonstrating how Mary's coredemption in no way supersedes Christ's preeminence in the work of salvation and illustrating how the Virgin's universal Spiritual Maternity is inherently linked to her work as Coredeptrix, there may still endure a hesitance to bestow on Mary so illustrious an appellation. Perhaps one way to overcome this pious concern is to recall the pneumatology of St. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941). The late saintly Father is renowned not only for his astounding holiness of life, which he consummated with the crown of martyrdom in the death camp of Auschwitz, but also for his deep love of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Throughout his life, Fr. Kolbe wrote extensively of the profound relationship between her and the Holy Spirit. At the heart of his pneumatology was the fact that both Mary and the Holy Spirit are the immaculate conception—the *created* immaculate conception and the *uncreated*, respectively. Having been immaculately conceived by the Holy Spirit himself, Mary was imbued with the fullness of grace from the very first moments of her existence. This being the case, She is bathed, plunged into the Spirit of the Father and the Son to such an extent that when she says, 'I am the Immaculate Conception' she means, 'I am the manifestation, the epiphany, of the Holy Spirit.' Beyond this we could say even that Mary is a true *theophany*, a visible manifestation of the father's infinite love for men, that love which, through the Holy Spirit, accomplishes in the church the work of the redemption, the mission of the son, who is also the son of Mary. Is this not what Father Kolbe has in mind when he says: Mary Immaculate is the incarnation of Divine Mercy (Conference, Nov. 24, 1938).<sup>72</sup>

This is also fitting due to the maternal character of the Holy Spirit. Fr. Manteau-Bonamy describes how the masculine and the feminine intersect in the creation of life and how through the feminine the child is made aware of who his or her father is. Indeed, he claims, a mother completes one of her most essential tasks when she reveals one's father to a child.<sup>73</sup> In the same way, Christ, the "son[,] cannot be known except through the [feminine] Holy Spirit."<sup>74</sup> This being the case, it is fitting that the one through whom Christ is manifested in human flesh to the world—who makes him, sent from the Father, known to us—is overshadowed by the Holy Spirit in Christ's

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<sup>72</sup> Manteau-Bonamy, H. M. *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit: The Marian Teachings of St. Maximilian Kolbe*. Libertyville, IL: Marytown Press, 2008, 30.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

conception, having been joined with him since before her own birth. The power of Spiritual Maternity present in Mary is not only by fact of her own personhood, but by the union which exists in a wholly unique way between her and the third person of the Trinity. This union is so perfect that their two wills, though distinct, act as one; an ideal marriage, in concept.<sup>75</sup> It is by this spousal union that Mary is exceptional: “No other creature is or will ever be Immaculate like her, or full of grace, or capable of being so intimately united to the Lord as was the Immaculate Virgin. (Sketch, 1940)”<sup>76</sup> It is by fact of her union with the Holy Spirit, based on their alike natures as the created and uncreated immaculate conceptions, that Mary is able to exert such maximal spiritual influence. This component is essential to the Coredemptrix discussion. As Miravalle notes, it is “the Holy Spirit, the Divine Spouse of Mary, who prepares and sustains Mary at each stage of her coredemptive role.”<sup>77</sup> Dialogue concerning the Mary, Coredemptrix title would do well to recall this crucial fact of Our Lady’s Spiritual Motherhood as not only the Mother of God, but also spouse of the Holy Spirit—and thus united to God to such a degree as to be able to participate in the saving work of redemption through her Son.

Other critics have called into question the issue of the theandric nature of Christ, which they propose is absent in the case of the Virgin Mary.<sup>78</sup> The term theandric combines *theos* (divine) and *andros* (human) to describe the actions of Christ, which have both a human and a divine nature by character. It is proposed that because Mary does not have hypostatically-united divine and human natures—as Christ does—then even if she herself were to be crucified for the sake of humanity’s redemption, it would not be sufficient for salvation to occur. The issue with this proposal is that it attenuates the reality of theandric actions. While it is true that Christ is the only person to have both a human and a divine nature, it is not true that theandric actions are reserved only for the Messiah. Rather, Christians daily engage in theandric

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<sup>75</sup> “The mother of God is the most perfect of all creatures; she is Immaculate, full of grace, all beautiful. From her God receives the highest glory a creature can possibly give him. So perfect is she, so closely bound to the Holy Spirit, that we can call her his spouse. (Conference, June 20, 1937).” (Ibid, 45.)

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>77</sup> Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 5.

<sup>78</sup> Miller, Michael J. “Mediatrix, Si! Coredemptrix, No!” *Catholic Culture*. Trinity Communications, 2001.

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=4074>

actions whenever they experience or act under the influence of grace,<sup>79</sup> when they act in mediation between fellow man and God, or offer their sacrifices upon the altar of the Mass in participation with the work of redemption. In this way, man, however sinful and spiritually deficient, engages in theandric actions by way of participation in the divine means made accessible by God himself. Therefore, to claim that Mary cannot be Coredemptrix by way of the singular meaning of theandric activity in Christ is to ignore the very content and basis of holy Christian living.

Further, if theandric activity is an integral part of the lives of every Christian man and woman who aspire to holiness, how much more must this be true of the Immaculate Mother of God. Particularly in view of her spousal unity with the Holy Spirit, in which Mary's will is perfectly in union with God, there is truly a harmony of human and divine wills operating through the Blessed Virgin:

So, while their union is not of the same order as the hypostatic union linking the human and divine natures in Christ, it remains true to say that Mary's action is the very action of the Holy Spirit. For Mary as the spouse of the Holy Spirit is raised to such a height of perfection above all creatures that she accomplishes in everything the will of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in her from the very first instant of her conception. If we consider all these truths together we can conclude that Mary, as mother of Jesus our savior, was made the Co-redemptrix of the human race; as the spouse of the Holy Spirit she shares in the distribution of all graces.<sup>80</sup>

The claim that theandric action is solely applicable to Christ—and that therefore Mary, in operating as the Coredemptrix, is not capable of committing actions which have both divine and human natures working as one—is to misunderstand the term and to negate the nature of the grace, mediation, and redemption in the Christian life. For these reasons, Kolbe's pneumatology upholds not only the reality of Mary's coredemption, but also the firmament of Christian living.

In our present times, there is an ever-growing need to call upon Mary as Spiritual Mother of the Church to intercede as she faces new trials, it seems,

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<sup>79</sup> Key in this respect is the role of the sacraments, by which the state of grace is sustained and enlivened.

<sup>80</sup> Manteau-Bonamy. *Immaculate Conception*, 91.



at every corner. In her humility, Mary will not exert her full powers unless we invite her to. For this reason, it would be in humanity's best interests to work towards a full, Magisterial recognition of the Coredemptrix title under the aegis of the proposed Fifth Marian Dogma. However, this cannot be realized if the Church's own pontiff, let alone other members of Christ's Church, maintain serious misgivings concerning the title. Pope Francis raises points which must be prayerfully addressed. The truth is present if man obediently seeks it in accordance with the will of the Lord. Scripture, from Gen 3:15 to Jn 19:26, attest to the anticipation and realization of the New Eve, universal Spiritual Mother of the all the living who, in bearing the Incarnate Word and suffering with him through a mutual self-offering upon the cross, merits for herself the title of Coredemptrix. Tradition and the Magisterium affirm this reality, if not in explicit word then in content and, particularly, the Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium*, which recognizes that Mary's immaculate obedience intimately bound her to the work of her son in redemption, and the life and works of Pope St. John Paul II. In consideration of this evidence, it is difficult to defend that Mary, in her humility as Coredemptrix, could somehow displace Christ in his superiority in the work of salvation. Rather, Mary's Coredemption is directly drawn from Christ's preeminence: in her preservative redemption from sin by Christ himself, Mary is empowered to participate in his singular redemptive act. Drawing all authority from her Son, the mantle of Mary's universal Spiritual Motherhood extends over all the Church. If one recognizes this fact, it is then necessary to see that this motherhood is a logical result of her Coredemption, where, in the offering of herself and her Son on Calvary, she is granted in return all the sons and daughters of the Church. Finally, St. Maximilian Kolbe's pneumatology indicates that the various considerations which ground the Coredemptrix title are themselves rooted in Mary's spousal relationship to the Holy Spirit, through which she becomes the channel of all grace to humanity. If man is to open a new age of Marian intercession with its much-needed promise of peace, it is imperative that the Church engages in a timely dialogue, responding to the concerns expressed by our Holy Father in order that they might be resolved, empowering Mary to act as she, in obedience to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, maternally sees fit.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> This has been initiated by the leaders of the lay movement, Mother of All Peoples, as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. An article detailing the specifics of this movement is available at the following: Miravalle, Mark. "Comment on Statement from Bishop of Amsterdam Responding to CDF Letter of the CDF Concerning the Lady of All Nations." Mother of All Peoples, January 1, 2021. <https://www.motherofallpeoples.com/post/comment-on-statement-from-bishop-of-amsterdam-responding-to-cdf-letter-on-the-lady-of-all-nations>