

The Role of Mary in Redemption

A Document of the Theological Commission of the

International Marian Association

1. “Be it done unto me according to your word” (Lk. 1:38). Through the free cooperation of a woman, Jesus Christ, the divine and human Redeemer, entered the world (cf. Gal.4:4-6). Mary, the Immaculate Virgin of Nazareth, through her free and feminine “yes,” consented to the conception of divine Word in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit, and thus mediated the “one mediator” (1 Tim 2:5) to the world, bringing salvation to the human race. St. Irenaeus declared that Mary is the “cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race”¹; St. Jerome pronounced, “Death through Eve; life through Mary”²; and St. Teresa of Calcutta stated simply, “No Mary, no Jesus.”³

2. Mary’s participation in the saving work of Jesus is entirely dependent on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, the only divine Redeemer. Mary’s sharing in the redemptive work of Jesus relies entirely on the salvation accomplished by Christ, who is the “one mediator between God and man,” and who “gave himself as a ransom for all”(1 Tim 2:5-6). Mary’s human participation in Redemption (λυτρώσις)⁴ is entirely dependent upon the unique Redemption achieved by the Word made flesh, relies wholly on his infinite merits, and is sustained by his one mediation. Mary’s sharing in the redemptive mission of her Son in no way obscures or diminishes the unique Redemption of humanity accomplished by Jesus Christ, but rather serves to manifest its power and fruits.⁵

3. Mary’s unique participation in the Redemption accomplished by Christ is founded upon her role as Mother of God, as she cooperated in bringing Jesus into the world, and providing the Redeemer with the very instrument of Redemption, which is his body: “...We are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all” (cf. Heb. 10:10). Mary is the “woman” prophesied as the mother of the “seed” of victory (cf. Gen 3:15) who was blessed by the Father with a divinely granted “enmity” between herself and the serpent. Mary, the “full of grace” (Lk. 1:28) was providentially prepared by the Father through her Immaculate Conception to participate with the Son in the crushing of the head of Satan and redeeming humanity from sin, and to pass on to her divine Son an immaculate human nature like her own in order to

¹ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, V.III, Ch. 22, n.4, PG 7, 959 A, Harvey 2, 123.

² St. Jerome, *Epist.* 22, 21; *PL* 22, 408.

³ Common expression of St. Teresa of Calcutta; for general treatment of Our Lady and St. Teresa of Calcutta, cf. Joseph Langford, MC, *Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady, Our Sunday Visitor*, 2007.

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⁴The New Testament notion of “redemption” comes from the basic root, λύω (“to untie,” “to loose,” “to set free,” or even “to destroy”). This is clearly related to the abstract noun forms λυτρώσις (cf. Lk 1:68; Heb 9:12) and ἀπολυτρώσις (cf. Lk 21:28; Rom 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7; 1:14; 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15), both typically rendered “redemption. For definitions, cf. William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, University of Chicago Press, 2000.

⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 60.

accomplish the mission of Redemption.⁶ Mary's Immaculate Conception, along with her Divine Motherhood, makes appropriate her unique cooperation in the redemptive work of Christ.

4. The unique human cooperation of Mary with Jesus in the work of Redemption which began at the Annunciation, was explicitly confirmed at the Presentation in the words of Simeon, "...and a sword shall pierce through your own heart, too" (Lk. 2:35). Mary's saving role with Jesus continued uninterruptedly until the historic summit of Redemption on Calvary (cf. Jn. 19:25-27). As the Second Vatican Council teaches:

Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in union with her son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to his disciple, with these words: "woman, behold your son" (Jn. 19:26-27).⁷

And again:

She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, shared her Son's sufferings as he died on the cross. Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason, she is a mother to us in the order of grace.⁸

5. Within the rich Tradition of the Church the patristic concept of Mary as the "New Eve"⁹ who uniquely worked with Jesus, the "New Adam,"¹⁰ to restore the life of grace to the human family contains within itself the doctrine of Mary's unique participation with Jesus in the Redemption.¹¹ The early Fathers of the Church taught that God willed to restore grace to the human race by using the same three elements used by the Adversary for its loss: a man, a woman, and a tree,¹² and that Mary was the obedient Virgin who actively participated with Jesus as the "cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race."¹³ We can see, therefore, how the role of Mary as the New Eve was not arbitrary, but central alongside Christ, the New Adam, in the plan of God for the redemption and consequent restoration of grace to the human race. It is evident that

⁶ Cf. Bl. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, Dec. 8, 1854. Along with the solemn definition, the document also offers the following papal commentary on Genesis 3:15: "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 the handwriting of the decree that stood against us, and fastened it 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 enmity with the evil serpent, and most completely triumphed over him, and thus crushed his head with her immaculate foot."

⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 58

⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 61.

⁹ Cf. St. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. 100, PG 6, 709-712.; St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, Ch. 22, n.4, PG 7, 959 A, Harvey 2, 123.; St. Jerome, *Epist.* 22, 21; *PL* 22, 408.

¹⁰ Cf. 1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 5:12-18.

¹¹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 56; for doctrine of Coredemption, cf. *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 58,61.

¹² Cf. for example, St. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. 100; PG 6, 709-712; St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, Ch. 22, n. 4, PG 7, 959 A, Harvey 2, 123.

¹³ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, Ch. 22, n. 4, PG 7, 959 A, Harvey 2, 123.

God wanted a woman, in her free feminine and maternal dignity, to play a central role in the redeeming work of Jesus.¹⁴

The doctrine of Mary's role in the Redemption, sometimes referred to as "Marian Coredemption," which was initially focused upon the redemptive Incarnation, gradually extended to Mary's co-suffering at Calvary by the end of the first millennium, as exemplified in the writings of the Byzantine monk, John the Geometer.¹⁵ At the same time, the legitimate term "redemptrix"¹⁶ first appeared in reference to Mary's subordinate participation in the salvation wrought by Christ (in ways analogous to the earlier historical appearance of the term "Mediatrice" as applied to Mary in reference to her role with Jesus, the one Mediator¹⁷). In the twelfth century, Mary's "compassion" (*cum passio*, or "suffering with") was taught by St. Bernard of Clairvaux,¹⁸ and his disciple, Arnold of Chartres referred to the Mother of Jesus being "co-crucified," and that she spiritually "co-dies" with Jesus at Calvary.¹⁹ By the 15th century, the term "Co-redemptrix,"²⁰ was used in the Tradition, with the "co"²¹ prefix providing a greater accent on the subordination of Mary to Jesus in Redemption. In the 16th century, one of the Council of Trent's foremost theologians, Jesuit Alphonsus Salmerón, repeatedly used and defended the Co-redemptrix title.²² From the 16th to the 18th century, the Co-redemptrix term would gradually become more frequently used than "Redemptrix" in denoting the unique sharing of the Mother in the redemptive mission of the Son.²³

The prefix "co-" is derived with the Latin "*cum*" which indicates in its first etymological meaning "with" and not "equal." The Latin, "*redimere*," literally means to "buy back," and the "*trix*" suffix refers to the feminine. In unified form, the Co-redemptrix term denotes the subordinate participation of Mary the "New Eve" in the buying back of the human race from sin through the incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the "New Adam."²⁴

6. Beginning with the 19th century papal Magisterium, we have a consistent papal teaching on Mary's unique participation in the Redemption as an official Church doctrine, which will extend successively to the 21st century papal Magisterium.²⁵ Of special mention during this period is the

¹⁴ Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, n. 3: "A woman is to be found at the center of this salvific event."

¹⁵ John the Geometer, *Life of Mary*, Bol. 196, p. 123; cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Wednesday Audience*, October 25, 1995, *Inseg.* XVIII/2 (1995) 934-936.

¹⁶ *Litanies des saintes*, Cathedral of Salisbury, Parchment 173; cf. Laurentin, *Le Titre de Corédemptrice*, p. 11-12.

¹⁷ Cf. Theoteknos, Homily on the Assumption, n. 9, in A. Wenger, *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge dans la Tradition Byzantine du VI au X siècle*, Paris 1955, pp. 289, 291; St. Germanus of Constantinople, *Homily 2 on the Dormition*, PG 98, 357.

¹⁸ St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Serm. 3 in Purificatione Beatae Mariae.*, 2; PL 183, 370; cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Wednesday Audience*, October 25, 1995, *Inseg.* XVIII/2 (1995) 934-936.

¹⁹ Arnold of Chartres, *De septem verbis Domini in cruce*, 3; PL 189, 1694; PL 189, 1726-1727; PL 189, 1693 B; cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Wednesday Audience*, October 25, 1995, *Inseg.* XVIII/2 (1995) 934-936.

²⁰ *Orat. Ms S. Petri Slaisburgens, saec. XV; Codex Petrin, a, III, 20; Orat. Ms S. Petri. Saec. XIV, XV; Codex Petrin. , 1, 20*, quoted in M. Dreves, *Analecta hymnica medii aevi, Leipzig, Reissland*, t. 46, 1905, p. 126, n. 79.

²¹ The prefix "co" is etymologically rooted in the Latin word "cum" which is translated "with." Only secondary connotations of "cum" convey a concept of equality.

²² Alphonsus Salmerón, *Commentarii in Evangel.*, Tr. 5, Opera, Cologne, ed. Hierat, 1604, t. III, pp. 37b-38a; *Commentarii*, vol. 10, tr. 41, p. 359b; vol. 10, tr. 41, p. 359b; vol. 11, tr. 38, p. 312a; vol. 3; tr. 43, 495a.

²³ Cf. R. Laurentin, *Le Titre de Corédemptrice*, p. 19.

²⁴ Cf. St. Bonaventure, *de Donis Spiritus Sancti*, 6:14; Col. 6:17; *Opera Omnia*, vol 5, p. 486.

²⁵ Cf. J.B. Carol, *De corredemptione Beatae Virginis Mariae*, Rome, 1950; G. Roschini, *Maria Santissima Nella Storia Della Salvezza*, Vol. II, Isola Del Liri, Pisani, pp. 144-155. For a survey of papal texts from Leo XIII to John

explicit use of the Co-redemptrix title by the Holy Office (now Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith) and Congregation of Rites (now Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments), as well as its approval under the pontificate of Pope St. Pius X;²⁶ the papal teaching of Benedict XV: "...that we rightly say that she [Mary] redeemed the human race together with Christ;"²⁷ the first three papal usages of the Co-redemptrix title by Pope Pius XI;²⁸ and the explicit defense of the Co-redemptrix title by Pius XI:

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 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 and the agony and in the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of mankind.²⁹

7. The Second Vatican Council explicitly teaches the doctrine of Mary's participation in the Redemption, from her consent at the Annunciation (cf. Lk. 1:38) to her ongoing cooperation and co-suffering with Jesus throughout his saving mission (cf. Lk 2:35), which culminated at Calvary (cf. Jn. 19:25-27), as has been cited from *Lumen Gentium*, nn 58 and 61. It is further significant that the first schema of the document on Mary as prepared by theologians of the Holy Office contained a strong historical, theological, and magisterial defense of the Co-redemptrix title within its notation.³⁰ Declared "Mother of the Church"³¹ by Pope Bl. Paul VI, Mary "cooperated in initiating God's kingdom"³² and thus manifested her motherly Coredemption for the Church.

Paul II, cf. A. Calkins, "The Mystery of Mary Co-redemptrix in the Papal Magisterium," *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, pp. 25-92; M. Perillo, F.I. and M. Somerton, F.I., "The Marian Coredemption Through Two Millennia," *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, Ratchliffe College, England, 2002, Academy of the Immaculate, pp. 79-112.

²⁶ Congregation of Rites, May 13, 1908, *ASS* 1, 1908, p. 409; in which the Congregation itself uses the Co-redemptrix title in granting the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary to be raised to the rank of double rite; as does the Holy Office, Congregation of the Holy Office,; *AAS* 5, 1913, p. 364; Congregation of the Holy Office, January 22, 1914, *AAS* 6, 1914, p. 108.

²⁷ Pope Benedict XV, *Inter Sodalicia*, *AAS* 10, pp. 181-182.

²⁸ Cf. Pius XI, *Allocution to Pilgrims from Vicenza, Italy*, November 30, 1933, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 1, 1933, p. 1; Pius XI, *Allocution to Spanish Pilgrims*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 25, 1934, p. 1; Pius XI, *Radio Message for the Closing of the Holy Year at Lourdes*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 29-30, 1935, p. 1.

²⁹ Pius XI, *Allocution to Pilgrims from Vicenza, Italy*, November 30, 1933, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 1, 1933, p. 1.

³⁰ "De Maria Virgine Matre Dei et Matre Hominum," Section 3, note 16, *Acta Synodalia Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi, Typis Polgottis Vaticanis*, 1971, vol. 1, pt. 4. The decision to exclude the Co-redemptrix title from the final version of the Marian document to be eventually found in *Lumen Gentium* Chapter 8 did not come from the Council Fathers themselves, but from a theological sub-committee who would state in a "*Praenotanda*" explanatory pre-note, that while certain terms used by Roman Pontiffs such as "Co-redemptrix of the human race" were "absolutely true in themselves," they "may be understood with difficulty by separated brethren (in this case, Protestants)" and were, for that reason, "omitted" from the schema. Cf. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Volumen I, Periodus Prima, Pars IV, Praenotanda*, Vatican City, 1971, p. 99; cf. *Besutti, Lo Schema Mariano*, p. 41.

³¹ Declaration of Blessed Paul VI at Second Vatican Council, November 21, 1964 (*AAS*, 1964, 39).

³² Pope St. John Paul II, "Blessed Virgin Is the Mother of the Church," *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., September 24, 1997, p. 11.

8. Following the Council, Pope St. John Paul II invoked Mary as the “Co-redemptrix” on at least seven occasions³³ during his pontificate, and provided a vast quantity of teachings on the doctrine of Mary’s participation in the Redemption, as manifested in his encyclicals, apostolic letters, exhortations, homilies, and audiences.³⁴ One example of his use of the Co-redemptrix title, highlighted within the context of a rich theology of Marian Coredemption based on *Lumen Gentium*, n. 58, can be seen in this 1985 homily:

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 this victim born of her” (*Lumen Gentium*, 58).... At Calvary with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church...Having suffered for the Church, Mary deserved to become the mother of all the disciples of her Son....Mary’s role as Co-redemptrix did not cease with the glorification of her Son.³⁵

Also important within the Mariological teachings of Pope St. John Paul II is his magisterial confirmation of Mary’s unique role with Jesus in the acquisition of the graces of Redemption.³⁶ The immaculate Mother alone, of all creatures, shared in the actual obtaining of the graces with Christ as the Co-redemptrix with the Redeemer, whereas all Christians are called to participate in the consequential release and distribution of the redemptive graces acquired at Calvary:³⁷

The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to spread by prayer and sacrifice. Mary, instead, cooperated in the event itself and in the role of mother; thus her cooperation embraces the whole of Christ’s saving work. She alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that

³³ Pope St. John Paul II, *Allocution to the Sick, September 8, 1982, Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, Vol 3, 1982, 404*; General Audience, December 10, 1982, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., Dec. 18, 1982, p. 2; General Audience, Nov. 4, 1984, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., Nov. 12, 1984, p. 1; *Homily at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Alborada*, Guayaquil, Ecuador, Jan. 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., March 11, 1985; World Youth Day Allocution, May 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., April 9, 1985, p. 12; Allocution to the Volunteers for the Sick at Lourdes, March 24, 1990, *Insegnamenti*, XIII/1, 1990, 743:1; *Allocution on Sixth Centenary Canonization of St. Brigid of Sweden*, October 6, 1991, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., October 14, 1991, p. 4. Decades before the numerous references to Co-redemptrix by Pope St. John Paul II, Fr. Laurentin strongly defended the legitimacy of the Co-redemptrix title in virtue of its previous usages and approvals by the papal magisterium: “Used or protected by two popes, even in the most humble exercise of their supreme magisterium, the term [Co-redemptrix] henceforth requires our respect. It would be gravely presumptuous, at the very least, to attack its legitimacy”, R. Laurentin, *Le Titre de Corédemptrice, Etude Historique in Marianum*, 13, 1951, p. 418. This is not to imply that this quote represents Laurentin’s present position on the Co-redemptrix title.

³⁴ Cf. for example, A. Calkins, “Pope John Paul II’s Teaching on Marian Coredemption, *Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate Theological Foundations II: Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical, Queenship*, 1997; and A. Calkins, “Pope John Paul II’s Ordinary Magisterium in Marian Coredemption: Consistent Teaching and More Recent Perspectives,” *Mary at the Foot of the Cross: Acts of the International Symposium on Marian Coredemption*, Ratcliffe College, England, 2002, Academy of the Immaculate, pp. 1-37.

³⁵ Pope St. John Paul II, *Homily at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Alborada*, Guayaquil, Ecuador, Jan. 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., March 11, 1985.

³⁶ Mary’s unique participation with Christ in the acquisition or obtaining of the graces of Redemption has been referred to as her role in “Objective Redemption.”

³⁷ The release and distribution of redemptive graces has been, in the past, theologically denoted as “Subjective Redemption.”

merited the salvation of all mankind. In union with Christ and in submission to him, she collaborated in obtaining the graces of salvation for all humanity.³⁸

What is evident in the papal teachings of Pope St. John Paul II, as is also consistently found in the historic and theological use of the Co-redemptrix title, is the *essential relationship between the title and the doctrine*. The Co-redemptrix title is a single term that denotes the doctrine of Mary's special participation in the Redemption accomplished by Christ. Even when the term is not used, the Christian truth of Mary's coredemptive role with Jesus remains as a doctrine consistently and officially taught by the Church's papal and conciliar Magisterium. When the title is used, as exemplified in the teachings of Pope St. John Paul II, it is utilized precisely to signify the unique though in every way subordinate participation of Mary in Jesus's redemptive act. Therefore, any use of the Co-redemptrix title to denote anything other than Mary's subordinate role with Jesus in Redemption is a misuse of the title itself and should be identified as such (as can happen with any other Mariological or even Christological title), and not as anything intrinsically inappropriate or ambiguous about the Co-redemptrix title itself.

During the pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II, an ecumenical gathering of 15 Catholic theologians and 6 theologians from other Christian traditions took place in 1996 and is referred to as the "Czestochowa Commission." This commission (which sometimes has been referred to as a specially appointed papal commission that gave serious study to the proposition of a solemn definition of Marian coredemption) concluded that the three titles were "ambiguous" and hence more theological study was required before any papal definition of these roles should take place.³⁹ In point of fact, several members of the Czestochowa Commission have stated that this ecumenical gathering was neither specifically assembled to study this question, nor was there any serious study of the issue, but only one discussion lasting one half hour. Nevertheless, in response to their conclusion that the Co-redemptrix title is too "ambiguous" for a potential definition, Mary Co-redemptrix is sufficiently clear and doctrinally sound to have been used by two Roman pontiffs,⁴⁰ several Vatican congregations,⁴¹ theologians of the former Holy Office,⁴²

³⁸ Pope St. John Paul II, "Cooperator in the Redemption" Audience, April 7, 1997, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, April 16, 1997, p. 7; cf. also *Salvific Doloris*, 1984 n. 25; Papal Audience, April 2, 1997 Papal Audience, October 25, 1995.

³⁹ *Declaration of the Theological Commission of the Congress of the Pontifical International Marian Academy*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 1997.

⁴⁰ Cf. Pius XI, *Allocution to Pilgrims from Vicenza, Italy*, November 30, 1933, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 1, 1933, p. 1; Pius XI, *Allocution to Spanish Pilgrims*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 25, 1934, p. 1; Pius XI, *Radio Message for the Closing of the Holy Year at Lourdes*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 29-30, 1935, p. 1; Pope St. John Paul II, Pope St. John Paul II, *Allocution to the Sick, September 8, 1982*, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, Vol 3, 1982, 404; General Audience, Nov. 4, 1984, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., Nov. 12, 1984, p. 1; *Homily at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Alborada*, Guayaquil, Ecuador, Jan. 31, 1985, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., March 11, 1985; World Youth Day Allocution, May 31, 1985, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., April 9, 1985, p. 12; Allocution to the Volunteers for the Sick at Lourdes, March 24, 1990, *Insegnamenti*, XIII/1, 1990, 743:1; *Allocution on Sixth Centenary Canonization of St. Brigid of Sweden*, October 6, 1991, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., October 14, 1991, p. 4.

⁴¹ Congregation of Rites, May 13, 1908, *AAS* 1, 1908, p. 409; in which the Congregation itself uses the Co-redemptrix title in granting the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary to be raised to the rank of double rite; as does the Holy Office, Congregation of the Holy Office,; *AAS* 5, 1913, p. 364; Congregation of the Holy Office, January 22, 1914, *AAS* 6, 1914, p. 108.

⁴² Cf. First Schema of the Marian Document at the Second Vatican Council as drafted by theologians of the Holy Office and inclusive of a significant history and defense of the Co-redemptrix title, "*De Maria Vergine Matre Dei et*

hundreds of cardinals, bishops, theologians, and clergy,⁴³ great numbers of saints,⁴⁴ blessed,⁴⁵ mystics,⁴⁶ religious congregations and associations,⁴⁷ as well as accepted by millions of lay faithful⁴⁸ for over seven centuries. As to the commission's call for greater study of the title and its definability, this suggestion seems most appropriate if executed seriously and objectively.

10. In sum, the Marian title “Co-redemptrix” signifies in a single term the traditional and magisterial doctrine of Mary's unique participation with and under Jesus in the work of Redemption. The Co-redemptrix title in no way denotes any form of equal, parallel, rival or competitive role of Mary with Jesus, as such would constitute both heresy and blasphemy.⁴⁹ The philosophical and theological meaning of “participation” includes the understanding of an inferior being “taking part in” (*partem capere*) the perfections or qualities of a superior being.⁵⁰ Thus, Mary's participation in the Redemption of Christ in no way diminishes his perfect divine Redemption, but rather in a human feminine and maternal expression, partakes in its divine power and efficacy.⁵¹

It is therefore most appropriate in the proper analogous use of the same root word, “redemption,” to indicate Mary's participation in the mission of the Redeemer with the term, Co-redemptrix.” This same is true when applied to humanity to be “co-redeemers in Christ,” as has been used by the Roman pontiffs.⁵² The use of the same root term of Redemption positively expresses the

Matre Hominum,” Section 3, note 16, *Acta Synodalia Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi, Typis Polgottis Vaticanis*, 1971, vol. 1, pt. 4.

⁴³ Cf. for example, J.B. Carol, *De corredemptione*, Rome, 1950, pp. 198-221; G. Roschini, *Maria Santissima Nella Storia Della Salvezza*, Vol. II, 1969, pp. 172-189; D. Bertetto, *Maria corredentrice, la cooperazione prossima e immediata di Maria alla redenzione cristiana*, Alba 1951; J. Bover, *María mediadora universal. Soteriología mariana*, Madrid, 1946; J. Galot, *Maria, la donna nella opera della salvezza*, Roma 2005; J. Idigoris, *La maternidad espiritual de María*, Bogotá, 1986; R. Javelet, *Marie la femme mediatrice*, Paris, 1984. J. Salgado, *La Maternité Spirituelle de la très Sainte Vierge Marie*, Vaticano, 1990; M. Hauke, “La cooperazione attiva de Maria alla Redenzione, Prospettiva storica (patristica, medievale, moderna, contemporanea)” *Maria, Unica Cooperatrice Alla Redenzione: Atti del Simposio sui Mistero della Corredenzione Mariana*, Fatima, Portogallo, 2005, Academy of the Immaculate; , J. Kosiar, *Could Holy Mary Be Called Co-redemptrix?* Lambert Academic Publishing, Saarbrücken 2015.

⁴⁴ Cf. for example, S. Miotto, “La voce dei Santi e la ‘Corredentrice,’ *Maria Corredentrice*, Frigento, Italy, 2000, Vol. III, pp. 189-223; S. Manelli, “Marian Coredemption in the Hagiography of the 20th Century,” *Mary at the Foot of the Cross: Acts of the International Symposium on Marian Coredemption*, Ratcliffe College, England, 2002, pp. 175-236; Miravalle, “Contemporary Saints and Mary Co-redemptrix”, *With Jesus: The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix*, Ch. XIV, pp. 213-229.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Cf. for example: M. Perillo, F.I. and M. Somerton, F.I., “The Marian Coredemption Through Two Millenia,” *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, Ratcliffe College, England, 2002, Academy of the Immaculate, pp. 79-112; M. Miravalle, J.B. Carol, *De Corredemptione, Romae*, 1950; “My Son and I Redeemed the World”, *With Jesus: The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix*, Ch. IX, pp. 93-97.

⁴⁷ Cf. for example, *Congregation of Mother Co-redemptrix* (Vietnam); *Figlie de SS. Maria Corredentrice* (Italy).

⁴⁸ Over 7 million petitions for the solemn papal definition of the doctrine of Mary's Spiritual Motherhood, inclusive of its three essential aspects of Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces and Advocate, have been submitted to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith by in the international Catholic lay movement, *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici*, from 1993 to 2000, cf. www.fifthmariandogma.com.

⁴⁹ Cf. Pope St. John Paul, *October 1, 1997 Wednesday Audience, L'Osservatore Romano*, English Ed., p. 3.

⁵⁰ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, aa. 44-45; I-II, 91, a. 2.

⁵¹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 60.

⁵² Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Allocution to the Sick at the Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God, April 5, 1981, L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., April 13, 1981, p. 6; *Address to the Sick following General Audience*, January

unity and intimacy of cooperation that God has willed for his human creatures, whom he calls to share in the mission of Redemption as “co-heirs,”⁵³ “co-creators,”⁵⁴ “co-sanctifiers,”⁵⁵ and co-workers.”⁵⁶ As St. Augustine rightly confirms, “God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us.”⁵⁷ Not only is the Co-redemptrix term theologically acceptable in articulating the intimacy and complementarity between the divine Redeemer and his immaculate human mother, but the title is actually necessary to properly denote and signify in a single term the providentially designed unity between Jesus and Mary, God-man and human woman, New Adam and New Eve, Redeemer and Co-redemptrix, in the historic work of Redemption.

Mary’s role as Co-redemptrix has no meaning outside of the Redemption accomplished by Christ. It is a term, which, by its very nature, returns our focus to the Cross of Christ, and hence is intrinsically Christological in meaning and orientation. Mary Co-redemptrix proclaims to the world that human suffering is redemptive when joined with the suffering of Jesus Christ. The Co-redemptrix term for Mary necessarily leads the world back to the Cross of Christ and the necessity of the Redeemer for the salvation of humanity. Present theology must therefore avoid a rigid or overly restrictive use of the term, “redemption” which would, in a break from Tradition, prohibit any analogous participation by the Mother of Jesus or the rest of humanity in the redemptive work of Jesus, and thus run contrary to the clear scriptural call of St. Paul for all Christians to “make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church (Col. 1:24).”

11. Mindful of the critically important ecumenical mandate of the Church, recent theological testimonies and defenses for the legitimacy of the Co-redemptrix title from other Christian traditions also confirm the ecumenical capacity for the proper understanding of Mary as the Co-redemptrix with Christ the Redeemer.⁵⁸ With prayer as its soul and dialogue as its body,⁵⁹ the ecumenical mission for Christian unity must also include an accurate, honest, and transparent dialogue about the Church’s perennial teaching on Marian Coredemption. Certainly, further magisterial teachings on Mary’s true role as Co-redemptrix would be articulated in such a way as to distinguish clearly what is foundational and unique in the Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, and what is participatory in the role of Mary, and thus constitute, apart from initial appearances, an authentic contribution to true Christian ecumenical dialogue as delineated by the

13, 1982, Inseg. V/1, 1982, 91; *Address to the Bishops of Uruguay, May 8, 1988, L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., May 30, 1988, p. 4.

⁵³ *Eucharistic Prayer II, Liturgy of the Novus Ordo*.

⁵⁴ Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 43.

⁵⁵ For example, the Bishop’s distribution of the Sacrament of Confirmation and the priest or deacon’s distribution of the sacrament of Christian Baptism are all true participations in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁶ 1 Cor. 3:9.

⁵⁷ St. Augustine, *Sermo* 169, 11, 13; *PL* 38, 923.

⁵⁸ For positive discussion of the Co-redemptrix title and/or the proposition of a solemn definition of the Co-redemptrix doctrine, cf. for example, Anglican author, Dr. Judith Gentle, “Ecumenism Is the Issue: On Declaring the Dogma of Our Lady as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all Graces and Advocate Forthwith!”, *Vatican City Day of Dialogue on the Fifth Marian Dogma*, March 25, 2010, www.motherofallpeoples.com; Anglican Dr. John Macquarrie, J. Macquarrie, “Mary Coredemptrix and Disputes Over Justification and Grace, An Anglican View,” *Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate Theological Foundations II: Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical*, pp. 245-258; in context of Co-redemptrix relative to the Incarnation, Evangelical Theologian, Tim Perry, *Mary For Evangelicals: Toward An Understanding of the Mother of Our Lord*, Inter Varsity Press, 2006.

⁵⁹ Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, nn. 21, 28.

Church.⁶⁰ Mothers, by nature, unite, and the whole truth about Mary should not be seen as an obstacle to Christian unity, but rather as a maternal means of truth and intercession which will powerfully aid the accomplishment of the desire of Jesus for his disciples that “all may be one”(Jn. 17:21).⁶¹

12. Not only did Mary actively cooperate with the historic acquisition of the graces of Redemption merited by the Lord Jesus,⁶² she also participates in the distribution of redemptive graces to the human family as the Mediatrix of all graces. Three centuries of papal Magisterium articulate and confirm that each and every grace of Redemption merited by the Redeemer at Calvary comes to us through the intercession of Mary.⁶³ For reason of Mary’s unique and singular cooperation in restoring supernatural life to souls,⁶⁴ as the Council teaches, Mary is a “mother to us in the order of grace” who “intercedes for the gifts of eternal life”⁶⁵ and is rightly invoked in the Church under the title of “Mediatrix.”⁶⁶ The postconciliar papal Magisterium continues to teach this doctrine, as Pope St. John Paul II invoked the Immaculate Virgin as “Mediatrix of all graces” on eight occasions,⁶⁷ and Pope Benedict XVI also referred to Mary as the *Mediatrix omnium gratiarum*.⁶⁸

Mary also continues her mission of maternal coredemption with Jesus through her ongoing intercession for the human family as Advocate.⁶⁹ In putting into maternal action her most ancient title,⁷⁰ Our Lady’s intercession of protection, grace and peace for the Church and for all humanity, especially at times of historic trial and persecution, is yet one more manifestation of her motherly mediation in directing humanity to the salvation and peace that comes only from Jesus Christ.⁷¹

⁶⁰ Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 1995, nn. 36, 18.

⁶¹ Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, n. 79.

⁶² Pope St. John Paul II, “Cooperator in the Redemption,” General Audience, April 9, 1997, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., April 1997, p. 7.

⁶³ For survey of popes from Benedict XIV to Benedict XVI, see A. Apollonio, “Mary Mediatrix of All Graces,” *Mariology For Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, and Consecrated Persons*, Seat of Wisdom, 2007, pp. 444-461.

⁶⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 61

⁶⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 62.

⁶⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 62.

⁶⁷ Pope St. John Paul usages of “Mediatrix of all graces”: December 1, 1978 *Address to Provincial Superiors and Directors of the Italian Institutes of the Congregation of St. Joseph*, No. 3, *Inseg* I, 1978, 250; August 30, 1980 *Address to Young People at the Marian Shrine of Mount Roio*, No. 3, *Inseg*. III/2, 1980, 495; *L’Osservatore Romano* English ed., 648:3; January 17, 1988 *Angelus Address*, No. 2, *Inseg*., XI/1, 1988, 119; *L’Osservatore Romano* English ed., 1023:5; April 10, 1988, *Homily at Mary, Mother of the Redeemer Parish*, No. 7, *Inseg*. XI/1, 1988, 863; *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., 1036:11; July 2, 1990, *Shrine at Our Lady of Graces in Benevento*, No. 1, *Inseg*. XIII/2, 1990, 17; *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., 1148:2; June 28, 1996 *Address to Mercedarian Sisters of Charity*, No. 4, *Inseg*. XIX/1, 1996, 1638; *L’Osservatore Romano*, English ed., 1451:5.

⁶⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, Feb. 11, 2013, *Letter Designating Archbishop Zimonski as Papal Representative to 2013 World Day of the Sick*, Jan. 10, 2013, released Feb. 11, 2013, *Inseg. di Benedetto XVI*, IX, p. 51.

⁶⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 62.

⁷⁰ St. Irenaeus, *Adverses Haereses*, 5, 19, 1, SC 153, 248-251.

⁷¹ For example, the early Church *Sub Tuum Praesidium* prayer to the Mother of God for her advocacy (third century); the 1571 Battle of Lepanto and Our Lady of Victory; the 1683 Battle of Vienna and the Holy Name of Mary; Prayer for Mary’s Advocacy for Contemporary Church and World at conclusion of Pope St. John Paul II’s, *Christifidelis Laici*, Dec. 30, 1988, n. 64; cf. Prayer of Pope Francis to Our Lady for Peace, *Day of Prayer and Fasting*, September 7, 2014.

Why, then, if the role of Mary as Co-redemptrix (as well as her subsequent roles as Mediatrix and Advocate) is a doctrinal truth, need it be proclaimed? Surely, heaven is aware of its universal Marian significance and efficacy, but it always pleases the Lord when the truth about his Mother is freely and joyfully accepted by humanity, testified to by humanity, *proclaimed by humanity*. “For this I have been born and have come into the world, to testify to the truth” (Jn. 18:37), and when the People of God testify to the truth of Mary as Co-redemptrix, this brings both great grace to humanity and great joy to the Heart of the Redeemer.

13. The year 2017 commemorates the centenary of the historic apparitions of Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima, which is, in itself, a powerful manifestation of *Our Lady’s Coredemption in action*. At the heart of the Fatima message is a Marian call for coredemption by all the Christian faithful in offering prayer, penance, and sacrifice in reparation to God and for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls, especially those in the greatest need of God’s mercy.⁷² On October 13, 1917, Our Lady appears as “Our Lady of Sorrows” which profoundly conveys her role as the Co-redemptrix.⁷³ At Fatima, Mary acts as both Mediatrix in bringing forth the opportunity for historic grace for humanity,⁷⁴ and as Advocate in seeking to protect the world from the ongoing threat of war, persecutions for the Church, sufferings for the Holy Father, and even the annihilation of nations if we do not cease offending God through rejection of God’s law and his love.⁷⁵

It, therefore, seems most timely that during this centenary celebration of Our Lady’s Spiritual Maternity so powerfully witnessed at Fatima that we, as the People of God, in a special way acknowledge and honor the doctrine of Mary as Spiritual Mother of All Peoples in her motherly roles of mediation and intercession for the human family.

Therefore, we, as members of the Theological Commission of the International Marian Association, and in full obedience and fidelity to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, humbly request that during this 2017 Fatima centenary, and in continuity with the papal precedents of Pope Pius XI and Pope St. John Paul II, Pope Francis would kindly grant public recognition and honor to the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary for her unique human cooperation with the one divine Redeemer in the work of Redemption as “Co-redemptrix with Jesus the Redeemer.” We believe that a public acknowledgement of Mary’s true and continuous role with Jesus in the saving work of Redemption would justly celebrate the role of humanity in God’s saving plan and lead to the release of historic graces through an even more powerful exercise of Our Lady’s maternal roles of intercession for the Church and for all humanity today.

January 1, 2017, Solemnity of the Mother of God

See: www.internationalmarian.com Contact information: secretary@internationalmarian.com

⁷² Messages of Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima, May 13, 1917, July 13, 1917; Messages of the Angel of Portugal, 1916, 1917, “Fourth Memoir,” *Memoirs of Sr. Lucia*.

⁷³ October 13, 1917 Message of Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima, “Fourth Memoir,” *Memoirs of Sr. Lucia*.

⁷⁴ “...Pray the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary, in order to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war because only she can help you...”, July 13, 1917 Message of the Lady of the Rosary at Fatima, “Fourth Memoir,” *Memoirs of Sr. Lucia*, 2000.

⁷⁵ Cf. July 13, 1917 message and Third part of the Secret of Fatima, released June 26, 2000 by Pope St, John Paul through the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith; “*The Message of Fatima*” Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, June 26, 2000.