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MARY'S COOPERATION IN REDEMPTION AND THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

*Mark Miravalle, S.T.D.**

Introduction

Is it appropriate for a Christian to believe that he has the ability, or even more a responsibility, to participate in the salvation of others? Does a Christian, by virtue of his baptismal grace in the life of the Redeemer (and, through the Redeemer, into the divine life and activity of the Trinity), possess the capacity to intercede for the salvation of another human being with a significant instrumentality concerning his eternal destiny?

St. Paul indeed thought so, as he called the followers of Jesus to "make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24); that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1); and that Christians could be legitimately referred to as "co-workers" with God (1 Cor. 3:9).

It is most noteworthy that contemporary Protestant evangelical theologians are also offering limited testimony to the participation by Christians in the salvation of others, and to

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some degree, are willing to grant to the Mother of Jesus particular levels of participation in the one, saving mediation of Jesus. This includes, within certain limits, defending some legitimate usage of the titles and corresponding roles ascribed to the Mother of the Lord within traditionally Catholic formulations, such as that of “mediator,” “advocate,” and even “coredeemer.”¹

In his valuable study *Mary for Evangelicals*, evangelical theologian Tim Perry offers substantial support for Mary’s intercession. Starting with the general notion of the intercession of saints embodied in the two questions of: 1) do the saints pray for us; and 2) if so, is it possible to ask for their intercession, Perry quotes Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson, “there is no good reason for answering ‘no’ to any of these questions. Simply saying . . . that there is no scriptural mandate to address individual saints will not do.”² Jenson uses the example of infant baptism, which also does not have a direct scriptural mandate, but is nonetheless a widespread practice within evangelical Christianity, and further cites Luther’s testimony to the invocation of the saints as an ancient practice which Scripture in no way forbids.³

With a parallel argument to infant baptism and its plausibility from a scriptural perspective, Perry proceeds to put forth a justification for the intercession of the “church triumphant for the church militant:”⁴

[T]o treat death as that which sunders the bonds created by our identification with Christ in baptism can (and should) be presented as an implicit denial of the resurrection of Christ, which by our baptism, we now partly enjoy and hope one day to fully to share. . . . Those who have died in Christ are still, after death, infused by the Holy Spirit with the resurrection life of Christ and are therefore, even as they now await the resurrection, alive to and in him. . . .

¹ Tim Perry, *Mary for Evangelicals* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic Press, 2006), 302-306.

² Robert Jenson, “A Space for God,” in *Mary: Mother of God*, ed. Braaten and Jenson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 50; cf. Perry, *Mary for Evangelicals*, 299.

³ Perry, *Mary for Evangelicals*, 300.

⁴ *Ibid.*

... It is on the basis of this shared life in Christ that Christians can and do intercede for one another across wide geographic differences. ... If Christ is not only the bond of our communion, but the source of its life—a life that transcends bodily death—and if it is on the basis of our union with Christ that we intercede for each other, it is quite possible to conceive not only that the saints now in heaven pray for us, but that they can be implored to do so, much in the same way as we ask brothers and sisters here on earth.⁵

Regarding Mary's particular intercession, Perry identifies that, while the same general principle of the intercession of the saints applies to her, Mary's intercession is unique by virtue of her constituting the primordial type of the church, of God's people, and in virtue of her singular role as the *Theotókos*: "In her representative and maternal roles, Mary is the unique space for God, in and through whom the church continues to plead God's Word not only to God but also to itself."⁶

Beyond the unique advocacy of the Mother of God, Perry also provides evidence for limited concepts of Marian mediation and coredemption. Concerning the legitimate understanding of remote mediation at the annunciation, Perry asserts, "To name Mary as mediator is appropriate in the field of Christology. Insofar as she is *Theotókos*, she does in some sense mediate God's presence on earth because she gave God the Son his human nature."⁷ Mary's ongoing mediation between God and his people is supported in a qualified manner as a "gifted intercessor," with the created mediation that is distinguished from the uncreated mediation of Jesus alone.⁸

While the title and role of Mary as a "co-redeemer" enters a complex debate within the evangelical Protestant community itself between synergists and monergists and the issue of Mary's freedom, Perry cites the common ground within evangelical Christianity for Marian coredemption in at least its most fundamental expression manifested at the annunciation: "All

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 305.

will agree that these words ["here am I"] reflect her cooperation with God's grace in the incarnation."⁹ As a monergist, Perry asserts Mary as a co-redeemer in what he describes as the "weakest possible sense": "Mary is a coredeemer in a manner analogous to the church. Insofar as the church is the means by which God has chosen to offer his grace to the world and a sign that points to the gracious work of the Holy Spirit throughout the world, the church is itself a coredeemer. Insofar as Mary is the means by which God gave the world himself as the incarnate one, she is a sign that points to the gracious work of God in Christ."¹⁰

Clearly Perry and his colleagues are not assenting to the full classic Catholic understanding of Marian coredeemption, particularly in regard to Mary's participation with and under Jesus in the obtaining of the graces of Redemption. But this evangelical contribution to the Co-redemptrix dialogue nonetheless remains a valuable addition to the discussion.

In its most generic meaning, the title Co-redemptrix refers to Mary's unique personal cooperation in Jesus' work of Redemption, and, "in its weakest possible formulation," it refers to her unique role in giving birth to the Redeemer and, in virtue of that act, giving to the Redeemer his body, the very instrument of Redemption (cf. Heb. 10:10). When members of the Protestant theological community can find a common ground in granting at least a fundamental legitimacy to Marian coredeemption in her "cooperation with God's grace in the incarnation,"¹¹ then this certainly poses a challenge by example to the Catholic theological community in a call of assent and consensus to a fundamental notion of Marian coredeemption within the ecclesial fullness of revealed faith and life.

We now examine an abbreviated history of the Catholic tradition on Marian coredeemption through the identification of some of its key texts and developmental contributions. We will also take a brief glance at certain developmental parallels this

⁹ Ibid., 306.

¹⁰ Ibid., 306-307.

¹¹ Ibid.

doctrine shares with the development of the Immaculate Conception in journey to its eventual solemn definition in 1854, coupled with some observations on the significance of these parallels for the present status of Marian coredemption.

PART ONE. A SYNTHESIZED HISTORY

We are generally acquainted with the following fifteen sources and corresponding texts which manifest Mary's unique cooperation with the Redeemer. The hermeneutical key is to examine whether these sources/texts organically reveal answers to questions such as these: Does Mary like no other creature share in the Redemption of the world with Jesus while entirely dependent on Jesus? Did the Mother of Jesus freely, actively, and personally participate with the Redeemer in human salvation? Is there an authentic historical development in the Christian witness to Mary's unique role with Jesus in Redemption at the Annunciation as testified to by the apostolic and patristic Church, which later led to a Christian recognition of her continued journey of faith and coredemptive suffering with Jesus culminating at Calvary? Does the Mother of the Redeemer, in virtue of her unique role as New Eve with the New Adam, cooperate in the actual obtaining of the graces of Redemption? Is the Marian title "Co-redemptrix" a legitimate title which comes forth from the historical development at a time when the doctrine of Marian coredemption also experiences a theological maturation in reference to Mary's participation at Calvary? Does her role as "Co-redemptrix" continue even after "the glorification of her Son," as John Paul II posited?¹²

In response to these questions, we will let the texts and sources, for the most part, speak for themselves.

1. The Annunciation

Incarnatio redemptiva redemptio inchoativa. This patristic expression correctly conveys that the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is truly the "redemption begun." And yet, it was the

¹² John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. ed., November 12, 1984, p. 1.

Father's perfect plan that such a redemptive Incarnation take place only through the consent of a human, a woman, a virgin.

Perhaps St. Bernard describes it best when he states that the whole world waited to hear the response of the Virgin, upon whom salvation was dependent: "The angel awaits an answer; . . . We too are waiting, O Lady, for your word of compassion; the sentence of condemnation weighs heavily upon us . . . We shall be set free at once if you consent. This is what the whole earth waits for . . ." ¹³

"Be it done unto me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38). With these words, words of a free and immaculate virgin, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. "The Eternal Father entrusted himself to the Virgin of Nazareth," ¹⁴ and the Virgin gave her "yes" to the Father's plan to redeem the world through the Incarnate Son.

For those tempted to dismiss the "fiat of history" as bereft of any real active participation on the part of the Virgin (as if her consent was only a type of passive recognition or simple submission), we note that Mary's "fiat" in the Greek is expressed in the optative mood (*ghenòito moi . . .*), a mood which expresses her active and joyful desire, not merely a passive acceptance, to participate in the divine plan. ¹⁵ As the Incarnation is the *Redemption begun*, so too is Mary's fiat the *coredemption begun*.

In the popular but profound words of Bl. Teresa of Calcutta, "Of course, Mary is the Co-redemptrix. She gave Jesus his body, and the body of Jesus is what saved us." ¹⁶ The Letter to the Hebrews tells us that we have been "sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all" (Heb. 10:10). But Jesus receives the precious instrument of Redemption, his sacred body, through Mary. In virtue of the intimate and sublime salvific gift—body to Body, heart to Heart, Mother to Son—the

¹³ St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Hom. 4, 8-9; Opera Omnia, 4* (Rome: Ed. Cisterc., 1966), 53-54.

¹⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Mater*, March 25, 1987, no. 39.

¹⁵ I. de La Potterie, *Maria nel mistero dell'Alleanza* (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 185; in Eng., *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, trans. B. Buby (New York: Alba House, 1992).

¹⁶ Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, Personal Interview, Calcutta, August 14, 1993.

Immaculate Virgin begins her role as Co-redemptrix in the donation of an immaculate human nature like her own to the Redeemer.

But, within the gift of body from Mary to Jesus is the pre-eminent gift of heart contained within that gift of body. It is the gift of free will, of soul and spirit, unconditionally offered back to the Eternal Father in the "yes" of the Immaculate One to his redemptive plan, regardless of the price. With this "let it be done to me," the humble Virgin of Nazareth becomes "cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race,"¹⁷ as St. Irenaeus teaches; the "price of the redemption of captives,"¹⁸ as St. Ephraem proclaims; she "conceived redemption for all,"¹⁹ as St. Ambrose explains; and is rightly greeted, "Hail, redemption of the tears of Eve," by the Eastern Akathist Hymn. St. Augustine tells us that the faithful Virgin first bore Christ in her heart and then in her flesh²⁰; and St. Thomas Aquinas explains that the Blessed Virgin's free consent to receive the Word represented in a true sense the consent of the entire human race to receive the Eternal Son as the Redeemer.²¹

The humble virgin's "yes," soft-spoken to the archangel Gabriel, is amplified and resounds throughout creation and time. It is humanity's yes by humanity's best; for she speaks not only for herself but in the name of mankind, when she gives her consent to the Father's design for a Redeemer. The Triune God so respects human free will, typically fragile and fickle, that he awaits human consent for a mission upon which literally every human soul's eternal destiny depends. Yet, above all human creatures, the sinless Mary is most free to choose, most able to offer herself to the Father for the accomplishment of his will. And when her consent is given, he generously responds with the man-God.

Some within the theological community have argued that her fiat is only a "remote," "indirect" or "mediate" participation

¹⁷ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, vol. 3, ch. 22, n. 4; *PG* 7, 959.

¹⁸ St. Ephraem, *Opera Omnia* (ed. Assemani; Rome, 1832), 3:546.

¹⁹ Ambrose, *Ep.* 49, n. 2; *PL* 16, 1154 A.

²⁰ St. Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate*, III.

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

in the plan of Redemption, too distant from Calvary to be considered an intimate sharing in the accomplishment of Redemption. But it is vital to keep in mind the wisdom of the Fathers in the early Church, and their consistency in affirming that the Incarnation is salvation anticipated and begun. God the Father sends an angelic invitation to his immaculate virgin daughter, requesting of her a free assent to become the greatest human cooperator in the plan of Redemption by becoming the Mother of the Redeemer, which includes everything that is mysteriously part of that redemptive plan and role throughout her life on earth.

There are not two invitations. There is not one for bearing the Redeemer and another for suffering *with* the Redeemer—not one invitation sent to Nazareth and another sent to Calvary. Mary is invited by the God of Abraham and Moses to a new covenantal vocation of the greatest conceivable union with the Redeemer and with his prophesied mission. The redemptive mission begins with the virgin of Nazareth who gives the Logos flesh, but it certainly does not end there. The Virgin knows that hers is a historical and lifetime vocation, that she is to become the Mother of the “suffering servant” of Isaiah—the messianic saviour of whom the Virgin, traditionally accepted to have been educated in the Temple, is well knowledgeable. Her vocation is a heavenly call for an extraordinary life-long suffering with the Suffering Servant. It is an invitation to a vocation of being “with Jesus,” beginning at the Annunciation and continuing through an incomparable union of heart wherever the Redeemer goes and whatever the Redeemer does.

Is this not the same with the “yes” that one utters to the various Christian vocations? The priest, the religious, the married person—each says “yes” on the day of ordination, profession, or marriage, accepting a lifetime of service and love in that vocation, without the knowledge of everything the vocation will entail in the future. Is the priest on the day of ordination given divine illumination regarding each and every specific joy and sorrow that awaits him in the life of priesthood? Rather his “yes” on the day of ordination is a “yes” to the entire plan of God the Father of all mankind for his vocation. The Father does

not issue a second invitation before the most climactic and potentially painful aspects of his priestly vocation numerous years later, for the first "yes" of the priest is a lifetime "yes" to the entire life vocation.

The vocational "yes" of the virgin of Nazareth is also a lifetime "yes" to suffering "with Jesus." Seen in this light, Mary's fiat not only begins her providential vocation as Co-redemptrix with Jesus, but it also begins an intimately willed and consented participation in the Father's redemptive plan with the Son in its entirety, which must providentially include the immolation at Golgotha.

*"Principium huius maternitatis est munus Corredemptrix."*²² For this reason, it can be appropriate to describe the singular role of Mary in the plan of Redemption initiated at the Annunciation as the "Co-redemptrix begun" and her climactic participation with Jesus at Calvary as the "Co-redemptrix fulfilled."

2. Calvary

It is at Calvary that we see enacted the fulfillment of the "woman with the Redeemer," but in a genus of human experience that transcends the dignity and efficacy of any other human vocation. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Simeon (Lk. 2:35), a sword pierces the heart/soul of the Mother of the Redeemer when it pierces the heart/soul of her Son.

Jesus, Mary, the tree of the Cross. The redemptive recapitulation over Satan's initial victory makes plain the critical role of a woman. At Calvary, the original human sin is reversed and redeemed by Jesus, the New Adam (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22, 45) through the intercession of Mary, the New Eve at the tree of the Cross. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 is supernaturally fulfilled at Calvary with the "Woman" and her "seed of victory" crushing the head of Satan and his seed of sin. The Church's Liturgy sings to

²² F. Ceuppens, *De Mariologia Biblica*, *Theologia biblica*, 4 (Rome: Marietti, 1951), 201; cf. S. Manelli, F.F.L., "Mary Coredemptrix in Sacred Scripture," in *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations II*, ed. M. Miravalle (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Queenship Pub., 1996), 86.

God the Father the praises of the New Eve in the mission of the Redemption:

In your divine wisdom, you planned the Redemption of the human race and decreed that the new Eve should stand by the cross of the new Adam: as she became his mother by the power of the Holy Spirit, so, by a new gift of your love, she was to be a partner in his Passion, and she who had given him birth without the pains of childbirth was to endure the greatest of pains in bringing forth to new life the family of your Church.²³

John Paul II eloquently describes the Mother's share in the "redemptive love" of her Son and its universal, spiritual fecundity for humanity:

The Mother of Christ, who stands at the very center of this mystery—a mystery which embraces each individual and all humanity—is given as mother to every single individual and all mankind. The man at the foot of the Cross is John, "the disciple whom he loved." But it is not he alone. Following tradition, the Council does not hesitate to call Mary "*the Mother of Christ and mother of mankind*": since she "belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all human beings . . . Indeed she is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ . . . since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful.'"

And so this "new motherhood of Mary," generated by faith, is *the fruit of the "new" love* which came to definitive maturity in her at the foot of the Cross, through her sharing in the redemptive love of her Son.²⁴

What was the actual price of suffering for Mary Co-redemptrix in order to partake "with Jesus" in the Redemption of the human race and, as a result, to become the spiritual mother of all peoples? Popes and poets, musicians and artists have sought to convey the Mother's pain in various creative mediums, from the *Stabat Mater* to the *Pieta*. John Paul II

²³ *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin*, vol. 1, *Sacramentary* (New York: Catholic Book Publ. Co., 1992), 117; original Latin text in *Collectio Missarum de Beata Maria Virgine I* ([Vatican City]: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987), 49.

²⁴ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 23.

describes the intensity of Mary's suffering at Calvary as "hardly imaginable from a human point of view":

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 suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached such 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.²⁵

3. St. Irenaeus of Lyon

The erudite Bishop of Lyons, St. Irenaeus († ca. 202) is the first to teach a complete soteriology of recirculation between the disobedient virgin Eve, who is the "cause of death" for herself and the human race, and the obedient Virgin Mary, who becomes the secondary instrumental cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race:

Just as she . . . having disobeyed, became the cause of death for herself and for the entire human race, so Mary . . . being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the entire human race. . . . Thus the knot of Eve's disobedience received unloosing through the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve bound by unbelief, that the virgin Mary unfas-tened by faith.²⁶

The "cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race" constitutes a truly extraordinary profession within the second century of the Church. It is certainly an unequivocal testimony to Mary's unparalleled role with Jesus in salvation from the ancient Church—a proclamation of the Virgin Mother as a direct, though secondary cause in human salvation, which begins (but does not end) with the redemptive Incarnation.²⁷

²⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, Feb. 11, 1984, no. 25; *AAS* 76 (1984): 214.

²⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, vol. 3, ch. 22, n. 4.

²⁷ For St. Irenaeus, the Incarnation was not sufficient for our salvation without the passion. Cf. Fr. B. de Margerie, S.J., "Mary Coredemptrix: In the Light of Patristics," in *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations: Towards a Papal Definition?* ed. M. Miravalle (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Queenship Pub., 1995), 7.

The Marian teaching by St. Irenaeus does not, of course, propose the new Eve as the essential or formal cause of salvation, but as a providential secondary cause, anti-parallel to Eve's instrumental causality in Adam's formal loss of grace for humanity. As Eve is completely subordinate to Adam in the "death" of the human race, so too is Mary's instrumental role completely subordinate and dependent upon Jesus Christ, the New Adam. Christ alone is the formal and ultimate cause of salvation and recapitulation as "head," the "mighty Word and true man" who "redeemed us by his own blood."²⁸

The ancient purity of the teaching of St. Irenaeus professes that the Virgin Mary, through her obedient "yes," causes the salvation of the entire human race, but the Irenaean formulation prioritizes the salvation of Mary "herself" in a way which leads us centuries later to ponder its potential association with the preservative redemption of the Immaculate Conception. Irenaeus further identifies the Virgin Mary as the "advocate" or intercessor for the disobedient virgin, through whom the disobedience of Eve is destroyed:

It was because of a virgin who was disobedient that man fell, and after his downfall became subject to death. In the same way it is because of a Virgin who was obedient to the word of God that man has been regenerated. . . . It was proper and necessary that Adam be restored in Christ, in order that what is mortal be absorbed and swallowed up by immortality; and that Eve be restored in Mary, in order that a Virgin become the advocate of a virgin, and the disobedience of one be obliterated and destroyed by the obedience of the other.²⁹

The patristic period should not be judged upon the later medieval and modern understanding of Redemption that would explicitly teach the redemptive and coredemptive role of Jesus and Mary at Calvary within the more refined soteriological categories of suffering, satisfaction, merit, and sacrifice.

²⁸ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, vol. 5, ch. 1, n. 1.

²⁹ St. Irenaeus, cited in J. Barthulot, "Saint Irénée: Démonstration de la prédication apostolique, traduite de l'Arménien et annotée," in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 12, ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1919), 772ff.

But if we return to the essential meaning of Mary Co-redemptrix as the woman "with Jesus" in the work of salvation, it is certain that the patristic concept of the New Eve teaches the heart of the doctrine of Marian coredemption in its ontological and historical roots.

4. Ancient Liturgies and the *Akathistos* Hymn

Ancient Christian liturgies, such as the Coptic, Ethiopian, and Mozarabic liturgies (several of which are still in use today), pray publicly the doctrine of Mary's unique role with Jesus in salvation,³⁰ in manifestation of the liturgical maxim *lex orandi, lex credendi*. For example, the Armenian liturgy, which dates back to the fifth century, invokes the Mother as *salvatrix* (one who saves) and *liberatrix* (one who frees).³¹

As the soteriological understanding of Redemption as the "buying back" of humanity from the bondage of Satan developed, so too, in natural and peaceful progression, did the understanding of the instrumental role of the stainless Mary in the process of Redemption grow. From the New Eve model, the Fathers and doctors of the Church begin to expand their preaching and teaching of the Mother's redemptive role "with Jesus" from conception to birth, with this expansion gradually making its way to Calvary.³²

Not surprisingly, the second half of the first millennium begins with a witness to Mary's role in Redemption from the

³⁰ See, e.g., De Margerie, "Mary Coredemptrix in the Light of Patristics," 21.

³¹ Cf. René Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédemptrice. Étude historique* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1951), 11. The original Armenian term is "Pyrgogh."

³² For a more extensive treatment of the medieval and modern history of the title of Mary Co-redemptrix and Marian coredemption, see J. B. Carol, *De corredemptione beatae Virginis Mariae* (Vatican City: Typ. Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950); R. Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédemptrice*; G. Roschini, *Maria Santissima nella storia della salvezza* (4 vols.; Isola del Liri: Tip. Editrice M. Pisani, 1969), 2:171-232; L. Riley, "Historical Conspectus of the Doctrine of Mary's Co-redemption," *Marian Studies* 2 (1951). Numerous citations contained in this article were located in these extended treatments. *Note*: The references found in the Laurentin work illustrate that author's exceptional historical scholarship, but much of the commentary on the development of Marian coredemption in regards to the usages of "Redemptrix" and "Co-redemptrix" does not appear substantiated by his own excellent sources (cf. nn. 31, 73, 92).

great Eastern liturgical tradition with the Akathist hymn (ca. 525) which refers to the Mother of God as the "Redemption": "Hail, Redemption of the tears of Eve."³³

In the introductory canons of the *Akathistos*, the faithful enter into a rich praise of Mary's role in the Redemption:

Ode One: "Rejoice, O Bride Unwedded, the world's salvation (*kosmou diasōsma*).

Ode Five: "... who saved the world (*sōsasa kosmon*) from the flood of sin."

Ode Nine: "rescue us (*rhusai hēmas*, or "deliver us") from temptation.

In the Akathist hymn itself, addressing the *Theotókos*, the faithful pray, "Rejoice, my soul's salvation" (*Chaire, psychēs tēs emēs sōtēria*) and "deliver (*rhusai*) everyone from all calamities, and deliver (*lutrōsai*, from *lutron*, meaning "redeem" in the sense of buying back one in need of ransom) from future punishment those who cry out: Alleluia." This same word, *lutrōsai* also occurs in the *Small Paraklesis* (9th cent.), wherein other coredemptive language is found as well: "Searching for salvation (*sōtērian*) I have sought refuge in you. . . . From all distress and dangers deliver me" (*me diasōson*).³⁴

5. John the Geometer

With the contribution of the Byzantine monk John the Geometer, at the end of the tenth century, a new light of understanding shines upon the inseparability of the Mother and the Son in the accomplishment of Redemption fulfilled at Calvary. John Paul II acknowledges this historical breakthrough in the doctrine of Marian coredemption found in John the Geometer's *Life of Mary*:

This doctrine [of Mary's collaboration in Redemption] was systematically worked out for the first time at the end of the 10th century in the *Life of*

³³ *Akathist Hymn*, Strophe 1; PG 92, 1337 A.

³⁴ Virginia M. Kimball, "The Language of Mediation in Eastern Liturgical Prayer: The *Akathistos* and *Small Paraklesis*," *Marian Studies* 52 (2001): 183-218 (Theme of issue: The Marian Dimension of Christian Spirituality: Historical Perspectives, I. The Early Period).

Mary by the Byzantine monk, John the Geometer. Here Mary is united to Christ in the whole work of Redemption, sharing, according to God's plan, in the Cross and suffering for our salvation. She remained united to the Son "in every deed, attitude, and wish."³⁵

John the Geometer identifies Our Lady as the "Redemption (*lutrosis*) of the captivity,"³⁶ and describes her union with Jesus in the entire work of salvation:

The Virgin, after giving birth to her Son, was never separated from him in his activity, his dispositions, his will. . . . When he went away, she went with him, when he worked miracles, it was as if she worked them with him, sharing his glory and rejoicing with him. When he was betrayed, arrested, judged, when he suffered, not only was she everywhere present beside him and even realized especially then his presence, but she even suffered with him. . . . Terribly sundered, she would have wished a thousand times to suffer the evils she saw her Son suffering.³⁷

John expresses gratitude to Jesus for both his sufferings and for the sufferings of his Mother, which directly lead to a spiritual fruitfulness for humanity: "We give thee thanks for having suffered for us such great evils, and for having willed that your Mother should suffer such great evils, for you and for us. . . ." ³⁸

Christ gives himself as ransom for us and likewise gives his mother as ransom for humanity at every moment, according to the Geometer, so that Jesus: "should die for us once and she should die for us a thousand times in her will, her heart burning just as for you, so also for those for whom she, as the Father, has given her own Son, knowing him to be delivered from

³⁵ John Paul II, General Audience, Oct. 25, 1995, n. 2; *L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. ed., Nov. 1, 1995, p. 11.

³⁶ John the Geometer, *Sermon on the Annunciation*; PG 106, 846 A.

³⁷ John the Geometer, *Life of Mary*, as found in A. Wenger, A.A., "L'Assomption," *Études Mariales* (BSFEM) 23 (1966): 66, as quoted in English by M. O'Carroll, C.S.Sp., *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1982), 204.

³⁸ Antoine Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T. S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VIe au Xe siècle. Études e documents* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1955), 406-407 (Greek and French text on opposite pages).

death."³⁹ John goes on to profess Mary's suffering with Jesus for the Church "as a universal mother."⁴⁰

It is noteworthy that over a thousand years ago, the Tradition acknowledged the spiritual fecundity of the Mother's cooperation and suffering with Jesus, not only at the Annunciation but also proximately at Calvary for humanity's universal ransom.

6. The "Redemptrix" Title

In a French Psalter, which likewise dates back to the tenth century, a litany of saints invokes the petition, "Holy Redemptrix of the world, pray for us."⁴¹ In the harmony of relation between the truth conveyed in a doctrine and that same truth being captured in a single term, this petition to the Virgin Mother of Jesus under the title of "Redemptrix" reflects the development of doctrine articulated by John the Geometer. This tenth-century petition does not end with, "Holy Redemptrix of the world, have mercy on us," which could have inferred an erroneously parallel or competitive relation to the one divine Redeemer; but rather "Holy Redemptrix of the world, pray for us," which rather requests her intercession.

Was it appropriate for the medievals to refer to Mary as "Redemptrix?" Some authors have responded negatively, referring to Redemptrix as a "rash title,"⁴² and identifying shortened versions of "Mary is Redemption" and "she redeems; she is redemptrix" as "disconcerting"⁴³; while at the same time defending some legitimacy of "Redemptrix" as denoting an "equivocal affirmation" of more ancient expressions of "Mary redeems" ("from *Maria redemit* to *Maria Redemptrix*, the nuance is without importance"),⁴⁴ and that these terms convey an altogether different meaning by the Fathers for Mary from

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Litanies des saintes*, in a Psalter of French origin preserved in the chapter library of the Cathedral of Salisbury, Parchment 173, fol. in double columns, 0.39x0.32 m. Manuscript number 180, fol. 171 v., b; cited and edited by F.E. Warren in "An Unedited Monument of Celtic Liturgy," *Celtic Review* 9 (1888): 88-96.

⁴² See, e.g., Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédemptrice*, 12.

⁴³ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 12.

that which is unique for Christ the Redeemer in paying the price for sin. But they nonetheless seem hesitant to validate the participatory dimension of Mary in the very act of Redemption beyond the Incarnation.⁴⁵

A more historically organic interpretation of these post-patristic references to Mary's role in Redemption appears to be their identification as a natural development of those ancient expressions of "New Eve" and the principle of recapitulation in which the New Eve does share instrumentally though subordinately in the saving process with the New Adam, as well as in the necessary reversal of the first Eve's participation with Adam in sin.

To accept the patristic model of New Eve with its obvious secondary instrumental causality in salvation and then to categorically exclude any true sharing on the part of Mary in the later soteriology of Redemption, as manifest at the end of the first millennium and on into the upcoming medieval and scholastic periods, would be to artificially separate and rupture the continuity of the early medieval formulations of Marian coredeemption as an organic development from the patristic, and this without any theological or historical justification. Ironically, these early medieval references to Mary's role in the Redemption run greater risk of being misinterpreted outside of their proper subordination to Christ when they are inordinately separated from the patristic tradition which makes certain the entire dependency and subordination of the New Eve upon the New Adam.

From the twelfth through the eighteenth centuries, the Redemptrix title will be used frequently in the Church by a significant number of theologians, doctors, mystics and saints in a context of certain orthodoxy.

7. St. Bernard of Clairvaux and Arnold of Chartres

A monumental contribution comes with the insights of the St. Bernard of Clairvaux († 1153) and his associate, Arnold of Chartres († 1160). St. Bernard is the first to teach of Mary's

⁴⁵ Ibid.

"offering" of Jesus as the divine victim to the Father for the reconciliation of the world. St. Bernard's teaching is in the context of Mary's offering of Jesus at the Presentation of the Temple (and not yet at Calvary): "O hallowed Virgin, offer thy Son; and present anew to the Lord this Fruit of thy womb. Offer for our reconciliation this Victim, holy and pleasing to God. With joy, God the Father will receive this oblation, this Victim of infinite value."⁴⁶

The Abbot of Clairvaux appears to be the first to refer to the "compassion"⁴⁷ of Our Lady, a term which etymologically comes from *cum* (with) and *passio* (suffering or enduring), and therefore refers to her actual co-suffering with Jesus. According to Bernard, the Virgin Mother welcomes the "price of Redemption"⁴⁸; stands at "Redemption's starting point"⁴⁹; and "liberates prisoners of war from their captivity."⁵⁰

In addition, St. Bernard appears to be the first to preach of Mary's contribution of "satisfaction" for the disgrace and ruin brought about by Eve: "Run, Eve, to Mary; run, mother to daughter. The daughter answers for the mother; she takes away the opprobrium of the mother; she makes satisfaction to Thee, Father, for the mother . . . O woman singularly to be venerated . . . Reparatrix of parents."⁵¹

Arnold of Chartres can rightly be considered the first author who formally expounds the explicit doctrine of Marian coredeemption at Calvary. While two centuries earlier, John the Geometer had referred to the suffering of Mary with the crucified Jesus, Arnold accentuates that it is Jesus and Mary who *together accomplish the Redemption through their mutual offering of the one and the same sacrifice to the Father*. The Abbot of Bonneval tells us: "Together they [Christ and Mary] accomplished the task of man's redemption . . . both offered up

⁴⁶ St. Bernard, *Sermo 3 de Purificatione Beatae Mariae*; PL 183, 370.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*; PL 183, 438 A.

⁴⁸ St. Bernard, *Homil. 4 sup. Missus est*; PL 183, 83 C.

⁴⁹ St. Bernard, *Sermon des 12 étoiles*; PL 183, 430 C.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; PL 183, 430 D; *Homil. 4 sup. Missus est*; cf. Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédeemptrice*, 14ff.

⁵¹ St. Bernard, *Homilia 2 super Missus est*; PL 183, 62.

one and the same sacrifice to God: she in the blood of her heart, he in the blood of the flesh . . . so that, together with Christ, she obtained a common effect in the salvation of the world."⁵²

In a terminological development, Arnold states that Mary is "co-crucified" with her Son⁵³ at Calvary, and that the Mother "co-dies" with him.⁵⁴ In response to objections first raised by Ambrose that Mary did not suffer the Passion, was not crucified like Christ, and did not die as Christ died at Calvary, Arnold responds that Mary experienced "com-passion" or "co-suffering" (using the term of his master, Bernard) with the Passion of Christ: "what they did in the flesh of Christ with nail and lance, this is a co-suffering in her soul."⁵⁵ Further, Arnold explains that Mary is actually "co-crucified" in her heart with Jesus crucified,⁵⁶ and that the Mother "co-dies" with the death of her Son. Mary "co-died with the pain of a parent."⁵⁷

For Arnold, the Mother of the Redeemer does not "operate" Redemption at Calvary, but rather "co-operates" in Redemption, and to the highest degree.⁵⁸ It is the love of the Mother that co-operates in a unique way at Calvary, in a way most favorable to God: "[On Calvary] the Mother's love co-operated exceedingly, in its own way, to render God propitious to us."⁵⁹

8. The Co-redemptrix Title

As the more complete doctrine of Marian coredemption is being preached and taught by medieval theologians and saints, so too the liturgical hymns of the time begin to celebrate its truth. Between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the title of "Co-redemptrix" makes its first appearance in a liturgical

⁵² Arnold of Chartres, *De Laudibus B. Mariae Virginitis*; PL 189, 1726-1727.

⁵³ Arnold of Chartres; PL 189, 1693 B.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Cf. Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédemptrice*, 15, n. 51: "quod in carne Christi agebant clavi et lancea, hoc in ejus mente compassio naturalis"; PL 189, 1731 B.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 15, n. 52: "concrucifigebatur affectu"; PL 189, 1731 B.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 15, n. 53: "parentis affectu commoritur"; PL 189, 1693 B.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 15, n. 54: "co-operabatur . . . plurimum"; Arnold of Chartres, *Tractatus de septem verbis Domini in cruce*, tr. 3; PL 189, 1695 A.

⁵⁹ Arnold of Chartres, *Tractatus de septem verbis Domini in cruce*, tr. 3; PL 189, 1694.

hymn. *Her titles are her functions*, and thus, as the medieval mind achieves greater clarity regarding the Mother's salvific function with Jesus, it is appropriate that the title "Co-redemptrix," which best captures the function of Mary's share in Redemption in a single term, would be sung in the public prayer of the Church.

Two stanzas of a fourteenth/fifteenth-century Salzburg liturgical hymn, entitled *Plainchant to the Blessed Virgin holding in her lap her Son, taken down from the Cross*, record perhaps the earliest known use of the term "Co-redemptrix":

Good, sweet and kind,
 Absolutely worthy of no grief;
 If you would root out mourning from here
 As one suffering with the redeemer,
 For the captured transgressor
 You would become co-redemptrix.

Then I see that one ought not so much to grieve with
 My sad mother as
 I see that I ought to pay thanks
 To you, my redemptrix,
 Who deigns to free
 Me from the hand of the enemy.⁶⁰

We see in this hymn the use of both "Co-redemptrix" and "Redemptrix" titles. The Redemptrix title, used at least four centuries earlier than Co-redemptrix, conveys within context the same subordinate role and function of the Immaculate Virgin (in a manner analogous to the use of "Mediatrix" in relation to

⁶⁰ *Orat. ms S. Petri Salisburgens.*, saec. XV; Codex Petrin. a, III, 20 and *Orat. ms S. Petri saec. XIV, XV*; Codex Petrin. a, I, 20, quoted in *Pia Dictamina. Reimgebete und Leselieder des Mittelalters*, ed. by G. M. Drevés, *Analecta hymnica medii aevi*, t. 46 (Leipzig: Reisland, 1905), 126-128, no. 79. The original Latin is as follows (p. 127):

20. *Pia, dulcis et benigna,
 Nullo prorsus luctu digna,
 Si fletum hinc eligeres
 Ut compassa redemptori
 Captivato transgressori
 Tu corredemptrix fieres.*

21. *Tunc non tantum condolere
 Maestae matri sed debere
 Me cerno grates solvere,
 Tibi meae redemptrici,
 Quae de manu inimici
 Dignatur me evolvere.*

Christ the Mediator, without having to use “co-mediatrix”). But with the term developments of St. Bernard,⁶¹ Arnold of Chartres,⁶² and Pseudo-Albert,⁶³ we see how the prefix “co-” can assist in emphasizing the distinction between the entirely necessary and foundational accomplishment of the Redemption by Jesus Christ, from the exalted participation of his immaculate mother in the Redemption.

9. Medieval Mystical Tradition

The mystical tradition begins to play an important role in this and in later periods of Marian coredemption’s doctrinal development, with great spiritual figures such as St. Catherine of Siena and St. Bridget of Sweden contributing to the harmony between theology and spirituality within the Church. The Holy Spirit can and does use his prophetic gifts through chosen souls as lights to guide the great bark of Tradition and theology upon a particular path of doctrinal development.

At this historical point enters the mystical contribution of St. Bridget of Sweden († 1373). The *Revelations*, the written record of a series of visions and prophecies granted to St. Bridget by Jesus and Mary, are highly regarded and revered by the Church during the Middle Ages, including by a large number of popes, bishops, and theologians.⁶⁴ The revealed words spoken by both Jesus and Mary regarding Our Lady’s coredemptive role are truly significant in the development of the Co-redemptrix doctrine as they will directly influence numerous theologians as late as the seventeenth century “Golden Age” of coredemption (some three hundred years later). What the revelations received by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque are to the development of the doctrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the revelations of St. Faustina Kowalska to the public

⁶¹ St. Bernard was most likely the first to use the term “compassion”; *PL* 183, 438A; cf. Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédemptrice*, 15.

⁶² Arnold of Chartres wrote that Mary co-operated abundantly and exceedingly in our Redemption and was “co-crucified” and “co-died” with her Son; see his *Tractatus de septem verbis Domini in cruce*; tr. 3; *PL* 189, 1694, 1695 A, 1693 B.

⁶³ Pseudo-Albert, *Mariale*, q. 42, 4; q. 29, 3; q. 150.

⁶⁴ See St. Bridget, *Revelationes* (Rome: Apud S. Paulinum, 1606).

liturgical celebration of Divine Mercy in our own times,⁶⁵ the *Revelations* of St. Bridget are to the medieval progress of the doctrine of Mary Co-redemptrix.

The *Revelations* conveyed to the middle age churchman, theologian, and lay person the words conveyed by the Woman of Calvary herself and directly confirmed by the subsequent words of the Divine Redeemer. Our Lady reveals to St. Bridget: "My Son and I redeemed the world"⁶⁶ and, further: "*My Son and I redeemed the world as with one heart.*"⁶⁷ Jesus reveals: "*My Mother and I saved man as with one Heart only, I by suffering in my Heart and my Flesh, she by the sorrow and love of her Heart.*"⁶⁸ The impact of such a supernatural testimony which was authenticated and revered by significant numbers of medieval popes, bishops, and theologians should not be underestimated.

St. Catherine of Siena († 1380), the fourteenth century's greatest "mystic in action," referred to the Mother of the Redeemer as the "Redemptrix of the human race" both in virtue of giving birth to the Word and for the sorrow of "body and mind" that Our Mother suffers with Jesus: "O Mary . . . bearer of the light . . . Mary, Germinatrix of the fruit; Mary, Redemptrix of the human race because, by providing your flesh in the Word, you redeemed the world. Christ redeemed with his Passion and you with your sorrow of body and mind."⁶⁹

With the much later prophetic revelations of Venerable Mary of Agreda († 1665), contained in the *Mystical City of God*, Christian mysticism assists and confirms the Co-redemptrix development. In this prophetic work, the Spanish mystic calls Our Lady the "Redemptrix" and speaks of her consequential

⁶⁵ Consider, e.g., the influence of St. Faustina's revelations to the development of the encyclical *Dives in misericordia* or the liturgical development of the Feast of Divine Mercy.

⁶⁶ St. Bridget, *Revelationes*, L. I, c. 35, p. 56b.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ St. Bridget, *Revelationes*, IX, c. 3.

⁶⁹ St. Catherine of Siena, *Oratio XI*, delivered in Rome on the day of the Annunciation, 1379, in her *Opere*, ed. G. Gigli, 4:352.

role of distributing the fruits of Redemption in light of her primary role as a participant in the Redemption:

Just as she cooperated with the Passion and gave her Son to take part in the human lineage, so the same Lord made her participant of the dignity of Redemptrix, having given her the merits and the fruits of Redemption so that she can distribute them and with one hand communicate all this to those redeemed.⁷⁰

10. Salmerón and the Co-redemptrix

When one of the foremost theologians of the Council of Trent becomes an explicit defender of the Co-redemptrix role and title, their theological and doctrinal credibility extend throughout Catholic theological circles. Jesuit Father Alfonso (Alphonsus) Salmerón († 1585), renowned theologian, exegete, and one of the original followers of St. Ignatius, explains and defends the title of Co-redemptrix on several occasions.

In a single passage, Salmerón discusses the Marian titles of Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate (amidst others), as legitimate titles which rightly honor the goodness and glory of Mary, full of grace:

Truly Mary, very near and uniquely joined to him, is called full of grace ... how much he prepared that she as mother would pour out the fullest graces among us all as her sons, as one who had been assumed by Christ, not out of any necessity, or out of weakness, but on account of the necessity to share and make clear, certainly, the goodness and glory in the mother that she would be (if it is permitted thus to speak) co-redemptrix, mediatrix, cooperatrix of the salvation of mankind and to whom, as to an individual advocate, all the faithful ought to approach and fly for help.⁷¹

Salmerón argues that the participation of Mary Co-redemptrix does not distract from, but rather adds glory to Christ himself;

⁷⁰ Ven. Mary of Agreda, *Mystica Ciudad de Dios* (Antwerp: H. and C. Verdussen, 1696), P.I, L. I, c. 18, n. 274, p. 86b.

⁷¹ Alfonso Salmerón, *Commentarii in Evangelicam historicam*. . . , tr. 5, Opera (Cologne: Éd. Hiérat, 1604), vol. 3, pp. 37b-38a.

for all her excellence and her capacity to share in redeeming is derived from the redeeming capacity of Jesus:

The Mother stood near the Cross for this: that the restoration of mankind would correspond with the collapse of the world. As the fall of the world was accomplished by two, but especially by a man, so the salvation and redemption came about from two, but especially from Christ; for whatever excellence Mary has, she received from Christ, not only on account of a certain proper harmony, but also on account of the eminent capacity of Christ in redeeming, a capacity which with his mother (whose works he needed least of all) he wished to share as co-redemprix, not only without her dishonor, but with the great glory of Christ himself.⁷²

According to the tridentine Jesuit theologian, the simple motive of the Co-redemprix in the exercise of her many functions/titles on behalf of humanity is Christian maternal love: "For love of us . . . she is all ours who is called Mother of Mercy, Queen of heaven, Mistress of the world, Star of the sea, advocate, co-redemprix, preserver, mother of God."⁷³

Throughout Salmerón's extended treatment on Marian coredeemption we find the habitual use of the prefix "co-" in emphasizing the Mother's rightful subordination and dependency on the Lord of Redemption. He refers to Mary's "co-suffering,"⁷⁴ "co-misery,"⁷⁵ "co-sorrowing"⁷⁶; that she was "co-crucified,"⁷⁷ that she "co-died,"⁷⁸ "co-suffered," "co-operated,"⁷⁹ and was "co-united"⁸⁰ with Jesus in the Redemption. His theology of Marian coredeemption provides solid foundation for the following century's explosion of theological literature on the doctrine.

⁷² Ibid., vol. 10, tr. 41, p. 359b.

⁷³ Ibid., vol. 11, tr. 38, p. 312a.

⁷⁴ Ibid., vol. 3, tr. 43, p. 495a; cf. vol. 10, tr. 51, p. 425 a; cf. Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédemptrice*, 15-16.

⁷⁵ Ibid., vol. 10, tr. 51, pp. 426a, 424a, 429b; vol. 11, tr. 38, p. 311b; vol. 10, tr. 51, p. 426a; cf. Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédemptrice*, 15-16.

⁷⁶ Ibid., vol. 3, tr. 43, p. 495a.

⁷⁷ Ibid., vol. 3, tr. 43, p. 399b; vol. 11, tr. 2, p. 188a.

⁷⁸ Ibid., vol. 10, tr. 51, p. 426b.

⁷⁹ Ibid., vol. 6, tr. 6, p. 39a.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 36b.

11. Seventeenth Century: "Golden Age" of Mary Co-redemptrix

The extraordinary contributions to the Co-redemptrix doctrine previously offered by the likes of St. Bernard, Arnold of Chartres, Pseudo-Albert, John Tauler, and Alphonsus Salmerón became more and more the ordinary and "common opinion of the theologians"⁸¹ in the seventeenth century, which can legitimately be referred to as the Golden Age of Marian Coredemption.

In the 1600s alone, references to the Mother of the Lord's unique and active participation "with Jesus" in the Redemption number well over three hundred. Within these references are numerous explanations and defenses of the titles of Redemptrix and Co-redemptrix, coupled with learned theological defenses of the sound doctrine which the titles convey.⁸²

⁸¹ Franciscus Guerra, O.F.M., *Majestas gratiarum ac virtutum omnium Deiparae Virginis Mariae*, vol. 2 (Hispani: J. de Ribera, 1659), lib. 3, disc. 4, fragm. 10, n. 36.

⁸² See Carol, *De coredemptione*, 198-480. According to the valuable (though limited) study by Laurentin, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century the term Redemptrix was gradually replaced with that of Co-redemptrix. Before the seventeenth century Redemptrix is used by ten authors and Co-redemptrix by three authors. During the seventeenth century Redemptrix is still preferred fifty-one times to Co-redemptrix's twenty-seven times. By the eighteenth century, Co-redemptrix is being used more than Redemptrix by a count of twenty-four to sixteen, and by the nineteenth century Redemptrix virtually disappears, with some exceptions (Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédemptrice*, 19).

Along with these valuable statistics, Laurentin offers some strong conclusions of his own regarding the titles of Redemptrix and Co-redemptrix, which do not appear substantiated by his and other sources. For example, the author states: "But when in the twelfth century, the passage from *causa causae* (Mary, cause of the Redeemer) developed into the expression of *causa causati* (cause of Redemption), . . . the term Redemptrix could not without serious ambiguity translate these realities" (Ibid., 16). But the concept of Mary's participation in the Redemption as a sharing in the *causa causati* in reference to Redemption was intrinsic to the most ancient testimonies of the New Eve as the woman who played an active and instrumental role in salvation, and was gradually brought to its natural development in the explicit teachings of Mary's active role in Redemption at Calvary as articulated by St. Bernard, Arnold of Chartres, St. Albert, and John Tauler.

Moreover, the title Redemptrix was used in the Church in an orthodox and balanced manner for five centuries after the twelfth century and without any "serious ambiguity," but precisely the same way "Mediatrix" is used in relation to "Mediator" today—subordinate, dependent, and totally relying upon the primacy of the divine Redeemer. That Co-redemptrix as a title eventually phased out the use of Redemptrix

The rich exposition of this Marian truth during the seventeenth century in turn provides the grounding for its increasing systematic treatment in later centuries. Under the classic soteriological categories of merit, satisfaction, sacrifice, and ransom, Our Lady's coredemption is essentially discussed by some of the foremost theological minds of this age.⁸³ So vast in number were they, we can offer here only three citations of the theological laud to Mary's unique share in the Passion of Christ, inclusive of two Church doctors of the period.⁸⁴

can be seen as a positive development without casting aspersion on the legitimacy of Redemptrix, which was used in the Church for over seven hundred years in a balanced fashion by doctors, theologians, mystics, and saints.

The author goes on to refer to the titles of Redemptrix and Co-redemptrix as "somewhat disturbing" during this time of historical development, and concludes: "we have the impression that Co-redemptrix and, even more so, redemptrix, have slowed down the development of the following thesis of Mary's cooperation in Redemption." In fact, the historical evidence appears to support the opposite conclusion, that the terms in fact have assisted in the process of the historical development of doctrine. The greater frequency of both terms from the twelfth century to the eighteenth centuries parallels the time of greatest theological development of the doctrine of Mary's cooperation in Redemption, as is particularly the case in the seventeenth century Golden Age, during which the terms are used in greatest quantity and the theology of the role receives its greatest historical treatment.

In addition, the terms Co-redemptrix and Redemptrix truly capture the full meaning of the doctrine of Mary's unique participation with the Redeemer in the historic victory over Satan and sin. Rather than some minimalized or vague concept of the doctrine, the Co-redemptrix title envelops the full dynamism of the role of being Christ's unique partner in Redemption, and therefore contributed to an honest discussion of its intrinsic meaning and development. The Co-redemptrix title has historically served, and continues to serve, as an authentic component of the doctrinal development of Mary's cooperation in Redemption.

⁸³ For extended treatments of coredemption under the same four classic soteriological categories, see Gregory Alastruey, *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, Eng. trans. Sr. M. J. La Giglia, O.P. ([St. Louis]: Herder, 1964), chap. 2; C. X. J. M. Friethoff, O.P., *A Complete Mariology* (London: Blackfriars, 1958), Eng. trans. of Dutch original, Part III, chaps. I-V; for specific treatment during this seventeenth century period in its four traditional categories, see J. B. Carol, "Our Lady's Coredemption," in his *Mariology* (3 vols.; Milwaukee: Bruce Publ. Co., 1957), 2:400-409.

⁸⁴ For a fuller explanation of the seventeenth-century references to coredemption, see Carol, *De coredemptione*, 198-480.

St. Lawrence of Brindisi († 1619), Franciscan doctor of the Church, uses the concept of Mary's "spiritual priesthood"⁸⁵ to illustrate Mary's participation in the Redemption in the category of sacrifice. As sacrifice carries the specific soteriological sense of Christ's free immolation and offering of himself to the Eternal Father in a truly priestly action for humanity's sins, Mary in her "spiritual priesthood," as St. Lawrence explains, shares in the offering of the one redemptive sacrifice at Calvary with Jesus, the "Principal Priest":

Did not Mary put her life in danger for us, when she stood by the cross of Christ truly sacrificing him to God in spirit, as full, abundantly full of the spirit of Abraham, and offering him in true charity for the salvation of the world? . . . The spirit of Mary was a spiritual priest, as the cross was the altar and Christ the sacrifice; although the spirit of Christ was the principal priest, the spirit of Mary was there together with the spirit of Christ; indeed it was one spirit with him as one soul in two bodies. Hence the spirit of Mary together with the spirit of Christ performed the priestly office at the altar of the cross and offered the sacrifice of the cross for the salvation of the world to the Eternal God. . . . For of her, as of God to whom she was most similar in spirit, we can truly say that she so loved the world as to give her only-begotten Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish, but will have life eternal.⁸⁶

The Mother of Jesus, as we know, is not a "priest" in the formal sense, since she is not ordained and, therefore, cannot offer a formal public sacrifice. Rather, she possesses a spiritual priesthood true of all the baptized, but in the highest possible degree due to her singular dignity. In view of her fullness of grace and her coredemptive mission with the Redeemer, it is clear that her spiritual sacrifice, in subordinate participation "with Jesus" the High Priest, exceeds in spiritual fruitfulness the sacrifice of any ministerial priest, excepting only that of her own Son.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *Lumen gentium*, no. 10; 1 Pet. 2:9-10.

⁸⁶ St. Lawrence of Brindisi, *Mariale*; his Opera Omnia, 1 (Patavii: Ex Officina typographica Seminarii, 1928), 1:183-184.

⁸⁷ Cf. Carol, "Our Lady's Coredemption," 418; M. O'Carroll, C.S.Sp., *Theotokos*, 293-296.

Another doctor of the Church and revered counter-reformational cardinal and theologian, St. Robert Bellarmine († 1621), teaches the uniqueness of the Mother's cooperation in his metaphor of spiritual creation:

Even if Mary was not present at the creation of the material heavens, nevertheless she was present at the creation of the spiritual heavens—the Apostles; and although she was not present at the founding of the material earth, nevertheless she was present at the founding of the spiritual earth—the Church. For she alone co-operated in the mystery of the Incarnation; she alone co-operated in the mystery of the Passion, standing before the cross, and offering her Son for the salvation of the world.⁸⁸

The French author Fr. Raphael, of the Discalced Augustinians († 1639), illustrates the depth of acknowledgment of the Mother's specifically coredeemptive role with the Redeemer in the *buying back* of humanity as Co-redemptrix:

Her Son shares with her and conveys to her in some way the glory of our ransom, an act which she truly did not perform, nor was able to carry out in order to satisfy the Father by the rigor of justice . . . But we can say that she cooperated in our ransom in that she gave the Redeemer flesh and blood, substance and price of our ransom. She did so just as a servant cooperated in the buying back of a slave if she lent the money to her master for the deliverance. Also, she cooperated because she willingly consented to see him die and she generously condemned herself to the same torture . . . which rightly gives her the quality of coredeptrix of man although her Son is the principal and formal cause of our salvation.⁸⁹

12. Newman and Faber

By the middle of the nineteenth century, we have the corroboration of Venerable Cardinal John Henry Newman († 1890). Newman defends the Co-redemptrix title in his dialogue with

⁸⁸ St. Robert Bellarmine, *Cod. Vat. Lat. Ottob.* 2424, f. 193, cited by C. Dillenschneider, *Marie au service de notre Rédemption* (Haguenau: Maison Saint-Gérard, 1947), 208, n. 2. Bellarmine's contemporary and brother Jesuit, Suarez († 1617), known as the father of modern systematic Mariology, also contributes to the coredeemption discussion in *De Verbo Incarnato*, Q. 38, a. 4, disp. 23, sect. 1, n. 4 (ibid., n.1).

⁸⁹ Father Raphael, *Les sacrifices de la Vierge et de la France*, speech given in Aix, February 2, 1639 (2nd ed., Avignon: I. Piot, [s.d.]), 32-34.

the Anglican clergyman Pusey by reason of the title's relation to the other glorious patristic titles granted to Christ's Mother:

When they found you with the Fathers calling her Mother of God, Second Eve, and Mother of all Living, the Mother of Life, the Morning Star, the Mystical New Heaven, the Sceptre of Orthodoxy, the All-undefiled Mother of Holiness, and the like, they would have deemed it a poor compensation for such language, that you protested against her being called a Co-redemptrix⁹⁰

A valuable testimony to the popular promulgation and acceptance of Co-redemptrix doctrine among the *sensus fidelium* comes from Newman's colleague in the Oxford movement and London Oratory founder, Fr. Fredrick William Faber († 1863).⁹¹ While the Pauline imperative of Colossians 1:24 calls all Christians to co-suffer with Jesus in the distribution of the graces of Redemption, Faber correctly distinguishes the unique role of Mary in the historic obtaining of redemptive graces:

She [Mary] co-operated with our Lord in the Redemption of the world in quite a different sense, a sense which can never be more than figuratively true of the saints. Her free consent was necessary to the Incarnation, as necessary as free will is to merit according to the counsels of God. . . . She consented to his Passion; and if she could not in reality have withheld her consent, because it was already involved in her original consent to the Incarnation, nevertheless, she did not in fact withhold it, and so he went to Calvary as her free-will offering to the Father. . . . Lastly, it was a co-operation of a totally different kind from that of the saints. Theirs was but the continuation and application of a sufficient redemption already accomplished, while hers was a condition requisite to the accomplishment of

⁹⁰ Ven. John Cardinal Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching Considered*, vol. 2, subtitled *In a Letter Addressed to the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D., on Occasion of His Eirenicon of 1864* . . . (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891), 78.

⁹¹ Cf. F.W. Faber, *The Foot of the Cross or the Sorrows of Mary* (Philadelphia: P. Reilly Co., 1956) (originally published in 1858); cf. also Arthur Calkins, "Mary the Coredeptrix in the Writings of Frederick William Faber (1814-1863)," in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross: Acts of the International Symposium on Marian Coredeemption . . . February 2000* (New Bedford, Mass.: Franciscans of the Immaculate, 2001), 317-344.

that redemption. One was a mere consequence of an event which the other actually secured, and which only became an event by means of it. Hence it was more real, more present, more intimate, more personal, and with somewhat of the nature of a cause in it, which cannot in any way be predicated of the co-operation of the saints.⁹²

13. Papal Magisterium of the Nineteenth through Twenty-First Centuries

The papal pronouncements of the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries bring the doctrine to the ranks of the ordinary teaching of the Church's Magisterium. The character of the papal documents which articulate the doctrine of Marian coredeemption include encyclical letters, as well as apostolic letters, exhortations and general addresses. Its veracity is apparent through the frequency of papal teaching during this time period⁹³ and a repeated use of the Co-redemptrix title by two pontiffs assures its freedom from doctrinal error.⁹⁴ In fact, all the conciliar criteria for the ordinary teachings of the Papal Magisterium are fulfilled by the nineteenth and twentieth century successors of Peter regarding Marian coredeemption.⁹⁵ Here we will limit our abbreviated treatment to the specific discussion of the Co-redemptrix title within twentieth and twenty-first century magisterial documents, while keeping in mind the various studies which have already presented a more complete exposition of the doctrine (which the title represents

⁹² Faber, *The Foot of the Cross*, 372-374.

⁹³ A number of citations have been found in the more extensive work by Msgr. Arthur B. Calkins, "The Mystery of Mary Coredeptrix in the Papal Magisterium," in *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, ed. M. Miravalle (Goleta, Calif.: Queenship Pub., 2002), 25-92.

⁹⁴ The criterion of repetition in regards to the papal use of the title of Co-redemptrix includes the six usages by John Paul II.

⁹⁵ For the same application of conciliar criteria to Marian coredeemption specific to the Magisterium of John Paul II, see Calkins, "Pope John Paul II's Teaching on Marian Coredeemption," in *Mary Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations II*, ed. M. Miravalle (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Queenship Pub., 1996), 145. Note: While the Co-redemptrix title has not been used in papal documents of a conciliar or encyclical character, its repetition (at least on nine occasions by Pius XI and John Paul II collectively) likewise appears to fulfill the conciliar criteria of "frequency" of papal teaching.

in a single term), as a consistent teaching of the ordinary magisterium.⁹⁶

The first usages of the Co-redemptrix title in the official pronouncements of the Roman Congregations take place under the magisterium of St. Pius X. Co-redemptrix is used three times by the Holy See in documentation from three congregations of the Holy See. The first official use of Co-redemptrix comes on May 13, 1908, in a document by the Congregation of Rites. In positive response to a petition to raise the rank of the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary to a double rite of second class for the Universal Church, the Congregation of Rites expresses its hope that "the devotion of the Sorrowful Mother may increase and the piety of the faithful and their gratitude toward the merciful Co-redemptrix of the human race may intensify."⁹⁷ The Holy Office is the next congregation to use the term (on June 26, 1913). In expressing the Congregation's satisfaction in adding the name of Mary to the name of Jesus in the indulgenced greeting "Praised be Jesus and Mary," which is then responded to with "Now and forever," the document, signed by Cardinal Rampolla, states: "There are those Christians whose devotion to the most favored among virgins is so tender as to be unable to recall the name of Jesus without the accompanying name of the Mother, our Co-redemptrix, the Blessed Virgin Mary."⁹⁸ Six months later, the same Holy Office grants a partial indulgence for the recitation of a prayer of reparation to the Blessed Virgin (*Vergine benedetta*). The prayer ends with the words: "I bless thy holy Name, I praise thine exalted privilege of being truly Mother of God, ever Virgin, conceived without stain of sin, Co-redemptrix of the human race."⁹⁹

Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) becomes the first pontiff to use the title of Co-redemptrix in papal addresses, which he does on three occasions during his pontificate. The first occasion is

⁹⁶ See, e.g., J. B. Carol, *De corredemptione*; Calkins, "The Mystery of Mary Co-redemptrix in the Papal Magisterium," 25-92; Mark Miravalle, "With Jesus": *The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix* (Goleta, Calif.: Queenship Pub., 2003), 189-212.

⁹⁷ *AAS* 1 (1908): 409.

⁹⁸ *AAS* 5 (1913): 364.

⁹⁹ *AAS* 6 (1914): 108.

on November 30, 1933, in a papal allocution to the pilgrims of Vicenza, Italy. Pius XI explains in this first papal usage of Co-redemptrix precisely why it is a legitimate term under which to invoke the Mother of the Redeemer:

By necessity, the Redeemer could not but associate [in Italian: *non poteva, per necessità di cose, non associare*] his Mother in his work. For this reason we invoke her under the title of Co-redemptrix. She gave us the Savior, she accompanied him in the work of Redemption as far as the Cross itself, sharing with him the sorrows of the agony and of the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of mankind.¹⁰⁰

The fact that the comments of Pope Pius XI were apparently given spontaneously in his general address could be interpreted to speak all the more to his acceptance of the title and his familiarity and confidence with it.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Pius XI, *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 1, 1933, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Laurentin's exegetical questioning of the accuracy of this text (Laurentin, *Le titre de Corédemptrice*, 26), as well as the March 23, 1934, text, appears somewhat overstated. It is a basic fact that Pius XI used the Co-redemptrix title, accompanied by an explanatory rationale for the title, in the office of Roman pontiff, in a document which has the character of a public address. How much deliberation came before its usage, based on a prepared text or the lack thereof, becomes rather questionable speculation. It is recorded in *L'Osservatore Romano* as the words of Pius XI explaining the use of the title Co-redemptrix with an explanatory rationale for its use.

The objection raised by Laurentin does not immediately concern the legitimate question of examining what level of papal authority is being used here, but rather whether it is an authentic papal allocution or not. It would not be advisable to use similar speculation to judge the merits of other papal allocutions, or even to question, for example, the status of papal allocutions previously prepared by a theological writer and not by the hand of the pontiff himself. In some cases, the spontaneous words of a pope manifest the true convictions of his mind and heart with even greater authenticity, manifesting his confidence and familiarity with, for example, the Co-redemptrix title.

Laurentin does conclude in the same document that, because the term was "used or protected" by the two popes, the Co-redemptrix term does merit our respect and its legitimacy should not be attacked: "Used or protected by two popes, even in the most humble exercise of their supreme magisterium, the term henceforth requires our respect. It would be gravely presumptuous, at the very least, to attack its legitimacy" (*ibid.*, 27-28). But then he follows with the conclusion that "it would be inexact to say Rome positively recommends or encourages its use." Is the pope's own example in using the Co-redemptrix title not in itself a positive recommendation or encouragement of its use, particularly within a papal address "carrying weight and universal outreach" (to quote Laurentin's own words)?

During the 1934 Holy Year of Redemption, Pius XI repeats the Co-redemptrix title on the occasion of the Lenten commemoration of Our Lady of Sorrows. *L'Osservatore Romano* reports the pontiff's remarks to Spanish pilgrims. The pope notes with joy that they have come to Rome to celebrate with him "not only the nineteenth centenary of the divine Redemption, but also the nineteenth centenary of Mary, the centenary of her coredeemption, of her universal maternity."¹⁰² Pius XI then exhorts the youth to "follow the way of thinking and the desire of Mary most holy, who is our Mother and our Co-redemptrix: they, too, must make a great effort to be coredeemers and apostles, according to the spirit of Catholic Action, which is precisely the cooperation of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church."¹⁰³

In his April 28, 1935, radio message for the closing of the Holy Year at Lourdes, Pius XI directly invokes the Mother as the "Co-redemptrix" for the third time, she who assisted the Lord in the offering of the "sacrifice of our Redemption": "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, didst stand next to him, suffering with him as Coredeptrix . . . preserve in us, we beseech thee, and increase day by day the precious fruit of his Redemption and thy compassion."¹⁰⁴

In papal witness to most every aspect of Marian coredeemption and to the Co-redemptrix title, John Paul II exceeded all papal predecessors. Pope John Paul uses the title on at least six occasions in public addresses.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the most significant example of his usage of this title is on January 31, 1985, at the Marian Sanctuary in Guayaquil, Ecuador, where he delivers a homily in which he professes the Co-redemptrix title within a solid theological context of scriptural and conciliar teaching on the doctrine:

Mary goes before us and accompanies us. The silent journey that begins with her Immaculate Conception and passes through the "yes" of

¹⁰² Pius XI, *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 25, 1934, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Pius XI, *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 29-30, 1935, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Calkins, "The Mystery of Mary Coredeptrix in the Papal Magisterium," 25-92.

Nazareth, which makes her the Mother of God, finds on Calvary a particularly important moment. There also, accepting and assisting at the sacrifice of her Son, Mary is the dawn of Redemption; . . . 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 which she herself had brought forth" (*Lumen Gentium*, 58) . . .

In fact, at Calvary she united herself with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church; her maternal heart shared to the very depths the will of Christ "to gather into one all the dispersed children of God" (Jn. 11:52). Having suffered for the Church, Mary deserved to become the Mother of all the disciples of her Son, the Mother of their unity

The Gospels do not tell us of an appearance of the risen Christ to Mary. Nevertheless, as she was in a special way close to the Cross of her Son, she also had to have a privileged experience of his Resurrection. In fact, Mary's role as Coredemptrix did not cease with the glorification of her Son.¹⁰⁶

Pope Benedict XVI continues John Paul's committed papal teachings on the coredemption doctrine (consistent with the pontiffs of the last two centuries) with his February 11, 2008, letter for his World Day of the Sick, in which he speaks of

¹⁰⁶ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. ed., March 11, 1985, p. 7. The Guayaquil homily by the Vicar of Christ should not be dismissed as either marginal or devoid of doctrinal weight. Unfortunately, these were the expressions used to describe the significance of the repeated papal usages of the title of Co-redemptrix by Pope John Paul II, as contained in an unsigned article which appeared in *L'Osservatore Romano* on June 4, 1997. This article accompanied the brief conclusion of an ad hoc ecumenical committee of theologians (sixteen Catholic and five non-Catholic) who met at the 1996 Czestochowa Marian Conference to study the possibility of a dogmatic definition of Mary as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate (a meeting estimated by the committee members to have lasted less than one hour). Although the ad hoc committee members later stated that they were not informed that they were in any way acting as an official "papal commission," their conclusions were nonetheless published some ten months later in *L'Osservatore Romano* as the conclusions of a "commission established by the Holy See" and released as a "Declaration of the Theological Commission of the Congress of the Pontifical International Marian Academy" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 1997); see M. Miravalle, *In Continued Dialogue with the Czestochowa Commission* (Goleta, Calif.: Queenship Pub., 2002).

Mary's participation in the Passion of her Son in fulfillment of her fiat at the Annunciation:

For this reason, Mary is a model of total self-abandonment to God's will: she received in her heart the eternal Word and she conceived it in her virginal womb; she trusted in God and, with her soul pierced by a sword (cf. Lk. 2:35), she did not hesitate to share the Passion of her Son, renewing on Calvary at the foot of the Cross her "yes" of the Annunciation. . . . Associated with the Sacrifice of Christ, Mary, *Mater Dolorosa*, who at the foot of the Cross suffers with her divine Son, is felt to be especially near by the Christian community, which gathers around its suffering members who bear the signs of the Passion of the Lord. Mary suffers with those who are in affliction, with them she hopes, and she is their comfort, supporting them with her maternal help. And is it not perhaps true that the spiritual experience of very many sick people leads us to understand increasingly that "the Divine Redeemer wishes to penetrate the soul of every sufferer through the heart of his holy Mother, the first and the most exalted of all the redeemed"?¹⁰⁷

Mary's unique active, free, personal, and feminine cooperation with the Redeemer, both at the Annunciation and at Calvary, are explicit and consistent within the ordinary papal magisterium of the last two centuries.

14. Second Vatican Council

On June 18, 1959, a circular letter is sent from Rome to all cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and general superiors of religious orders, followed on July 18 by a letter to Catholic universities and faculties of Theology. The purpose of the letters is to request from the future Council Fathers of the newly announced ecumenical council (Jan. 25, 1959) suggestions for the themes that should be eventually treated at the Council itself.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Benedict XVI, *Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the Sixteenth World Day of the Sick*, February 11, 2008 (Libreria Editrice Vaticana); cf. John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, no. 26.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. G. M. Besutti, O.S.M., *Lo schema Mariano al Concilio Vaticano II* (Rome: Edizioni "Marianum," 1966), 17.

These suggested topics are obtained during the antepreparatory period completed by spring of 1960.¹⁰⁹ The secretary of the antepreparatory council then compiles a summary of the petitions and proposals from the bishops and prelates. Among these petitions, there are approximately four hundred requests by bishops for a dogmatic definition of Our Lady's mediation, which included her cooperation in the Redemption, and particularly her role as Mediatrix of all graces.¹¹⁰ Approximately fifty bishops request a dogmatic definition of Mary specifically as the "Co-redemptrix."¹¹¹ One report states that the highest number of petitions on any single issue that the future Council Fathers agree should merit a conciliar statement is on Our Lady's mediation; the second largest number of petitions seeks a condemnation of communism; and the third issue is the need for a solemn dogmatic definition on Marian coredemption.¹¹²

The first schema on the Blessed Virgin Mary is presented to the Council Fathers on November 23, 1962. The schema is prepared by a subcommission of theologians and is titled "On the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of Men."¹¹³ Within the documentation contained in this first schema (note 16) is a succinct summary of the doctrine of Mary as "Co-redemptrix," from the New Eve doctrine of the Early Fathers to the rich teachings of the nineteenth and twentieth century Papal Magisterium leading up to the Council. In the section which refers to the various titles in which the cooperation of the Mother of God with Christ in the work of human Redemption is expressed, the documentation offers the following

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. The responses received numbered 1,998, which represented seventy-seven percent of those asked for suggestions.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Besutti states the number of bishops for the definition of Mary's Mediation was over 500. See also A. Escudero Cabello, *La cuestión de la mediación mariana en la preparación del Vaticano II* (Rome: LAS, 1997), 86-92, and O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, 352.

¹¹¹ *Relationes*, Vatican Press, 1963, as quoted by O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, 308; cf. also Calkins, "The Mystery of Mary Coredemptrix in the Papal Magisterium," 36.

¹¹² O'Carroll, "Vatican II," *Theotokos*, 352.

¹¹³ Besutti, *Lo schema Mariano*, 22; see also C. Balić, O.F.M., "La doctrine sur la Bienheureuse Vierge Marie, Mère de l'Église, et la Constitution 'Lumen Gentium' du Concile Vatican II," *Divinitas* 9 (1965): 464.

substantiation of the legitimacy of the title of Co-redemptrix and its doctrine (which follow a New Eve patristic summary):

All these things developed from the Pontiffs and the theologians, and a terminology was created in which Mary is soon called the "spiritual Mother of men, Queen of heaven and earth"; in other ways, "New Eve, Mediatrix, Dispensatrix of all graces," and indeed, "Co-redemptrix" . . . To that which pertains to the title "Co-redemptrix" and "Associate of Christ the Redeemer," some things must be added.

Already in the tenth century, the title of "Redemptrix" was used: "Holy Redemptrix of the world, pray for us." When in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, this familiar title was used, already an immediate cooperation of the Blessed Virgin in the work of our Redemption was recognized, and to the name "Redemptrix" is added "co," and therefore the Mother of God was called "Co-redemptrix," while Christ continued to be called "Redeemer." From that time to the seventeenth century, the title Co-redemptrix was brought into use not only in devotional works of piety and holiness, but also in a great number of theological tracts.¹¹⁴ This also pertains to the Roman pontiffs, as it has occurred in certain texts of St. Pius X and Pius XI . . .¹¹⁵

The schema notation subsequently quotes Pope Pius XI using the Co-redemptrix title on December 1, 1933, and proceeds to cite further references in support of the Co-redemptrix doctrine by Popes Leo XIII, Pius XI, and Pius XII. The notation even refers back to Pius VI in the eighteenth century, who condemns the thesis that unless a title of Mary is not explicitly contained in Scripture then it cannot be believed, even though approved by the Church and incorporated into its public prayer (*Auctorem fidei*, 1794). Even though this notation is not included in the eventual version of *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter Eight, its presence in the first Marian schema given to the Council Fathers manifests the

¹¹⁴ Here the documentation refers to J. B. Carol, *De corredemptione* . . . , 482.

¹¹⁵ The note then cites: "cf. St. Pius X and Pius XI, in contexts of minor importance, cf. ASS 41 (1908) pp. 409; AAS 6 (1914) pp. 108 s.; *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29-30, April, 1935."

fact of its presence in Catholic Tradition and ordinary papal teachings.¹¹⁶

One reason for the absence of the Co-redemptrix title in the final version of the conciliar treatment on the Blessed Virgin was the anticipatory prohibition or omission of the title by a theological subcommittee communicated in a *Praenotanda*, which immediately follows the text of the original Marian schema as it was distributed to the Council Fathers. The

¹¹⁶The relevant section of note 16, due to its importance in understanding how secure was the Co-redemptrix title and teaching at the time when the first schema was written, is here given in its Latin original:

Quae omnia evoluta sunt a Theologis et a Summis Pontificibus, et creata est nomenclatura, ubi Maria vocatur mox *Mater spiritalis hominum*, mox *Regina caeli et terrae*, alia vice *Nova Heva*, *Mediatrix*, *Dispensatrix omnium gratiarum*, immo et *Corredemptrix*. Quod attinet ad titulum "Regina" cf. notam (14); quoad titulum "Mater spiritalis," "Mater hominum" cf. notam (12); quoad titulum "Corredemptrix," Socia Christi Redemptoris" hic quaedam adiungenda sunt:

Iam saeculo x occurrit titulis *Redemptrix*: "Sancta redemptrix mundi, ora pro nobis." Quando saeculo xv et xvi hic titulus usitatus evadit, et iam percipitur immediata cooperatio B. Virginis in opere nostrae redemptionis, vocabolo "Redemptrix" additur "con," et ita Mater Dei nuncupatur "corredemptrix," dum Christus "Redemptor" appellari pergit. Inde a saeculo xvii, titulus "Corredemptrix" communissime usurpatur non solum in operibus pietati ac devotioni inservientibus, verum etiam in quamplurimis tractatibus theologicis [cf. Carol, J., *De corredemptione Beatae Virginis Mariae*, Romae, 1950, p. 482].

Quod vero attinet ad Romanos Pontifices, occurrit in quibusdam textibus S. Pii X et Pii XI, in contextibus minoris ponderis: cf. ASS 41(1908) p. 409; AAS 6 (1914) pp. 108 s.; *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29-30 apr. 1935.

Pius XII consulto vitare voluit hanc expressionem adhibendo frequenter formulas "Socia Redemptoris," "Generosa Redemptoris Socia," "Alma Redemptoris Socia," "Socia in Divini Redemptoris opere."

Consortium Mariae cum Iesu in oeconomia nostrae salutis saepe saepius a Summis Pontificibus extollitur: "ad magnam Dei Matrem eandemque reparandi humani generis consortem" [Leo XIII, Const. Apost. *Ubi primum*, 2 febr. 1898: Acta Leonis XIII, XVIII, p. 161];

Pius XI, Alloc. *peregrinantibus e diocesi Vicent.*: *L'Osserv. Rom.* 1 dec. 1933: "Il Redentore non poteva, per necessità di cose, non associare la Madre Sua alla Sua opera, e per questo noi la invociamo col titolo *Corredentriche* . . .";

Pius XII, Litt. Encycl. *Ad caeli Reginam*, 11 oct. 1954: AAS 46 (1954) p. 634: "Si Maria, in spiritali procuranda salute cum Iesu Christo, ipsius salutis principio, ex Dei placito *sociata* fuit . . ."

Praeter titulos allatos adsunt quamplurimi alii, quibus a christifidelibus Maria salutatur.

subcommission's rationale for the removal/prohibition of the co-redemptrix title reads: "Certain expressions and words used by Supreme Pontiffs have been omitted, which, in themselves are absolutely true, but which may be understood with difficulty by separated brethren (in this case, Protestants). Among such words may be numbered the following: 'Co-redemptrix of the human race' [Pius X, Pius XI] . . ." ¹¹⁷

The theological commission's admission that the title "co-redemptrix of the human race" is in itself "absolutely true" should dissuade present opinions to the contrary. The term is omitted not because of any intrinsic theological error, but rather due to the opinions of certain members of the subcommission that the title "may be understood" by Protestant Christians "with difficulty."

Is it not appropriate to examine this prohibition of the Co-redemptrix term within a consistent framework which should include the overall genus of Catholic terminology? What would happen to the entire Catholic terminological tradition if all our theological terms and titles were to be measured by the same standard? Certainly, "Immaculate Conception" and "Assumption" from among the species of defined terms

Leo XIII, Litt. Encycl. *Supremi Apostolatus*, 1 sept. 1883: Acta Leonis XIII, III, p. 282: "Veteris et recentioris aevi historiae, ac sanctiores Ecclesiae fasti publicas privatasque ad Deiparam obsecrationes vota commemorant, ac vicissum praebita per Ipsam auxilia partamque divinitus tranquillitatem et pacem. Hinc insignes illi tituli, quibus Eam catholicae gentes christianorum Auxiliatricem, Opiferam, Solatricem, bellorum potentem Victricem, Paciferam consalutarunt."

Cf. Pius VI, Const. *Auctorem fidei*, 28 aug. 1794 [*Documentos Marianos*, n. 230]: "Item [doctrina] quae vetat, ne imagines, praesertim beatae Virginis, ullis titulis distinguantur, praeter denominationibus, quae sint analogae mysteriis, *de quibus in sacra Scriptura expressa fit mentio*; quasi nec adscribi possent imaginibus piae aliae denominationes, quas vel in ipsismet publicis precibus Ecclesia probat et commendat: temeraria, piarum aurium offensiva, *venerationi beatae praesertim Virgini debitae iniuriosa*." ("De Beata Maria Vergine Matre Dei et Matre Hominum," Section 3, note 16, *Acta Synodalia Concilia Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1971, vol. 1, pt. 4.)

¹¹⁷ Original Latin from the *Praenotanda*: "Omissae sunt expressions et vocabula quaedam a Summis Pontificibus adhibita, quae, licet in se verissima, possent difficiliter intelligi a fratribus separatis (in casu protestantibus). Inter alia vocabula adnumerari queunt sequential: 'Corredemptrix humani generis' [S. Pius X, Pius XI] . . ."

could never have withstood this form of prohibitive scrutiny, let alone “transubstantiation” and “papal infallibility” within the overall genus of Catholic terminology, as these terms certainly run the danger of being “understood with difficulty” by our brother and sister Christians who are not in the full Catholic communion.

The Second Vatican Council does not use the Co-redemptrix title, but nevertheless repeatedly teaches the doctrine, most notably expressed in numbers 56, 57, 58, 60, and 61 of *Lumen Gentium*. For example:

Committing herself whole-heartedly and impeded by no sin to God's saving will, she devoted herself totally, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, under and with him, serving the mystery of redemption. . . . (LG, 56)

Lumen Gentium 58 particularly captures the heart of Our Lady's coredemption at Calvary in her free consent to the immolation of the victim with whom she shared an interior unity of heart in his redemptive mission (with footnotes referring to its precedence in earlier papal teaching by the Ordinary Magisterium):

Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to his disciple, with these words: “Woman, behold thy son” (Jn. 19:26-27). (LG, 58)

And further in *Lumen Gentium*, no. 61:

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.

It is within a “hermeneutic of continuity” with the Church's Tradition and Papal Magisterium before the Council, and not a

“hermeneutic of rupture” as Pope Benedict instructs and warns in his address to the Curia on December 22, 2005,¹¹⁸ that the conciliar teaching on Marian coredemption must be properly interpreted and promulgated.

15. Contemporary Saints

The hagiographical testimony of the saints and blessed represents the highest, most trustworthy level of *sensus fidelium*.¹¹⁹ *Vox populi vox Dei*. Among this *vox populi* chorus, the witness of the saints offers the most pure and genuine refrain in recognizing, living, and sometimes dying for Christian truth. It is therefore particularly valuable to hear the praise of Mary Co-redemptrix amidst the rather exclusive genus of saints who both lived and were canonized within the same twentieth century. We will here offer three example witnesses from among the several recently canonized and beatified who use the Co-redemptrix title.¹²⁰

St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe († 1941) offers exceptional tribute to the Co-redemptrix as the predestined partner with the predestined Redeemer in restoring grace to mankind: “From that moment [of the Fall] God promised a Redeemer and a Co-redemptrix saying: ‘I will place enmities between thee and the Woman, and thy seed and her Seed; She shall crush thy head.’”¹²¹ St. Maximilian acknowledges the more complete

¹¹⁸ *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006-), 1 (2005): 1023-1031.

¹¹⁹ Cf. M. de Maria, “Il ‘sensus fidei’ e la ‘Corredentrice,’” in *Maria Corredentrice*. Storia e teologia, 3 (Frigento: Casa Mariana Editrice, 2000), 8. For extended treatments, see S. M. Miotto, “La voce dei Santi e la ‘Corredentrice,’” in *Maria Corredentrice*, 3:189-223; S. Manelli, “Marian Coredemption in the Hagiography of the 20th Century,” in *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, ed. M. Miravalle (Goleta, Calif.: Queenship Pub., 2002), 191-261. (Note: The majority of references contained in this section on the saints can be found in these two more comprehensive works.)

¹²⁰ For more examples, see M. Miravalle, “*With Jesus*,” and S. Manelli, “Marian Coredemption in the Hagiography of the 20th Century.”

¹²¹ St. Maximilian Kolbe, *Scritti* (Rome: ENMI, 1997), no. 1069. See also L. Iammorone, “Il mistero di Maria Corredentrice in san Massimiliano Kolbe,” in *Maria Corredentrice*, 2:219-256; H. M. Manteau-Bonamy, O.P., *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit: The Marian Teachings of Father Kolbe* (Kenosha, Wis.: Prow Books, 1977), 99-102.

understanding of Mary Co-redemptrix within contemporary times: "Clearly, our relationship with Mary Co-redemptrix and Dispensatrix of graces in the economy of Redemption was not understood from the beginning in all its perfection. But in these, our times, faith in the Blessed Virgin Mary's mediation continues to grow more and more each day."¹²²

St. Leopold Mandic († 1942), the Croatian Capuchin priest stationed in Padua, offered his life to Mary Co-redemptrix for the reunification of the Oriental Churches with the Church of Rome. So extraordinarily dedicated was this saint to Mary Co-redemptrix that he had a lifelong desire to author a book in defense of the Blessed Mother as "Co-redemptrix of the human race" and the "channel of every grace" that comes from Jesus Christ.¹²³

St. Leopold refers to the Mother as "Co-redemptrix of the human race" on thirteen occasions, and also rekindles the medieval and modern title of "our Redemptrix."¹²⁴ So stout-hearted a defender of the Co-redemptrix was Leopold, that above one of his images he once wrote the following personal testimony: "I, friar Leopold Mandic Zarevic, firmly believe that the most Blessed Virgin, insofar as she was Co-redemptrix of the human race, is the moral fountain of all grace, since we have received all from her fullness."¹²⁵

To convey the unconditional nature of dedication to the Co-redemptrix lived by this Patron of Church reunification, St. Leopold writes the following oath of victimhood in his own hand, wherein he offers his entire life "in submission to the Co-redemptrix of the human race" for the "redemption" and reconciliation of the Oriental peoples:

¹²² Kolbe, *Scritti*, no. 1229.

¹²³ P. E. Bernardi, *Leopoldo Mandic: Santo della riconciliazione* (Padua: Convento dei Cappuccini, 1990), 118.

¹²⁴ St. Leopoldo Mandic, P.Tieto, and Remigio Battel, *Suo umile servo in Cristo. Lettere di san Leopoldo Mandic* (2 vols.; Padua: Ed. "Portavoce di san Leopoldo Mandic," 1992), 2:117. Also, for an extended treatment, see P. Stemman, "Il mistero di Maria 'Corredentrice' nella vita e negli insegnamenti di san Leopoldo Mandic," in *Maria Corredentrice* (Frigento, 1999), 2:257-276.

¹²⁵ St. Leopold Mandic, *Suo umile servo in Cristo*, 2:124.

In truth, before God and the Blessed Virgin, confirming all by oath, I myself am obliged, in submission to the Co-redemptrix of the human race, to exert all my life's strength, in accord with the obedience I owe my superiors, for the redemption of all dissident Oriental peoples from schism and error.¹²⁶

The human witness of St. Leopold to both the undeniable truth of Mary Co-redemptrix and the authentic imperative of Christian ecumenism provides concrete proof in a canonized human life that generous Church devotion to Mary Co-redemptrix in no way opposes authentic Catholic ecumenical activity.

We also recall the witness of the recently beatified Mother Teresa of Calcutta († 1997), whose Mariological profundity-in-simplicity resound in a 1993 letter of support for the dogmatic definition of Mary Co-redemptrix:

14, August 1993

Feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe

Mary is our Coredemptrix with Jesus. She gave Jesus his body and suffered with him at the foot of the cross.

Mary is the Mediatrix of all grace. She gave Jesus to us, and as our Mother she obtains for us all his graces.

Mary is our Advocate who prays to Jesus for us. It is only through the Heart of Mary that we come to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

The papal definition of Mary as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate will bring great graces to the Church.

All for Jesus through Mary.

God bless you
M. Teresa, M.C. ¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Stemman, "Il mistero di Maria 'Corredentrice,'" in *Maria Corredentrice*, 2:269. The original Latin text is as follows: "Vere coram Deo et Deiparae Virgini, interposita sacramenti fide, me obstrinxi in obsequium Corredemptricis humani generis, disponendi omnes ratione vitae meae iuxta oboedientiam meorum superiorum in redemptionem Orientalium Dissidentium a schismate et errore" (St. Leopoldo Mandic, *Suo umile servo in Cristo*, 2:97).

¹²⁷ Bl. Teresa of Calcutta, *Letter to Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici*, Aug. 14, 1993, *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* Archives, Hopedale, Ohio.

**PART TWO. PARALLELS IN DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT
WITH THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

The Holy Spirit guides and nurtures a seed of revelation found in the Word of God, written or handed down, so that it takes root and grows gradually to full blossom and beauty within the garden of the Church in the form of a defined dogma. As the Spirit is one, so are his ways similar and detectable within the process of this development of doctrine towards its eventual gnoseological perfection in the form of a defined dogma. While there is always some dimension of the beauty of diversity within the movements of the Spirit, so too is there a certain uniformity and pattern.

It is appropriate that the doctrinal maturity of Co-redemptrix historically takes place, in general, side-by-side with the development of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Mary is Co-redemptrix only because she was first the Immaculate Conception. God the Father prepares her for this great battle for souls through her total enmity against the serpent. The pure and perfect Virgin partakes in the greatest of all sacrifices, so that grace can flow to humanity through the same immaculate channel from which Christ, the first uncreated Grace, passes into humanity. Grace is thereupon distributed to the human family free from the limitations of a mediation tainted by sin, so as to allow its greatest possible efficacy in the human heart who receives it. Later popes will confirm that the mystery of Mary's coredeemption cannot be understood outside of an understanding of her fullness of grace.¹²⁸

In examining the development of the Immaculate Conception, we find at least seven parallels with that of the doctrinal maturation of Marian coredeemption. As these stages of maturity eventually led to solemn definition of the Immaculate Conception, so, too, the presence of these same seven characteristics in the development of the Co-redemptrix doctrine bespeaks its own doctrinal maturity.

¹²⁸ John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. ed., December 12, 1983, p. 1.

1. Longstanding Liturgical Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows

In 1477, Pope Sixtus IV approves of the Feast of the Conception of Mary. This liturgical approval plays a most significant role in the Immaculate Conception's doctrinal progression. With the Co-redemptrix doctrine, we also have a liturgical feast celebrated in Rome which likewise dates back to the fifteenth century in the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

In fact, until 1960, the role of Mary Co-redemptrix was liturgically celebrated twice a year. The first feast focused upon the "compassion" or co-suffering of Mary at Calvary and was celebrated on the Friday before our present Palm Sunday. The second feast, historically promoted by the Servites of Mary and celebrated on September 15, accentuated the entire core-demptive life of the Virgin as highlighted in seven scriptural and traditional events or "sorrows": 1) Simeon's prophecy in the Temple, 2) the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, 3) the loss of the Christ Child in the Temple, 4) the encounter of Mary with Jesus on the way of the Cross, 5) her suffering during the crucifixion and death of Jesus, 6) the taking down of Jesus from the Cross, and 7) the burial of Jesus in the tomb.

Moreover, the first official use of the Co-redemptrix title by the Holy See comes on May 13, 1908, in a document by the Congregation of Rites in reference to the Feast of the Seven Sorrows, as previously noted.¹²⁹ These liturgical celebrations of the coredemption underscore the fact that the role has been believed and venerated for over a half millennium in the liturgical life of the Church.

2. Conciliar Teachings in Relation to Extra-conciliar Definition

The conciliar teaching of Trent on the Immaculate Conception doctrine, however implicit, did nonetheless establish its doctrinal integrity.¹³⁰ In addition, there were those at Trent

¹²⁹ AAS 1 (1908): 409.

¹³⁰ Miravalle, "The Immaculate Conception and the Coredemptrix," in *The Immaculate Conception in the Life of the Church: A Theological Symposium in Honor of the 150th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception*, ed. Fr. Donald H. Calloway (Stockbridge, MA: John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy, 2004).

who desired a solemn definition of the Immaculate Conception,¹³¹ but the Council saw it sufficient for that time to reflect the legitimacy of the doctrine in its other teachings.

The Second Vatican Council in its preparatory stage similarly received over 450 petitions for the solemn definition of Marian mediation which generally included the understanding of her coredemptive role along with her subsequent role as Mediatrix of all graces,¹³² but deemed it sufficient for the purposes of a non-defining pastoral council to present a certain teaching on Marian coredemption. The fact that the Second Vatican Council, which was pastoral by nature (as determined at its outset by Bl. John XXIII), did not define the coredemption doctrine cannot be used as a valid argument against its definability. Trent did not define the Immaculate Conception, nor did Vatican I define the Assumption, although it had received from participating Fathers numerous petitions to do so.¹³³ Rather, the solid conciliar teaching on Marian coredemption puts forth a basis in ecumenical council teachings for a potential definition in the future.

3. Petitions from the Faithful, Hierarchy, and Heads of State

Bl. Pius IX's acknowledgement of the numerous petitions from the hierarchy, common faithful, and even heads of state received by the Holy See for the Immaculate Conception's definition illustrates the papal respect given to the *sensus fidelium* in the process of discerning the timeliness and appropriateness of infallible declarations. Pius XII made the same acknowledgement for the vast number of petitions received in favor of the Dogma of the Assumption.¹³⁴

The largest number of *per annum* petitions received by the Holy See for any single cause in the history of the Church has been for the solemn definition of Mary Co-redemptrix. In the past fifteen years, over seven million petitions have been

¹³¹ Carol, *Fundamentals of Mariology* (New York: Benzinger, 1956), 107.

¹³² G. M. Besutti, O.S.M., *Lo Schema Mariano*, 17; M. Miravalle, "With Jesus," 167.

¹³³ Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, in *AAS* 17 (1950):754-755.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

received by the Holy See from over one hundred and fifty countries in support of this infallible declaration.¹³⁵ More than five hundred and fifty bishops, including forty six cardinals, have also joined in the petition during the past fifteen years.¹³⁶

As Spain was foremost in national support for the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the Philippines and Mexico are leaders in the national calls for the definition of Mary Co-redemptrix. Over seventy percent of the Mexican hierarchy has petitioned the Holy Father for the definition.¹³⁷ The Philippines have produced the largest number of lay petitions. Mrs. Corazon Aquino, former President of the Philippines, petitioned the Holy See for the dogmatic proclamation while in office.

4. Indulgenced Prayers

The indulgences approved by the Holy See for prayers associated with the Immaculate Conception also finds its parallel with the Co-redemptrix doctrine. The Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) is the first pontiff to make an official magisterial pronouncement relative to the Immaculate Conception. Pope Sixtus issues sixteen constitutions with reference to Mary's Conception,¹³⁸ but the first major bull is issued in 1477 and entitled *Cum praeclsa*. In this bull, the pontiff officially approves the prayers of the Office of the Conception and grants indulgences for those who recite the Office or attend Mass in its honor.¹³⁹

As previously cited, on June 26, 1913, the Holy Office issued a document expressing the Congregation's satisfaction in

¹³⁵ *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* petition center archives, P.O. Box 220, Goleta, CA 93116, May, 2003.

¹³⁶ Note: These numbers reflect only the past fifteen years, without including the great number of hierarchical petitions for the dogma prior to 1993; see *Vox Populi* petition archives.

¹³⁷ Cf. *Vox Populi* petition archives.

¹³⁸ Cherubinus Sericoli, O.F.M., *Immaculata B. M. Virginis Conceptio iuxta Xysti IV Constitutiones* (Rome: Officium Libri Catholici, 1945), 26, 29.

¹³⁹ J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (54 vols.; Paris-Leipzig: H. Welter, 1901-1927), 32:373-374. For information on Sixtus IV, see Sericoli, *Immaculata B. M. Virginis*, 26, 29.

adding the name of Mary to the name of Jesus in the indulgenced greeting "Praised be Jesus and Mary," which is then responded to "Now and forever." The document then states: "There are those Christians whose devotion to the most favored among virgins is so tender as to be unable to recall the name of Jesus without the accompanying name of the Mother, our Co-redemptrix, the Blessed Virgin Mary."¹⁴⁰ Again, the same Holy Office granted a partial indulgence for the recitation of a prayer of reparation to the Blessed Virgin (*Vergine benedetta*). The prayer ends with the words: "I bless thy holy Name, I praise thine exalted privilege of being truly Mother of God, ever Virgin, conceived without stain of sin, Co-redemptrix of the human race."¹⁴¹

5. Religious Congregations

As was the case with Innocent VIII and the approval of the "Religious of the Immaculate Conception of Mary," religious congregations with the Co-redemptrix title have received Church approval. The North Vietnamese religious congregation, "The Congregation of the Mother Co-redemptrix," which was approved by the local bishop in 1941 and approved by the Holy See in 1953, was forced to relocate to South Vietnam due to Communist persecution; it later expanded to the United States.¹⁴²

6. Approved Private Revelation

As the *Revelations* of St. Bridget and the apparitions of the Miraculous Medal to St. Catherine Labouré offer stimulation and growth to the Immaculate Conception doctrine, confirmed in the life of the Church, so too have ecclesiastically approved private revelations served to confirm the truth of Mary Co-redemptrix and, specifically, its eventual solemn definition.

¹⁴⁰ AAS 5 (1913): 364.

¹⁴¹ AAS 6 (1914): 108.

¹⁴² See *The Official Catholic Directory* (New York: P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 2003), 1305.

From the same *Revelations* given to St. Bridget of Sweden ("My Son and I redeemed the world as with one heart") to recently approved Marian apparitions, confirmation is found. The apparitions of Our Lady of Akita in Japan (1973) manifest Our Lady's ongoing coredeemptive role in the form of messages and scientifically verified lachrymations from a wooden sculpture of the image of the Lady of All Nations (an image from the at-that-time reported apparitions in Amsterdam, Holland).¹⁴³ The Akita apparitions received ecclesiastical approbation from the local ordinary, Bishop John Ito (1984). The related apparitions of the Lady of All Nations in Amsterdam (1945-1959), which have been declared of supernatural origin by the local ordinary Bishop Josef Punt of Haarlem-Amsterdam (May 31, 2002), contain numerous messages from Our Lady which speak of the roles of Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate, and the eventual solemn definition of these roles.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ T. Yasuda, S.V.D., "The Message of Mary Coredeemptrix at Akita and Its Complementarity with the Dogma Movement," in *Contemporary Insights on a Fifth Marian Dogma: Mary Coredeemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, Theological Foundations III, ed. M. Miravalle (Goleta, Calif.: Queenship Pub., 2000), 235-249; F. Mutsuo Fukushima, *Akita: Mother of God as Coredeemptrix, Modern Miracles of Holy Eucharist* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Queenship Pub., 1997).

¹⁴⁴ For example, in the message of April 29, 1951:

I stand here as the Co-redemptrix and Advocate. Everything should be concentrated on that. Repeat this after me; The new dogma will be the "dogma of the Co-redemptrix." Notice I lay special emphasis on "Co." I have said that it will arouse much controversy. Once again I tell you that the Church, "Rome," will carry it through and silence all objections. The Church, "Rome," will incur opposition and overcome it. The Church, "Rome," will become stronger and mightier in proportion to the resistance she puts up in the struggle. My purpose and my commission to you is none other than to urge the Church, the theologians, to wage this battle. For the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit wills to send the Lady, chosen to bear the Redeemer, into this world, as Co-redemptrix and Advocate.

... In the sufferings, both spiritual and bodily, the Lady, the Mother has shared. She has always gone before. As soon as the Father had elected her, she was the Co-redemptrix with the Redeemer, who came into the world as the Man-God. Tell that to your theologians. I know well, the struggle will be hard and bitter (and then the Lady smiles to herself and seems to gaze into the far distance), but the outcome is already assured. (Messages of the Lady of All Nations, Amsterdam, April 29, 1951)

To be sure, private revelation, even that which is approved by the Church, can never serve as the theological foundation for a Church doctrine or its potential definition. Nevertheless, the history of dogmatic development bears out the fact that "certain supernatural lights which it pleases God to distribute to certain privileged souls," to use the words of Bl. John XXIII,¹⁴⁵ have sparked and assisted the development of certain doctrines at key historical periods of the Church. Perhaps our best contemporary example is the new ecclesial emphasis on Divine Mercy, which has been directly stimulated through the revelations to St. Faustina Kowalska and has inspired the Church to the liturgical development of a universal feast of Divine Mercy (on the Sunday following Easter Sunday), as well as the doctrinal development on Mercy for our present troubled age (as manifested in the 1982 papal encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*).

7. Theological Controversy

If history tells us anything about the journey of Marian dogmas, it is that theological controversy and emotionally charged debate will be their constant companions. This is visible in a dramatic way in the seven centuries of battle over the Immaculate Conception, with some of history's greatest theologians, such as St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Albert the Great, and St. Bonaventure, finding themselves on the opposing side of the eventual dogma.

Theological controversy in itself, therefore, should never be used as a legitimate argument for the inappropriateness of a doctrine or its definition, as oftentimes the controversy becomes the very reason why the Bishop of Rome is called to speak definitively and bring peace to the family of the Church upon the necessary foundation of the truth.

The fact that the Papal Magisterium has never deemed it necessary to call for a public prohibition of the discussion of Mary Co-redemptrix due to controversy and its subsequent scandal for the faithful,¹⁴⁶ let alone prohibiting even private

¹⁴⁵ Bl. John XXIII, address at close of the Marian Year, Feb. 18, 1959.

¹⁴⁶ St. Pius V, *Super speculam*; see *Bullarium ... Romanorum pontificum* (14 vols. in 28; Rome: Typis S. Michaelis ad Ripam, sumptibus H. Mainardi, 1733-1762), vol. 4, part 3, p. 138.

discussion as it did for the Immaculate Conception debate,¹⁴⁷ should give a better historical context in which to understand the arguably lesser degree of theological disagreement over Marian coredemption. This is due in our own time in large part to the clarity and certainty of the doctrine by the twentieth and twenty-first century Papal Magisterium and the Second Vatican Council.¹⁴⁸

PART THREE. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In light of the unshakable foundation of Church teaching on the doctrine, the hub of debate in the case of Mary Co-redemptrix focuses more upon the question of its potential definition as a dogma of the Faith than upon its ontological legitimacy. This could place this doctrine in historical parallel to the Immaculate Conception's development within the latter part of the mid-nineteenth century. Now, as then, the Magisterium has settled the question of doctrinal integrity, and the theological discussion is principally centered around questions of the appropriateness and timeliness of a solemn definition.¹⁴⁹

What makes a Marian doctrine definable? It is the establishing of its foundation in divine revelation and its organic maturity in that faith, worship, and life dimension within the Church's living Tradition. Once again, both magisterial and conciliar teachings confirm the ontology of Marian coredemption in the sources of Revelation. Certainly the other criteria which, at the time, had indicated doctrinal maturity for the Immaculate Conception are likewise substantially present for the doctrine of Marian coredemption; they do, in fact, offer evidence for its maturity within the Church's contemporary Tradition.

Does this mean that further development intrinsic to the doctrine in preeminently important domains such as pneumatology, ecclesiology, anthropology, and ecumenical praxis

¹⁴⁷ Gregory XV, *Sanctissimus*; see *Bullarium . . . Romanorum pontificum*, vol. 5, part 5, p. 45.

¹⁴⁸ Miravalle, "With Jesus," chaps. 11-13, pp. 149-208.

¹⁴⁹ Note: However, a lack of knowledge of contemporary papal and conciliar teachings on Marian coredemption has caused unnecessary debate as to even its doctrinal legitimacy.

would not be fruitful? In no sense. At the same time, a just examination of doctrinal maturity and definability would include a parallel examination of the same domains of maturity at the time of the solemn definitions of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption. One could say that the level of understanding of the pneumatological, ecclesiological, ecumenical, and even anthropological aspects (even more intrinsic to the organic comprehension of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption), when these last two doctrines were defined as dogma, were substantially present, but were in no sense fully developed. In fact, it is oftentimes the dogmatic defining of the truth that inspires its more sublime and theologically interdisciplinary comprehension, as is evidenced in the pneumatological advancements of St. Maximilian Kolbe concerning the Immaculate Conception in the century following its solemn definition in *Ineffabilis Deus*.

In spite of its perennial presence in Church tradition and its repeated explicit papal usages by Pius XI and John Paul II, some still hold that the coredemptrix title is in itself theologically erroneous. For a Catholic Christian in full communion with Rome to contend that "co-redemptrix" possesses some form of intrinsic theological error would be unusual, as it would be tantamount to holding that these two popes committed some form of material heresy in their repeated use of the title. Others hold that certain words like "redeemer" must be reserved to the theandric activity of Jesus Christ alone. And yet, these same two popes have used the expression "co-redeemers" to call forth the entire People of God to cooperate in the salvation of others, as well as their co-redemptrix usages.¹⁵⁰

To reject the title in itself could be to reject two key philosophical and theological cornerstones which serve the proper

¹⁵⁰ Pius XI, Papal Allocution at Vicenza, Nov. 30, 1933; John Paul II, Address to the sick at the Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God (Fatebenefratelli) on Rome's Tiber Island on April 5, 1981 (*L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. ed., April 13, 1981, p. 6); idem, Address to the sick after a general audience given January 13, 1982 (*Insegnamenti pontifici*, V/1, 1982, 91); idem, Address to the Bishops of Uruguay gathered in Montevideo concerning candidates for the priesthood, May 8, 1988 (*L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. ed., May 30, 1988, p. 4).

hermeneutic of Catholic revelation: analogy and participation. Mary secondarily and analogously participates in the divine activity of Jesus Christ, divine and human redeemer, without herself possessing a divine nature. The People of God also participate in a tertiary and analogous manner in the redemptive mission of Christ (without, of course, possessing a divine nature), in bringing the good news of salvation to the world. Without the granting of the analogous use of terms in Christian theology, and with efforts to restrict terms referring to divine activity like redemption to a univocal sense in Jesus Christ, how could we hope to interpret or defend patristic expressions such as "deification" or "divinization" in reference to human participation in grace, let alone biblical expressions such as "co-workers" with God and "co-heirs" in Christ (Eph. 3:6)?¹⁵¹

We also use terms related to the particular divine activities of the Father and Spirit with similar expressions employing analogy and participation. God the Father is the "Divine Creator," and yet pro-life literature throughout the world refers to the human parents as "co-creators" with the Father in bringing new human life into the world. The Holy Spirit is the "Divine Sanctifier" and yet the Church is called to be co-sanctifier with the Spirit in bringing forth the salvific anointing of the Paraclete to the world. Is this not the appropriate response to St. Paul's call to be God's "co-workers" (1 Cor. 3:9)?

Within the genus of *ex cathedra* solemn definitions, it is ultimately through the discernment/illumination of the Roman pontiff that God's will is made known regarding the issues of timeliness and opportuneness. For it is his unique ability as

¹⁵¹ The writers of the New Testament have employed the Greek term *sunergos* to indicate the disciples' co- (*sun*) work (*ergon*) with God. "For we are God's co-workers (*sunergoi*) . . ." (1 Cor. 3:9). "Working together with (*sunergountes*) him . . ." (2 Cor 6:1). This is rather profoundly conveyed in the final verse in the Gospel of Mark, which indicates that the Lord is the Apostles' co-worker: "And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with (*sunergountos*) them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen" (16:20). Here, it is Christ himself, not the Apostles, who is named as the one doing the co-working, which corresponds to the Apostles' preaching by confirming their words with signs. He is the one, as co-worker, who is ultimately behind the preaching and the signs of the Church.

spiritual father of the family of God to assess, in the last analysis, what will aid in bringing forth a “new Pentecost” for today’s Church and world, in answer to the call of Bl. John XXIII at the Council and, more recently, Pope Benedict XVI in the United States.¹⁵² May the Holy Spirit guide the discernment of the Roman pontiff, and may the People of God follow his discernment in the spirit of filial obedience and *communio*.

We conclude with the prayer Pope Benedict dedicated to the world day of prayer for China on May 24, 2008, in which we find the heart of Marian coredeemption in a succinct prayerful expression:

Virgin Most Holy, Mother of the Incarnate Word and our Mother . . .

When you obediently said “yes” in the house of Nazareth,
you allowed God’s eternal Son to take flesh in your virginal womb
and thus to begin in history the work of our redemption.
You willingly and generously co-operated in that work,
allowing the sword of pain to pierce your soul,
until the supreme hour of the Cross, when you kept watch on Calvary,
standing beside your Son, Who died that we might live.

From that moment, you became, in a new way,
the Mother of all those who receive your Son Jesus in faith
and choose to follow in His footsteps by taking up His Cross.
Mother of hope, in the darkness of Holy Saturday you journeyed
with unflinching trust towards the dawn of Easter.
Grant that your children may discern at all times,
even those that are darkest, the signs of God’s loving presence.¹⁵³

¹⁵² See the homily of Pope Benedict XVI at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York on April 19, 2008.

¹⁵³ *Prayer of the Pope to Our Lady of Sheshan*, Vatican Information Services, May 16, 2008.