

# Mary Co-redemptrix is Catholic Tradition

by Dr. Mark Miravalle

During an interview in June 2024, Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez, Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, announced that the DDF was working on a second document concerning Marian Apparitions and Mariology in further commentary on the new Norms released in May 2024. Vatican observers have now reported that this document also discusses the title and doctrine of Mary as Co-redemptrix. The same Vatican observers report that Pope Leo has stopped the publication of the DDF document, and is requiring significant changes to the Marian document.

The specific issues calling for major revision by the Holy Father are presently unknown, but the fact that the Co-redemptrix title and doctrine are dealt with in the DDF document makes it an opportune time to reiterate that the doctrine of Mary's unique human cooperation with and under Jesus, our divine Redeemer, constitutes a doctrine as ancient as the Church. This is the Marian doctrine denoted in the traditional term, Co-redemptrix.

In Genesis 3:15, Mary is foreshadowed as uniquely participating in the work of Jesus Christ in the crushing of the head of Satan. At the Annunciation, the Virgin gives her free fiat which brings the divine Redeemer into the world by giving him flesh (Lk. 1:38; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 10:10). At Calvary, Mary is "spiritually crucified", as Pope St. John Paul II teaches, and her maternal suffering joined with that of Jesus constituted "a contribution to the Redemption of all" (Homily of Guayaquil, Ecuador, January 31, 1985; *Salvifici Doloris*, 1984, n. 25).

The Fathers of the Church immediately taught Mary's role as the New Eve: that as Eve was secondary though instrumental with Adam in the loss of graces for humanity, so Mary, the New Eve, was secondary though instrumental with Christ, the New Adam, in the restoration of grace to humanity. In the second century, St. Irenaeus, Doctor of the Church, taught that Mary, through her obedience, became the "cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race" (Adv. Haer. III, 2,4; Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 56).

By the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Mary was being referred to as the human "Redemptrix", associated with Christ the divine "Redemptor", (Litanies de saintes, Salzburg, P. 173), while at the same time, John the Geometer taught the inseparability of Son and Mother in the suffering at Calvary (*Annunciation*, PG 106, 846A). By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Mary was referred to as the "Co-redemptrix" with and under Jesus in the Redemption (Orat. Ms S. Petri Slaisburgens, Codex Petrin, a III, 20). The title Co-redemptrix in Church Tradition has never placed Mary on an equal level with Jesus, the only divine Redeemer, but has consistently denoted Mary's unparalleled sharing in the redemptive work of Jesus like no other creature. This doctrine and/or title has been taught throughout the late medieval and early modern periods by theologians and saints such as St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Arnold of Chartres, St. Bonaventure, St. Albert (or pseudo-Albert), St. Bernadine of Siena, St. Antoninus, Alphonsus Salmeron, St. Peter Canisius, Francisco Suarez, St.

Lawrence of Brindisi, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. John Henry Cardinal Newman, and many others (cf. *With Jesus: The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix*, pp. 77-145).

The Papal Magisterium has repeatedly used and approved the Co-redemptrix title, while consistently teaching Mary's unique role in Redemption for the last three centuries. The Co-redemptrix title was approved three times by Vatican Congregations under Pope St. Pius X, (AAS, 1, 1908, p. 409), including two times specifically by the Holy Office itself, the same doctrinal congregation as the present DDF (AAS 5, 1913, p. 364; AAS 6, 1914, p. 108). It would be inconceivable to have a present DDF ever teach in direct opposition to a previous doctrinal teaching of a past "DDF."

Pope Benedict XV taught in his 1918 Apostolic Letter, *Inter Sodalicia*, that "we may rightly say that she [Mary] redeemed the human race together with Christ" (AAS 10, p. 181).

Pope Pius XI specifically used the Co-redemptrix title on three occasions, and in one address defended the legitimacy of the Co-redemptrix title: "By necessity, the Redeemer could not but associate [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 Saviour, 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" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 1, 1933, p. 1).

Vatican II's treatment on Mary in *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter 8 positively teaches Marian Coredemption in four separate places (*Lumen Gentium*, nn. 56, 57, 58, 61), including this profound testimony to Mary's co-suffering with Jesus at Calvary:

Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and loving consenting to the immolation of this victim born of her." (*Lumen Gentium*, 58).

After the Council, Pope St. John Paul II specifically used the title Co-redemptrix on at least six separate occasions, such as on March 24, 1990, when the Holy Father refers to Mary as "Co-redemptrix of the human race beside her Son" (Insegn. XIII/1, 1990, 743, 1). St. John Paul II also taught the doctrine of Marian coredemption on a great number of occasions (cf. *With Jesus*, pp. 189-211).

With just this brief sampling of the presence of the Co-redemptrix title and doctrine in Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the teachings of the Papal Magisterium, along with the ubiquitous witness among the saints, mystics and within the faith-filled hearts of the People of God, does this ecclesial testimony not suffice to remove all doubt as to the substantial and perennial presence of Mary Co-redemptrix in the truth and life of the Catholic Church?

The admirable efforts of the Holy See to build bridges within the Church in pursuit of greater unity would be gravely and negatively impacted by any statement against the perennial teaching

and title of Co-redemptrix in light of its undeniable place in the Church's Tradition, both past and present. To speak against such a clearly Catholic Marian doctrine would cause both division and confusion amidst the People of God.

With such strong emphasis on the synodal way for the Church today —the way of ecclesial dialogue and listening—may the Holy See, including the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, listen and hear well the cry of Tradition and of the People of God today in bold testimony to the truth of Mary Co-redemptrix and its irremovable place within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. *Mary Co-redemptrix is Catholic Tradition.*