



Mater aeterna

Mary's Role as Co-Redemptrix with the Redeemer

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Mary is the daughter of God,¹ destined from eternity to be his Mother.² “The liturgy does not hesitate to call her "mother of her Creator" and to hail her with the words which Dante Alighieri³ places on the lips of St. Bernard: "daughter of your Son."⁴ She is at the same time the bride of the Holy Spirit⁵, who “so ennobled human nature that its very Creator did not disdain to share in it.”⁶ Mary is at last *Co-Redemptrix with the Redeemer*, offered as an eternal gift to humanity from Calvary, as a final effect of his redemptive act with her. “Behold your Mother!”⁷

Theological Definition

It is both helpful and ironic to first define the term “Co-Redemptrix” by stating precisely what Mary is *not*. She is neither a goddess, nor the fourth person of the Trinity, and she certainly does not possess a divine nature. To the contrary, Mary’s soul was saved from the stain of original sin (i.e., the unique privilege of her Immaculate Conception) in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, by what is known as “preservative redemption”.⁸ Jesus Christ is forever and always the *Redeemer*, the *King*, the *Almighty*, and Mary is and will always be secondary to Christ. Mary is “a creature completely dependent upon her Creator, like all other creatures.”⁹

¹ Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, 1673-1716. True Devotion to Mary with Preparation for Total Consecration. Translated from the original French by Father Fredrick William Faber, D.D. *Saint Louis de Montfort’s Prayer to Mary*.

² Saint John Paul II, *Redemptoris mater, On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church*. Encyclical letter. March 25, 1987. Sec. 3.

³ Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321. The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri : Inferno, Purgatory, Paradise. New York :The Union Library Association, 1935. *Paradiso, Canto 33*.

⁴ *Redemptoris mater*, Sec. 10.

⁵ Second Vatican Council, "*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen gentium*, 21 November 1964," in Vatican Council II. Sec. 63.

⁶ Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, Canto 33.

⁷ The New American Bible: Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010. John 19:27.

⁸ Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis deus: The Immaculate Conception*, Apostolic Constitution, December 8, 1854.

⁹ Mark I. Miravalle, “With Jesus. The Story of Mary Co-Redemptrix”, Queenship Publishing, 2003. Chapter 1. Page 8.

The term “Co-redemptrix” is derived from the Latin “*co*” meaning “*with*”, “*redimere*” meaning “*to buy back*”, and “*trix*” which is the female suffix. Co-Redemptrix means, literally, “*the woman who buys back with Jesus*”.¹⁰ Mary as the ‘new Eve’ was created by God to work with Jesus - *to suffer with Jesus* - to restore grace for the human family. She was with Jesus throughout his life, willfully cooperating in the work of redemption. Mary especially shared the suffering of Jesus in her heart¹¹; that is, she consented to the immolation of the victim born of her. Inaugurated at the Presentation in the Temple¹², the sacrificial union of the Son and Mother is willed by the Father, and therefore is meritorious. Mary is not a passive bystander at Calvary; to the contrary, she is an active participant offering Jesus to the Father as part of the single act of redemption between the Redeemer and the Co-redemptrix, the new Adam and the new Eve. This is the heart-union - *the unity of a shared goal* - between Jesus and Mary, in cooperation with the eternal Father.

Gratefully, for our sake “Mary’s role as Co-Redemptrix did not cease with the glorification of her Son.”¹³ Mary is at once Mother of God and Mother to the world, and her co-redemptive work with Christ continues now, and forever. She is rightly called Co-Redemptrix with the Redeemer, and most blessedly she is Mother to us all. As Co-Redemptrix, Mary first sacrificed her body and blood - “*fiat*”¹⁴ - for the One who would finally sacrifice his body and blood for all, and she wept below the cross as his salvific mission was made complete. Mary redeemed the human race together *with Christ* and as such, she rightly participates in the joint

¹⁰ Ibid., Page 9-10.

¹¹ Luke 2:35.

¹² Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus: The Right Ordering and Developing Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Encyclical Letter, February 2, 1974. Sec. 20.

¹³ Pope John Paul II, Papal Address at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Alborada in Guayaquil, January 31, 1985, *L’Osservatore Romano*, March 11, 1985.

¹⁴ Luke 1:38.

work of redemption, based on the merits *of Christ*. “This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation.”¹⁵

Upon Calvary, Mary was “spiritually crucified with her crucified son”¹⁶ as prophesied by Simeon at the Temple.¹⁷ As “Co-redemptrix”, Mary is the “Mother suffering” as she uniquely participates in the acquisition of graces with and under Jesus for the Redemption of the world. Because Mary uniquely participates in the acquisition of the graces obtained by Jesus at Calvary, Jesus gives her the task of distributing those graces to humanity. As “Mediatrice of all graces”, she is the “Mother nourishing”, the ‘new Eve’ distributing the graces acquired by Jesus, the ‘new Adam’, giving each and every grace to the human heart, the human family. As “Advocate”, Mary is the “Mother pleading”, serving in her maternal role as Queen Mother - in Hebrew, the *gebirah* - carrying the petition needs of humanity back to Christ the King.

“In summation then, the title ‘Mary Co-Redemptrix’ as used by the Church denotes the unique and active participation by Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in the work of Redemption as accomplished by Jesus Christ, the divine and human Redeemer.”¹⁸ Mary’s role as Co-redemptrix is the foundation of her role as the Mediatrice of all graces and Advocate. She is precisely Mediatrice and Advocate because she is first Co-redemptrix, the woman with and under Jesus in the acquisition of grace. She had a meritorious role with Jesus in the obtaining of the

¹⁵ *Lumen gentium*, sec. 62.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, sec. 58.

¹⁷ Luke 2:35.

¹⁸ Miravalle. “With Jesus”. Chapter 1. Page 10.

grace, and is therefore the rightful distributor of those graces, always in union with and subordinate to Jesus. God's grace is delivered to the human race by way of the sacrifice of Christ and with the cooperation of Mary. What this means is that after the glorification of Jesus on Calvary, Mary's work in redemption does not cease to exist; it continues, specifically in Mary's role as Mediatrix of all graces. Because once the graces of redemption have been acquired, they must consequently be distributed. Until the graces of Christ are distributed they will not save; they have to be received by the human heart to create the effect desired by Christ. Thus, we recognize the source and summit of Christ's redemption at Calvary: *Ad Jesum per Mariam*.¹⁹

Scriptural Foundation

“The whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents.”²⁰ The first scriptural reference to a co-redeemer is found at Genesis 3:15 (the *Protoevangelium*) when the woman uniquely participates with her offspring (seed) in the crushing of the head of Satan and his seed. Genesis 3:15 is a prophetic text, i.e., about the future, as we recognize instantly that God - to solve the problem created by Adam and Eve - chooses to station *the woman* in a co-redemptive role *with Christ* in the ultimate victory over Satan and evil. “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”²¹ Though sin existed from the beginning, so too did the light of Jesus Christ; “He was in the beginning with God; the light shines in the

¹⁹ Saint Louis de Montfort, xvi.

²⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church: Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000). 390.

²¹ Genesis 3:15.

darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.”²² We know that Jesus is the victor over sin, and Mary is the mother of Jesus; therefore, she must be the woman prophesized in ancient scripture. From the very beginning, God puts absolute, radical, and perpetual opposition between the serpent and Mary. As Jesus is opposed to sin, so too is Mary opposed to Satan; the woman is going to participate in the mission of her son, the seed of Mary’s co-redemption. Mary and her seed, Jesus will co-operate - i.e. *Jesus and Mary will operate with one another* - to forever vanquish the deathly effect of sin.

The divine plan for the universe has been formed completely in the mind of God. And God, the divine author, writes with history the way you or I write with words. All of creation, all of time, all of humankind, is God’s story of redemption. Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah predicted, “The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”²³ In his infinite power and wisdom God could have introduced Jesus Christ to our world at any time, in any place, and in any shape, fashion, or form. He chose 1st-century Galilee in a town called Nazareth, and he chose to be formed in the womb of a young Jewish woman named Mary. The angel Gabriel announced, “You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.”²⁴ In Hebrew, Jesus means “God saves”, and Mary’s humble fiat fulfilled Isaiah’s ancient promise of hope and salvation.²⁵

Eve should have passed down God’s grace to her children, but due to her disobedience, she instead transmitted the stain of original sin. It is Mary’s cooperation with God’s grace - and

²² John 1:2, 5.

²³ Isaiah 7:17.

²⁴ Luke 1:31.

²⁵ Michael J. Skinner. “*Precious Life Rosary*”, GratiaReflections, www.gratiareflections.com, 2019.

her cooperation with Christ the Redeemer - that reverses Eve's cooperation with Adam in the fall into original sin, and offers humanity the gift of eternal salvation. God ransoms us from captivity and unshackles us from the bondage of sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And Mary is the moral and feminine vehicle by which the Savior enters the world, for it is Mary's "*fiat*" at Luke 1:38 which gives Jesus his instrument of redemption.²⁶ In other words, Mary is the one who first sacrifices her body for the One who will finally sacrifice his body for all. Mary's cooperation in the redemption is far beyond any other creature; no other creature has an interior relation to the hypostatic union as does the Blessed Mother.

Mary's intercession and mediation are most clearly observed in her participation in the two greatest acts of human history: the incarnation and the redemption. Adam and Eve were our first parents, and were intended by God to sanctify all of human nature, i.e. they "were not ashamed."²⁷ The cataclysmic result of original sin was the stain passed onto all Eve's earthly children. Mary is given to us by Christ from the Cross, becoming Mother of the Church and therefore Mother of all "the children of God scattered abroad."²⁸ At John 19:25-27 Jesus, as a final effect of his redemptive act with Mary, gives Mary to us all. "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...the last words of the dying Christ to the woman announces the near end of her co-redemptive suffering on Calvary."²⁹ At the end of the three hours on the cross, having accomplished the ransom for the world by becoming the price for sin and death, Jesus gives a

²⁶ Note: Hannah is an example of an Old Testament *type* that foreshadows Mary, especially the connectivity with the word "*handmaid*", i.e., Hannah's reference to "thine handmaid" - three times - in 1 Samuel 1:11 and of course Mary's momentous "*fiat*" at Luke 1:38, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

²⁷ Genesis 2:25.

²⁸ John 11:52.

²⁹ *Lumen gentium*, 58.

final, extraordinary gift to all of humanity. “He said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son. Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.”³⁰

‘Woman’ connects Mary to the woman of Genesis, Cana, Revelation, and Galatians 4:4.³¹ Mary is ‘the woman’ *with* ‘the God-Man’ of scripture and the work of redemption. “Behold your Mother” is not a question, i.e. it is not “would you like Mary to be your Mother?”. Rather, it is a command to John, who represents all of humanity: “She is your mother.” Mary was crucified spiritually at Calvary, but Calvary is not an ending, rather, it represents a beginning. “Behold your Mother” is a directive, an imperative, the establishment of an office that Jesus manifests in the form of a gift. Christ delivers this gift of the finest price personally to each and every individual from the cross.³²

Magisterial Foundations & Tradition

As Eve was instrumental, though secondary to Adam, in the loss of grace for the human family, so Mary the new (or second) Eve is secondary though instrumental in the obtaining of grace - i.e., aiding in the restoration of grace - to the human family with and under Jesus Christ. Mary works as the New Eve with the New Adam (a concept referred to as “Re-circulation” and “Re-capitulation”). A man, a woman, and a tree (of Eden) lose grace; God shows his eternal power over the adversary by taking a man, a woman, and a tree (of Calvary) to re-establish grace for the human family. In the words of Saint Irenaeus: “Adam had to be Recapitulated in Christ, so that death might be swallowed up in immortality, and Eve had to be [Recapitulated] in Mary

³⁰ John 19:26-27.

³¹ Miravalle. “With Jesus”. Chapter 2. Page 17.

³² *Redemptoris mater*, Sec. 45.

so that the Virgin, having become another virgin's advocate, might destroy and abolish one virgin's disobedience by the obedience of another virgin."³³

The Church and her Fathers are unambiguous in the treatment of Mary's station as Co-Redemptrix with the Redeemer:

The Second Vatican Council - though its stated purpose being 'pastoral' and not 'defining' - did clearly articulate Mary's co-operative role in its signature document, *Lumen Gentium*: "Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption. Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience."³⁴

At the institution of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Mary's co-redemptive role was likewise acknowledged: "Just as Christ, the Mediator between God and man, assumed human nature, blotted the handwriting of the decree that stood against us, and fastened it triumphantly to the cross, so the most holy Virgin, united with him by a most intimate and indissoluble bond, was, with him and through him, eternally at enmity with the evil serpent, and most completely triumphed over him, and thus crushed his head with her immaculate foot."³⁵

When defining the dogma of the Assumption, Mary's co-redemptive role was re-affirmed: "Hence the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus

³³ Miravalle. "With Jesus". Chapter 7. Page 99.

³⁴ *Lumen gentium*, 56.

³⁵ *Ineffabilis deus*.

Christ in one and the same decree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine motherhood, the noble associate of the divine Redeemer who has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences...”³⁶

“Saint Bernard of Clairvaux is foremost in the development of Marian Coredemption, and was the first to teach of Mary’s ‘offering’ of Jesus (at the Presentation in the Temple) as the divine Victim to the heavenly Father for the reconciliation of the world. He further delineates the ‘compassion’ of Our Lady - ‘cum’ (with) and ‘passio’ (suffering) - thus referring to her “suffering with Jesus”. Moreover, Bernard suggests that Mary welcomes the ‘price of redemption’, stands at ‘redemption’s starting point’, and ‘liberates prisoners of war from their captivity’.”³⁷ And Arnold of Chartres (St. Bernard’s disciple) is regarded as the first author who formally develops the doctrine of “Mary Co-Redemptrix” at Calvary. Arnold specifies “that it is Jesus and Mary who work together to accomplish the redemption through their mutual offering of the one and the same sacrifice to the Father.”³⁸

The High Middle Ages represents a period of abundance in references to Mary’s cooperation in the “redemptive sacrifice.”³⁹ Saint Bonaventure (d. 1274) - the celebrated Franciscan theologian - declares his own expression of the aforementioned Saint Bernard/Arnold developments when he refers to Jesus and Mary as the “repairers” of the human race. “Just as they [Adam and Eve] were the destroyers of the human race, so these [Jesus and Mary] were its repairers.”⁴⁰ Saint Bonaventure further applies the principles of “Recirculation” and

³⁶ Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus, deus. Defining the Dogma of the Assumption*. Apostolic Constitution, November 1, 1950. Sec. 40.

³⁷ Mark I. Miravalle. “Mariology: A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, and Consecrated Persons”. Queenship Publishing. 2008. Section III. “Mary Co-Redemptrix: The Beloved Associate of Christ.” Page 365.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Page 366.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Page 368.

⁴⁰ Miravalle. “With Jesus”. Chapter 7. Page 94.

“Recapitulation” to the suffering of Mary at Calvary for our Redemption. Mary “bought us” and “paid the price” with Jesus on the cross. “That woman [Eve] drove us out of Paradise and sold us; but this one [Mary] brought us back again and bought us.”⁴¹ The mystic, Saint Bridget (d. 1373) of Sweden records a series of visions and prophecies granted to her by Jesus and Mary. “My son and I redeemed the world as with one heart.” Jesus likewise acknowledges, “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.”⁴² Lastly, Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church and Co-patroness of Europe, proclaims the Blessed Mother as “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.”⁴³

As a final magisterial example, we turn to Saint Pope John Paul II. Known as the “Pope of Mary Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate”⁴⁴ Saint John Paul II was a tireless and faithful devotee to the Blessed Virgin Mary, going so far as to adopt Saint Louis de Montfort’s “*Totus Tuus*” (Totally Yours) as his episcopal motto. “The Marian magisterium of [Saint] Pope John Paul II may well constitute his greatest single legacy to the Catholic Church.”⁴⁵ The doctrine of Mary Co-Redemptrix and *cause of salvation* “is systematically elaborated for the first time, at the end of the 10th century, in the *Life of Mary*, written by a Byzantine monk, John the Geometer. Here Mary is united to Christ in all her redemptive work,

⁴¹ Ibid., Page 94.

⁴² Ibid., Page 97.

⁴³ Ibid., Page 98.

⁴⁴ Dr. Mark Miravalle, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Theology 655, Winter 2023. Module 14: Mary Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate as Model for the Church, Lecture One: Co-redeemers in Christ.

⁴⁵ Miravalle. “Mariology”. Sec. III. Page 392.

participating, according to the divine plan, in the cross and suffering for our salvation. She remained united to her Son "in every action, attitude and will."⁴⁶

Marian Apparitions

“Prophecy is sometimes conveyed through supernatural visions or apparitions, which ‘chiefly tend towards revealing to men some secret thing for their salvation and instruction.’”⁴⁷

We provide here a summary of the three principle, and Church approved revelations “which embody the heart of the Marian message to the modern world”⁴⁸ and reinforce Mary’s role as *Co-Redemptrix with the Redeemer*.

Miraculous Medal (1830)

On November 27, 1830, Sister Catherine Labouré experienced an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the instructions to “have a medal struck” with the words “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” Sr. Catherine was further advised, “They should wear it [the medal] around their neck. Graces will abound for persons who wear it with confidence.”⁴⁹ The vision that Sr. Catherine beheld showed Mary standing on a globe, crushing the head of the serpent, thus depicting her universal, co-redemptive role with Christ as foreshadowed in Genesis 3:15. Rays of light are streaming from Mary’s outstretched hands, signifying her role as Mediatrix of all graces. The reverse side of the medal depicts the letter “M” fixed to the base of (i.e., below) the cross, re-emphasizing Mary’s role as Co-

⁴⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Mary Was United to Jesus on the Cross*, General Audience, October 25, 1995.

⁴⁷ Mark I. Miravalle. “Mariology”. Section IV. “Marian Liturgy and Devotion: Marian Private Revelation”. Page 818.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Page 841.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Page 845-846.

redemptrix while remaining always subordinate to her Son.⁵⁰ Beneath these images lie the Sacred Heart of Jesus, crowned with thorns, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, pierced with a sword, representing their co-joined, suffering hearts. Encircling the entire image are twelve stars representing the universal queenship of Our Lady as illustrated in Revelation 12:1.⁵¹ “It is difficult to imagine a richer, more densely packed Mariological dogma, doctrine, and devotion than this, specifically and artistically represented on what was to become two sides of an approximately one-inch medal...Such an extraordinary quantity of miracles accompanied its [the medal’s] release and promulgation that it was quickly named the ‘Miraculous Medal’ by the faithful.”⁵² Sr. Catherine revealed her role as recipient of the apparitions only at the end of her life. Her body was exhumed and found to be incorrupt in 1933, and she was canonized a Saint by Pope Pius XII on July 27, 1947.⁵³

Lourdes (1858)

In the small Pyrenees Mountain town of Lourdes, the 14-year old peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous received eighteen apparitions from the Blessed Mother from February 11 to July 16, 1858. The primary message of Lourdes was one of reparation to God for the sins of mankind and coredemptive prayer and sacrifices for the conversion of sinners.⁵⁴ “Sr. Bernadette...became a living example of Christian reparation and coredemption by fulfilling the scriptural call of Colossians 1:24 to ‘make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church.’ Through her prayers (specifically the Rosary) she embodied Our Lady’s

⁵⁰ Ibid., Page 846-847.

⁵¹ Ibid., Page 846.

⁵² Ibid., Page 847-848.

⁵³ Ibid., Page 849.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Page 850.

invitation to all followers of Christ that they “embrace the path of Christian coredeemption”, to become what Pope John Paul II would later term a “co-redeemer in Christ.”⁵⁵ Sr. Bernadette was canonized a saint by Pope Pius XI on December 8, 1933.

Fatima (1917)

The message of Fatima was received via six separate apparitions by three young shepherd children - Lúcia de Jesus Santos, and her cousins Jacinta and Francisco de Jesus Marto - from the mountain town of Fatima, Portugal from May 13 through October 13, 1917. The primary directive given by the “Lady of the Rosary” was a call to reparation and Christian coredeemption.⁵⁶ By the time of the sixth and final apparition the children had developed a remarkable following, resulting in the first-hand account of 70,000 onlookers who witnessed a solar miracle - the sun “dancing in the sky”. In their totality, the visions are considered a representation of the three [then] existing sets of Rosary mysteries - Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious - with Mary as ‘Our Lady of Sorrows’ in particular signifying her role as Coredeemprix.⁵⁷ Francisco and Jacinta were canonized on May 13, 2017, while the cause for Lúcia’s canonization has been underway since her death in 2005 at the age of 97.

Summary

Every truth about Mary says something to us about the Church. Given that we are all members of the Church, i.e. members of the mystical body of Christ, then every truth about Mary

⁵⁵ Ibid., Page 859.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Page 862.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Page 877.

says something about us. In other words, Mary's role as Co-redemptrix is critical for us to understand as our role as co-redeemers in Christ.⁵⁸

This is the model for the Church; that suffering is redemptive, that's what "Mary Co-Redemptrix" tells us. That suffering is in fact *co-redemptive*. Mary suffered as a human; she is an exemplar for the Church that we are called to suffer. We are indeed co-redeemers in Christ and we can "make up for what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, the Church."⁵⁹ We are able to do this because of (first) the objective acquisition of graces by Jesus through his Redemption on Calvary, with the willful assistance and co-operation of his Mother, and (second) the subjective and mysterious distribution of these graces by Christ through Mary to all of humanity.

As Saint John Paul II teaches, "In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that they were not only a proof of her unshakeable faith but also a contribution to the redemption of all."⁶⁰ All people are called to be "co-redeemers" in Christ, i.e. to participate in the process of bringing the graces of the Redemption to be received by the human heart. Saint John Paul II further instructs, "Those who share in the sufferings of Christ preserve in their own sufferings a very special particle of the infinite treasure of the world's Redemption, and can share this treasure with others... For, whoever suffers in union with Christ— just as the Apostle Paul bears his "tribulations" in union with Christ— not only receives

⁵⁸ Saint John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*. Apostolic letter. February 11, 1984. Sec. 24.

⁵⁹ Colossians 1:24.

⁶⁰ *Salvifici doloris*. Sec. 25.

from Christ that strength already referred to but also "completes" by his suffering "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."⁶¹

There is a creative element to suffering, where Christ invites us to share his cross with him, to do so - not reluctantly, like Simon of Cyrene: "*they forced him to carry the cross*"⁶² - but willingly, like Mary. We are called to receive the grace of Jesus, through Mary, by embracing our earthly suffering as they did - with thanksgiving, faith, humility, and love. Christ, in his love for us, invites us to use our sufferings of today and in a mysterious way, to participate in a release of the graces paid for by Him and entrusted to his Mother. The merits of our sufferings of today can be shared with others across time and space when offered to Christ and Mary, who in turn deliver those merits of grace when, and where others need them.

In his mind, God conceived the *Immaculata* who would conceive Him in her womb; God created his own mother, who would in turn create him. As the Creator is perfect, the source of his incarnate creation would too be perfect. In her stainless womb, Mary gave her body and blood for the One who would give his body and blood for all. And he who gave his life that humanity may have eternal life, gave to humanity his mother for all eternity:

- (1) **God is eternal.** "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."⁶³
- (2) **God is love.** "God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him."⁶⁴
- (3) **Therefore, love is eternal.** "So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love."⁶⁵
- (4) **Love is "To will the good of the other."** Saint Thomas Aquinas.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Matthew 15:21.

⁶³ Colossians 1:17.

⁶⁴ 1 John 4:16.

⁶⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:13.

⁶⁶ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Prima Secundae Partis, Question 26.

- (5) **Mary willed the good of all humankind.** “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”⁶⁷
- (6) **Mary is Mother to us all.** “Behold your Mother!”⁶⁸
- (7) **Therefore, Mary is our eternal Mother.**

Mary’s titles are her functions. Her roles as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate are not just honorary titles; it is what she does for us as our eternal Mother. She redeems us through the suffering of Christ; she mediates for us with the grace of Christ; and she advocates for us in the love of Christ! Yet, she can only love her children to the degree we allow her to love us - to intercede in our lives - according to the principle of free will. When we freely participate with Mary - through the Rosary, the Scapular, and Total Consecration - Mary will lavish us with the love and endless, inexhaustible grace given to her by God himself, her Son, Jesus Christ. As evidenced by the Wedding at Cana, when we invite Mary into our lives, she always brings her Son with her; and when Christ and Mary are working together, miracles abound, and they always save the best for last.⁶⁹ Therefore, “We must cry out with the saints: *De Maria numquam satis*. Of Mary there is never enough.”⁷⁰

Mary is the mother of her Father, the daughter of her Son, and the bride of the Holy Spirit. She is at last *Co-Redemptrix with the Redeemer*, offered from the cross as a gift to all humanity. May we always remain close to our Blessed and eternal Mother, and therefore remain always in the eternal love, grace, and mercy of her Son, Jesus Christ.

⁶⁷ Luke 1:38.

⁶⁸ John 19:27.

⁶⁹ John 2:1-12.

⁷⁰ Saint Louis de Montfort. Page 4.

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