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Augustine, Irenaeus, Newman, and Mary's Role in Salvation

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Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory, send her, that she may be with me and toil, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions, and guard me with her

glory (Wisdom 9:10-12).

I would like to begin with the end, that is, with a conclusion which I maintain to be essentially and urgently true: *there will be no foundational restoration of peace and unity within the Church or the world, without the formal recognition of Mary, Spiritual Mother of all humanity, as the* ***divinely designated remedy*** *for our present ecclesial and global crises****.***
The Catholic imperative to preach, teach and live Mary in fullness of truth and love must be incorporated by both clergy and laity, bishops and religious, from the most humble members of the faithful to the highest echelons of the hierarchy. God has indeed «sent her forth from the holy heavens» and I believe we are in critical need of her guidance, her wisdom, and her grace *right now*, in our present moment of human history.
Who is Mary and *what is her true role for humanity*, such that it would necessitate an urgent imperative to acknowledge the whole «truth about Mary» in the words of St. John Paul II?1.How do three great doctors of the Church whose lives span the course of Christian history contribute to an authentically Catholic understanding of the role of Mary in human Redemption?

St. Augustine

As with styles in art, literature and fashion, so too there are trends in theology. Right now, St. Augustine (345-430) is "in". This is due, in large part, to a certain American Augustinian religious who has recently been elected as the Vicar of Christ.
Still, the classic brilliance and wisdom of the Doctor of Grace, one of the greatest minds and hearts in the Church's history, renders Augustine perennially relevant. Let us examine just three aspects of his voluminous wisdom which hold an immediate relevance to the role of Mary in Salvation.
We begin with Augustine's quintessential pearl on Our Lady and the Mystical Body: «… *She(Mary) is clearly the mother of the members of Christ…since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its Head*»2. Mary is at once physical mother of Christ, divine Head of the Body, and Spiritual Mother of all those mystically united to the Head. Pope St. Pius X offers this magisterial explanation: «Is not Mary the Mother of Christ? She is therefore our Mother also….He[Jesus] acquired a body composed like that of other men, but as Savior of our race, he had a kind of spiritual and mystical body, which is the society of those who believe in Christ….Consequently, Mary, bearing in her own womb the Savior, may be said to have born also those who life was contained in the life of the Savior. All of us, therefore…have come forth from the womb of Mary as a body united to its head. Hence, in a spiritual and mystical sense, we are all called children of Mary, and she is the Mother of us all»3.

Mary's Spiritual Motherhood is a certain teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers confirm this core Augustinian-Mariological teaching in *Lumen Gentium*, 61 where it rightly concludes that Mary is «a mother to us in the order of grace»[4]. On what theological basis does the Council justify this Spiritual Motherhood? It is due to her unique antecedent participation in the work of Redemption with and under Christ: «… in a wholly singular way, she cooperated by her faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls»[5]. The Mother of Jesus accomplishes this entirely singular cooperation from the conception of Jesus through Calvary: «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»[6]. Vatican II confirms that Mary is our Spiritual Mother in the order of grace precisely because she first cooperated in our Redemption – *a spiritual maternity based on coredemption.*

Secondly, St. Augustine specifies a particular title to capture Mary's subordinate role with Jesus in human Redemption: «co-operator»[7]. St. John Paul II comments on this Augustinian title for Our Lady's coredemption:

«Down the centuries the Church has reflected on Mary's co-operation in the work of salvation, deepening the analysis of her association with Christ's redemptive sacrifice. St. Augustine already gave the Blessed Virgin the title "co-operator" in the Redemption (cf. *De Sancta Virginitate*, 6; PL 40, 399), a title which emphasizes Mary's joint but subordinate action with Christ the Redeemer»[8].

Titles have always been used in the Church to capture a doctrinal truth within a single term, even when proper explanation is still required. Certainly, the Marian titles of "Mother of God," "Immaculate Conception" and even "Omnipotent by Grace" recently used by Pope Leo[9] all require extended explanation to convey accurate meaning and to avoid misunderstanding. The same legitimizing case could certainly be made for the title, "Co-redemptrix".

Thirdly, St. Augustine provides us with the classic Catholic maxim which conveys the providential imperative for all humans to freely cooperate with Christ's work of Redemption: «*God creates us without us, but he does not will to save us without us*»[10]. Humanity is required to freely and actively cooperate with God's grace in order to achieve personal salvation, as well as to participate in the salvation of others.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* articulates this basic Catholic truth that, in light of the human person having been created in God's image and likeness, «God's free initiative *demands man's free response*…»[11]. In its treatment on merit based on Trent,[12] the *Catechism* further teaches that it is God himself who has willed that human beings cooperate in the great mission of human salvation: «The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that *God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace.*

The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration...»13.

Not only does God will that we humans cooperate in our own reception of the graces of Redemption, but we are also dynamically called to cooperate in the *Redemption of others* . St. Paul's classic text of Colossians 1:24 makes our participation in the salvation of our fellow human beings not an option, but a Christian imperative: «Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church»14. The heavenly Father wants his human creatures to choose freely and personally to cooperate with redemptive grace, and as well to choose freely and personally to active assist others to cooperate with redemptive grace. The primordial incorporation of Christian coredemption is essentially linked to the mystery of human suffering. We are in fact «co-workers with God» (1 Cor. 3:9) in the words of St. Paul; «co-redeemers in Christ» in the words of St. John Paul II15; «redeemers in the Redeemer» in the words of Benedict XVI16.

These concepts of human cooperation in Redemption and vicarious coredemptive suffering are, in theory and practice, *uniquely Catholic*. Protestant Christianity based on Luther rejects the need for ongoing human cooperation with grace after a single act of faith. This is based both on belief in a voluntarist God and the total depravity of man, to which free human cooperation has no real effect on justification. The human person can only make a single act of saving faith (the efficacy of which is somewhat inconsistent with the two previous Protestant principles) and God has arbitrarily chosen to do the rest. Ongoing free cooperation, therefore, is considered fruitless for Redemption, either personally or mystically within the Body of Christ17.

Islam with some similarity holds to a radical divine voluntarism, i.e., the totally arbitrary will of "Allah", the sinfulness of man, and the impossibility of one human being fruitfully suffering for the benefit of another. It rejects the Christian concepts of Original Sin and Redemption through the divine and human mediation of Jesus. It thereby sees the Cross as a curse, not as a grace. While Islam holds to the value of human acts (*jihad)* in the personal struggle with sin, it does not accept any social or mystical concept of coredemptive suffering as valuable for another's spiritual wellbeing. Ultimately, it becomes an individual Pelagian effort to encourage an arbitrary divine being to pardon one's sins. Good acts performed by a follower of Islam, moreover, can have no directly positive coredemptive effect on any other human18.

Buddhism and Hinduism in general profess "karma," where your past actions are the effective cause for present and future evil. Therefore, anything proximate to a spiritual or eternal meaning revolves solely upon the individual's actions rather than theistic providential design. There is no divine redemption, mediation, or even judgement

because there is no principal divine being orchestrating life, deeds or destiny. The human person of Eastern Religion struggles against self, in battle with one's own will, since the human will is the source of personal evil. Similar to Islam, most religions of the East are based on personal efforts rather than reception and cooperation with divine grace. Hence, they do not believe in divine Redemption, cooperation with grace, nor the value of human suffering for the direct good of anyone except one's potential self-improvement19.

Msgr. Robert Hugh Benson, English author of the famous and thrice papally recommended anti-Christ novel, *Lord of the World*, strongly articulates the uniquely Catholic belief in the supernatural value of vicarious Christian coredemption:

«This principle, then, runs through the whole Catholic Church, from head to foot. In her not only is the outward sacrifice of the Cross offered continually in the most august mystery of the altar—(what Christ did once, He does always)—and in another way in the outward sufferings of her members; but the inward pains of Gethsemane are similarly perpetuated…Every instructed Catholic knows how to offer his own pain for the salvation of another soul, because it is only in the Catholic Church that that priestly race of which the first Pope speaks (cf. 1 Pet 2:9) is manifested. Only in the Catholic Church, in fact, is that immense principle of vicarious suffering accepted, recognized, and lived—that principle upon which the whole chain of life is held together, even in the physical order…»20.

Not only is the value of coredemptive suffering exclusively and existentially Catholic in its inextricable union with the redemptive sufferings of Christ crucified, it is also, as Benson refers, a *truth and mystery that holds together the entire Catholic way of life*. As such, Christian coredemption constitutes such an essential, non-negotiable Catholic truth that we simply cannot be truly Catholic without it.

It is also basic Catholic truth that the greatest historical example of human coredemptive suffering united with Christ is accomplished by the Woman of Calvary, the Immaculate New Eve. These two essential Catholic doctrines— the Christian value of human suffering and Mary's role as Co-redemptrix—are essentially linked: they either stand or fall together.

Christ Only or Christ First?

There appears to be a new wind blowing in some sectors of the Church. It sounds a different song for the Catholic, one easy to say and repeat, and most welcome within ecumenical Christian circles. But is it true? I refer to the expression, "*Jesus alone* saved the world," or similarly, "*Only Christ* redeemed the world". Even though at first potentially amiable to the Catholic ear, distinctions must be made to avoid an old and all too

Protestant refrain.

If the phrase, “Jesus alone saved the world,” seeks to convey that Jesus Christ as the *only* all-necessary divine Redeemer paid the infinite price in love to reconcile humanity with God the Father, and consequently provides the capacity for all other human participation in Redemption, then the expression can be understood accurately (however potentially misleading). If, on the other hand, the “Christ only” soteriological expression signifies that Jesus *alone and exclusively* has any role in the salvation of human beings, then this formulation becomes erroneous and unacceptable for the Catholic believer. Expressions like “Jesus alone saves” or “Christ is the sole Redeemer” are not the language of Vatican II.

A similar distinction is required in the proper understanding of the famous “one mediator” (εἷς μεσίτης) scriptural reference of 1 Timothy 2:5: «For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus». The inspired text inerrantly establishes Jesus Christ as the singular and perfect divine and human mediator between God and humanity. It does not in any sense, however, *prohibit human beings from participating or cooperating in the one perfect mediation of Jesus***.** There are two possible Greek words that St. Paul could choose to express “one” in his formulation, “one mediator”: a) “*monos*” (μόνος) which means “one and only one, solitary, alone”; or b) “*heis”* (εἷς) which means, “first” or “first” of many, which allows for others to also participate. St. Paul chose to use “*heis*” in speaking of Christ’s mediation, which provides a theological and etymological foundation for secondary and subordinate human participation in the one mediation of Christ.

In line with the Conciliar treatment on this classic Pauline text (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 60-62), St. John Paul II offers the following helpful explanation as to the proper interpretation of 1 Tim 2:5, which prohibits “parallel” mediation, not “subordinate” mediation:

«In proclaiming Christ the one mediator (cf. 1 Tm 2:5-6), the text of St. Paul’s Letter to Timothy excludes any other parallel mediation, but not subordinate mediation. In fact, before emphasizing the one exclusive mediation of Christ, the author urges "that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men" (2:1). Are not prayers a form of mediation? Indeed, according to St. Paul, the unique mediation of Christ is meant to encourage other dependent, ministerial forms of mediation. By proclaiming the uniqueness of Christ’s mediation, the Apostle intends only to exclude any autonomous or rival mediation, and not other forms compatible with the infinite value of the Saviour’s work…It is possible to participate in Christ’s mediation in various areas of the work of salvation. This desire to bring about various participations in the one mediation of Christ reveals the gratuitous love of God who wants to share what he possesses… In truth, what is Mary’s maternal mediation if not the Father's gift to

humanity?»21.

1 Tim 2:5 therefore reveals “Christ first” as the all-necessary divine basis for any creature’s cooperation in human salvation, but not “Christ only” in excluding Christians from participating in Christian coredemption. This mystery manifests God’s infinite generosity within his loving design to allow his followers a share in his greatest work of Redemption. This is a divinely granted privilege that should never be rejected as somehow replacing or lessening the one perfect mediation of the one Mediator and Redeemer.

It is, of course, the Immaculate Mother of the Redeemer who participates in the Redemptive mission of Christ *like no other*.

St. Irenaeus

An even more ancient doctor of the Church, St. Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130-202), testifies to Our Lady’s moral and causal role in the Redemption. This second century champion of orthodoxy (perhaps also the Church’s first true Mariologist) teaches that Mary’s subordinate human role as the New Eve with Christ, the New Adam, is unique, maternal, actively causal, and intrinsic to the redemptive incarnation of Jesus Christ. Since for the early Fathers, *Incarnatio redemptiva redemptio inchoativa,* the Incarnation was indeed “Redemption begun”. It is a simple, providential formula of motherly mediation that through the free yes of human woman, the human race receives its Redeemer. Vatican II directly quotes Irenaeus, with additional patristic references to Epiphanius, Augustine, Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, and John Damascene, as representative of the overall ancient Mariology of the Ancient Church which irrevocably preaches and teaches Mary’s causal role in salvation:

«Rightly, therefore, the Fathers see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating in the work of man’s salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she “being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race22. Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert with him in their preaching: “the knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience: what the Virgin Eve bound by her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith”23. Comparing Mary to Eve, they call her “Mother of the Living”24, and frequently claim: “death through Eve, life through Mary”25» (*Lumen Gentium,* 56).

Since authentic Catholic development of doctrine led by the Spirit always progresses and never regresses, how is it possible that the doctrinal clarity of Mary as the New Eve in her *uniquely active role in the work of Redemption* could now, some 19 centuries later, be put into question or even doubt by some within the contemporary Church?

The Council goes on to teach Marian coredemption in numbers 57, 58, and 61 of *Lumen Gentium,*

which includes the «union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation»26; that Mary «associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart»27; her «consent to the immolation of the victim born of her»28; and «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»29.

St. John Paul II in his address of April 9, 1997, "*Mary's Offering Is Totally Unique,*" provides a magisterial commentary on the conciliar teaching on Marian coredemption. In particular, the Totus Tuus pontiff makes the necessary distinction between the unique coredemption of the Mother of Jesus from the general cooperation in Redemption to which every Christian is called:

«When the Apostle Paul says: "For we are God's fellow workers" (1 Cor 3:9), he maintains the real possibility for man to co-operate with God. The collaboration of believers, which obviously excludes any equality with him, is expressed in the proclamation of the Gospel and in their personal contribution to its taking root in human hearts.

However, applied to Mary, the term "co-operator" acquires a specific meaning. The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to spread by prayer and sacrifice. Mary, instead, *co-operated during the event itself and in the role of mother; thus her co-operation embraces the whole of Christ's saving work.* She alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of all mankind. In union with Christ and in submission to him, *she collaborated in obtaining the grace of salvation for all humanity*... Although God's call to co-operate in the work of salvation concerns every human being, the participation of the Saviour's Mother in humanity's Redemption is a unique and unrepeatable fact»30.

«Unique» and «unrepeatable» is the Mother's coredemptive role with Christ which, according to Pope St. John Paul, embraces the *entirety of her Son's redemptive victory*.

What specifically, according to the pontiff, differentiates Mary's role in Redemption from all others? Mary «co-operated in the [redemptive] event itself», «her cooperation embraces the whole of Christ's saving work» and consequently «she ***collaborated in obtaining the graces of salvation for all humanity».*** No creature, human or angel, collaborated in the obtaining of saving grace, the actual acquisition of the graces of Redemption, classically referred to as "objective Redemption". This is also why the Immaculate Mother of the Redeemer *uniquely merits the title Co-redemptrix*.

The same Mother, who mediates the one Mediator to the world, uniquely participates in the entirety of her Son's redemptive mission. As Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of the redeemed, and Mother of the entire course of Redemption throughout her life, Mary could justly be referred to as "Mother of the Redemption".

This perennial doctrine of Our Lady's unique and active participation in Redemption,

which reached its meritorious summit at Calvary, is unfortunately what is absent from the recent Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith Doctrinal Note, *Mater Populi Fidelis*.

Mater Populi Fidelis

Since the publication of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith's Doctrinal Note, *Mater Populi Fidelis (MPF), Doctrinal Note on Some Marian Titles Regarding Mary's Cooperation in the Work of Salvation* on November 5, 2025, confusion, questions, and even shock have dominated international Catholic and secular media. This is due in large part to the Doctrinal Note's calling into question or even denial of the traditional and papal magisterial titles and corresponding doctrines of Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces 31. Several Mariological commentaries from respected Catholic circles have pointed out significant doctrinal deficiencies in the Note, particularly in light of its material rejection of certain points of Papal Magisterial teachings from both before and after the Council32.

It is important to bear in mind the Magisterium's own instruction to theologians and the laity in controversial cases such as these. Cardinal Ratzinger's 1990 CDF Instruction, *Donum Veritatis*, "On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian", identifies the *responsibility of theologians* to raise questions regarding magisterial formulations which may be in need of clarification or even modification:

«... the theologian has the duty to make known to the Magisterial authorities the problems raised by the teaching in itself, in the arguments proposed to justify it, or even in the manner in which it is presented. He should do this in an evangelical spirit and with a profound desire to resolve the difficulties. His objections could then contribute to real progress and provide a stimulus to the Magisterium to propose the teaching of the Church in greater depth and with a clearer presentation of the arguments»33.

The responsibility to make known to universal Church authority serious issues that concern the well-being of the Church is not reserved to theologians. It also belongs by canonical right to all the laity. The 1983 Code of Canon Law refers to the «duty» of the lay People of God to make known to the Pastors of the Church matters which pertain to the «good of the Church»:

«The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires...According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons»34.

It is therefore within this proper ecclesial spirit that we identify certain elements of *Mater Populi Fidelis* which in light of both pre-conciliar and post-conciliar papal magisterial teaching we believe require clarification and modification. Three principal elements of concern are as follows: 1) the disciplinary restriction on the title Co-redemptrix; 2) the rejection of the perennial doctrine of Mediatrix of all graces; and 3) the omission of Mary's active and meritorious action at Calvary.

In regard to the Co-redemptrix title, MPF n. 22 states: «Given the necessity of explaining Mary's subordinate role to Christ in the work of Redemption, it is *always inappropriate to use the title 'Co-redemptrix' to define Mary's cooperation*»35. Always inappropriate? This surprising statement brought confusion throughout much of the Church, in light of the fact that the Co-redemptrix title a) constitutes a traditional Marian title dating back to the 14th century36; b) has previously been used or approved by Popes Leo XIII, Pius XI, and John Paul II on at least 12 occasions37; and c) has been utilized by a host of saints and mystics, including contemporary saints such as St. Pio of Pietrelcina, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Edith Stein, St. Teresa of Calcutta and Sr. Lucia of Fatima38.

It furthermore appears against the very nature of Catholic evangelization and praxis to simply eliminate a term due to its need for explanation, rather than to simply explain it. What is the Catholic to do with terms such as Mother of God, and Immaculate Conception, let alone Transubstantiation and Papal Infallibility, all of which require in-depth and repeated explanations for their proper understanding? The Church rightly does not abandon these terms nor the truths they convey because they require substantial explanation. We just explain them, as mystery requires and deserves appropriate elucidation. This also provides the occasion for further analogy of faith evangelization in articulating the interconnected mosaic of Catholic truth.

Fortunately, Cardinal Fernandez, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and official author of MPF, offered an important clarification in what constitutes a *de facto reversal* of the absolute prohibition of the Co-redemptrix title by MPF. In his November 25, 2025 interview with the Vatican journalist Diane Montagna, Cardinal Fernandez stated that the Co-redemptrix title can in fact be used when accompanied with proper understanding, for example in prayer groups, etc. but it will not be used in official documents or liturgy of the present Magisterium39. While the Prefect's unofficial comments brought relief to Catholic Mariologists and faithful worldwide, this substantive correction still lacks the official status appropriate for such a significant disciplinary correction.

Secondly, the document directly rejects Mary's secondary moral or causal role in the mediation of each and every grace of the Redemption40. This doctrinal breech runs contrary to four centuries of the explicit papal teaching that Our Lady is the Mediatrix of

all graces, who indeed mediates each and every redemptive grace from Christ to fallen humanity. This constitutes, in my opinion, the greatest single error in MPF and in greatest need of official correction. To deny Mary's spiritual and maternal function as a direct moral mediational cause in the distribution of grace is to oppose the expressed teaching of twelve popes and six encyclical teachings, from Benedict XIV (+1759) to Pope Francis in 202341. It is, moreover, most distressing that a doctrinal note from the DDF, itself responsible for articulating and explicating Papal Magisterial teaching, would not only disagree with perennial papal teaching, but also choose to omit and exclude over three centuries of papal teaching in its own treatment of the doctrine.

Not only is the omission of the Mediatrix of all graces doctrine contrary to long-standing Catholic belief, it is also contrary to a widely-held Eastern Orthodox belief. While MPF certainly seeks to articulate a strong ecumenical sensitivity towards Protestantism, it does not do so regarding the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of Mary's universal mediation of graces. For example, the great Orthodox theologian, Gregory Palamas (+1359) teaches:

«No divine gifts can reach either angels or men, except through her [Mary's] mediation. As one cannot enjoy the light of a lamp …save through the medium of this lamp, so every movement towards God, every impulse towards good coming from him, is unrealizable, except through the mediation of the Virgin. She does not cease to spread benefits on all creatures, not only on us men, but on the celestial incorporeal ranks»42.

Theophanes of Nicaea (+1380) reiterates the same Orthodox doctrinal belief in Our Lady's role as universal Mediatrix of grace: «It cannot happen that anyone, of angels or of men, may come otherwise, in any manner whatsoever, to participation in the divine gifts flowing from what has been divinely assumed, from the Son of God, except through his Mother»43.

Could an overconcern with Protestant sensitivities leading to Marian minimalism inadvertently create a greater obstacle in Catholic-Orthodox unity by rejecting Mary's universal mediation? It appears that MPF's ecumenical approach has not led to any noticeable increase in Protestant Christians seeking to enter the Church. It has, conversely, contributed to certain Catholics deciding, without justification, to break full communion with the Church.

Substantial correction and modification of MPF must be made sooner or later by the papal Magisterium regarding the Mediatrix of all graces doctrine; let us hope and pray that it will be sooner. The rejection of this doctrine has caused grave international perplexity, including among worldwide Marian lay movements such as the Legion of Mary, Marian Consecration apostolates, and Scapular associations, where the *Mediatrix omnium gratiarum* doctrine serves as the necessary Mariological foundation for their

efficacious devotional outreaches.

Thirdly, *Mater Populi Fidelis* fails to present Mary's unique role with Jesus during its coredemptive summit at Calvary as being essentially *active* and *meritorious*. While acknowledging the active role of the Mother of Jesus at the Annunciation (as do several Protestant authors)44, MPF presents Mary at Calvary as only a passive witness of faith, but not as actively participating through her united suffering and sacrifice with her dying Son in the *obtaining* of the graces of Redemption 45. Yet, this active, coredemptive mission of the Woman of Calvary constitutes authentic papal teaching, as evidenced in the previously cited teachings of St. John Paul II in confirmation of Vatican II 46.

On a positive note, Pope Leo XIV has provided an initial content correction to the doctrinal ambiguity of *Mater Populis Fidelis* on Marian coredemption during his April 13, 2026 message to the Pontifical Biblical Commission. In a statement similar to John Paul II's coredemptive teachings in *Salvifici Doloris*47, Pope Leo succinctly refers to the unique and active «offering» of Mary's suffering at Calvary which resulted in the universal «good of all»:

«Let us contemplate in particular the Sorrowful Mother together with Jesus at the foot of the Cross: as Mother, she suffers on Calvary the sufferings of her Son and shares in them with a heart full of faith, offering her piercing sorrow for the good of all»48.

Moreover, the Papal Magisterium has officially attested to the unique *merits* of Our Lady in her joint work with Jesus in Redemption. It was, once again, God's direct will, that a woman participate with a New Man in the restoration of grace for the human race, in antithetical parallelism with the woman who cooperated with the first man in its loss. Would the Heavenly Father not reward Mary for her unparalleled suffering with Christ which restored grace for all humanity? At least in the order of "congruity" or relative appropriateness, the Mother of Jesus merits the graces of the Redemption – on her own secondary human level – that which Jesus merits condignly (in strict justice) on his own divine level. Our Lady's ability to merit on a human level of fittingness rests entirely upon her Son's divine merits, on his divine level of equality with the Father.

Redemption then, from an authentically Catholic perspective, was accomplished as *one historic act designed by the Father, sustained by the Spirit, and performed at Calvary by two persons: one divine and human, the other immaculate and human; one male and one female, who both merited, according to their respective roles, the infinite graces necessary for human salvation*.

St. John Henry Newman

A third and more contemporary Doctor of the Church, St. John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1890), has something critically important to say about Mary's role in Redemption,

the discernment of authentic Marian development of doctrine, and the specific role of the laity in this Mariological process.

Newman defended the legitimacy of the Co-redemptrix title in his famous debates with the Anglican priest-professor, Edward Pusey. He stated that for those like Pusey who accepted all the sublime titles given by the Church Fathers to Mary, such as «Mother of God, Second Eve, Mother of Life», etc., that the Fathers would consider it «poor compensation» that he «protested against her being called a Co-redemptrix»49.

Newman also referred to Our Lady as the «*arbitress of mercy* of every effect coming from God's mercy»50. An arbitress is a female mediator proximate to law. An arbitress of mercy therefore possesses the mediational power to determine a dispute related to mercy, and in that mercy is itself a grace, such an arbitress of mercy could also be considered a mediatrix of grace.

Most importantly, Newman discussed the role of the Catholic faithful in discerning the proper development of doctrine regarding Our Lady. In essence, he saw the laity as the witnesses and the true guardians of the living Tradition of the Church, which includes the Marian development of doctrine. The British Doctor of the Church views the *sensus fidelium*51 as a key discerning source for validating authentic Marian doctrinal development and devotion52.

In his 1859 *Rambler* article, "*On Consulting the Faithful on Matters of Doctrine*," Newman cites some 20 cases where Church authority, bishops and clergy, came to an erroneous position on doctrinal or disciplinary issues, while the common faithful discerned the issue correctly and faithfully defended and persevered in upholding authentic Catholic truth. Perhaps the most striking example Newman cites is the fourth century Arian heresy, where a strong majority of bishops rejected the divinity of Jesus, while the laity overwhelmingly remained faithful to it and to Him. Newman states: «...The voice of tradition may in certain cases express itself, not by councils, nor fathers, nor bishops, but the "*communis fidelium sensus*» 53.

St. John Henry Newman therefore argues that *the hierarchy must listen to the voice of the lay faithful as true guidance of discernment as to where authentic doctrinal development is to be found, especially regarding Marian truth and devotion.* The bishops and the laity should experience a «*pastorum et fidelium conspiratio*»54, a "breathing together" between pastors and laity whereby popes and bishops truly listen to the laity's discernment regarding appropriate doctrinal development leading to Marian dogma55.

In light of Newman's great insight here, it becomes quintessentially relevant to address the *largest petition drive concerning Mariological doctrinal development from the Christian laity in the history of the Catholic Church.* An international lay petition drive spanning the 20th and 21st centuries ***is collectively requesting the solemn papal definition of Mary as Spiritual Mother of all humanity***.

In 1915, Cardinal Desire-Joseph Mercier initiated a universal petition drive of bishops and laity to request of Benedict XV the dogmatic proclamation of Our Lady as Spiritual Mother of humanity, founded upon and inclusive of her roles as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces[56]. Hundreds of thousands of requests from the laity for this fifth dogmatic crown were joined by hundreds of requests by bishops of the time[57]. In 1929, two Italian laywomen, Raffaele Asaro and Amedeo Balzaro, launched their own lay petition drive for the joint definitions of Mary's Universal Mediation and the Assumption (approved by Pius XI through his secretary of state), which gathered the signed petitions of 20 cardinals, five patriarchs, over 700 bishops, and an estimated 2 million priests, religious, and laity[58]. Another petition drive for the dual goals of defining dogmatically the Assumption and Universal Mediation arose in Spain in 1929, which collected an additional 700,000 petitions from the laity and from 53 bishops[59].

From 1993 to 1999, the *Vox Populi Mariæ Mediatrici* international lay movement gathered over 6.5 million petitions for this fifth Marian dogma stemming from 150 countries, the totals of which were personally presented to CDF Prefect, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in audience in May of 1999[60]. From 1999 to 2026, the Vox Populi Movement directed the faithful to send their petitions directly to the CDF (now DDF), with a minimum estimate of at least an additional 2 million petitions over the last 27 years. From the *Vox Populi Mariæ Mediatrici* movement alone, approximately 8 million petitions for a fifth Marian dogma have been sent to the Holy See, joined by the petitioned signatures and letters of 700 cardinals and bishops within the last 33 years[61]. With the general total of these four major petition drives alone, ***there have been an estimated 12 million petitions for a fifth dogma of Mary's universal Spiritual Motherhood submitted to the Holy See from the lay People of God.***

Based on the discernment principle for Marian doctrinal and devotional development laid down by St. John Henry Cardinal Newman, the question arises: *to what extent is the Holy See truly listening to the voice of the lay faithful in their discernment of a possible fifth Marian dogma?* Is Rome following the wise council of Newman, commonly referred to as the "Father of Vatican II," in openly considering the unprecedented petitioning by the contemporary laity for this Marian development of doctrine? ***Perhaps now is the time for the Holy Father and the Holy See to take a refreshed and open-hearted Newmanian re-evaluation of the request of millions of the People of God for the solemn papal definition that the Virgin Mary is truly the Spiritual Mother of all humanity.***

Conclusion

In our present human condition, we find doctrinal confusion abounds. Dogmas, on the

other hand, clarify. History shows that most of the other Marian dogmas were defined at times when clarification was necessary. The full truth concerning the role of Mary in human Redemption calls for precisely the finalized clarification that only a dogma can definitively bring.

Without the proclaimed truth of Mary's authentic mediation, we cannot expect to receive the full activation and the consequent grace that would come from solemnly recognizing her mediational power. This solemn recognition of her salvific roles of grace could definitively initiate the *Triumph of her Immaculate Heart* as prophesied at Fatima and consequently lead to the promised and much awaited era of Peace. Conversely, it is quite possible that this providential equation expressed in negative form remains: no fifth Marian dogma, no Triumph of the Immaculate Heart, no historic grace.

Theologically and historically, it is inconceivable that the Church would stop with the four Marian dogmas of the Motherhood of God, Perpetual Virginity, Immaculate Conception, and Assumption, and then *fail to define and defend the truth of Mary's spiritual and maternal relationship to her human children, a salvific truth pneumatologically developed for two millennia, and which, in a certain sense, is the redemptive goal and purpose of the other four Marian dogmas.*

I conclude with one very special petition from a very special member of the People of God, an inspired expression of the "Voice of the People" for a fifth Marian dogma: St. Teresa of Calcutta, written and signed on the memorial of St. Maximilian Kolbe on August 14, 1993:

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…
The papal definition of Mary as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate
will bring great graces to the Church.
All for Jesus through Mary.
*God bless you, M. Teresa, MC.*62

Notes:

1 For example, cf. St. John Paul II, Encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater,* 1987, nn. 12, 23.

2 St. Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate*, 6; PL 40, 399, (emphasis mine).

3 Pope St. Pius X, *Ad diem illum*, 1904, n.10.

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

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 St. Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate*, 6; PL 40, 399.

8 Pope St. John Paul II, Wednesday Audience, "Mary's Cooperation is Totally Unique," April 9, 1997, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_09041997.html.

9 Pope Leo XIV, Address to the Priests and Consecrated at the Pompei Basilica of the Assumption, May 8, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2026/documents/20260508-pompei-messa.html

10 St. Augustine, Sermo. 169, 11, 13: PL 38, 923, CCC1847.

11 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2002 (emphasis CCC).

12 *Council of Trent*, Session VI, Canon 32; Decree on Justification 8.

13 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2008 (emphasis CCC).

14 *Catholic Revised Standard Ignatius Bible* translation.

15 Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Allocution to the Sick at the Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God, April 5, 1981, L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., April 13, 1981, p. 6; *Address to the Sick following General Audience*, January 13, 1982, Inseg. V/1, 1982, 91; *Address to the Bishops of Uruguay, May 8, 1988.*

16 Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Sick*, Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, Portugal, May 13, 2010.

17 Summarizing the justification theological positions of over 33,000 different denominations of Protestantism in a few sentences can be difficult, but the foundational position of Luther himself is accurately conveyed.

18 Sura 35, verse. 18; Cf. the excellent article by Fr. Serafino Lanzetta, "Mary Co-redemptrix: A Paradigm of Christian Life, Vicarious Suffering, the Mystical Body, and the Manifestation of True Religion," in *Ecce Mater Tua International Journal of Mariology*, Vol.

14, June 13, 2026, ,https://eccematertua.com/sites/ecce/files/ecce_14.5_lanzetta.pdf.

19 Ibid.

20 Robert Hugh Benson, *The Mystical Body and Its Head*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1911, as cited in S. Lanzetta, *op cit.*

21 Pope St. John Paul II, Wednesday Audience, "*Mary's Mediation Derives from Christ's,"* October 1, 1997, nn. 3-5.

22 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. III, 22, 4: PG 7, 959 A, Harvey, 2, 123.

23 St. Irenaeus, ibid.; Harvey 2, 124.

24 St. Epiphanius, *Haer.* 78, 18:PG 42, 728 CD-729 AB.

25 For example, St. Jerome, *Epist. 22, 21*:PL 22, 408. Cf. St. Augustine, *Sermo.* 51, 2,3: PL 38, 335, etc., cf. *Lumen Gentium* 56, footnotes, 6-10.

26 *Lumen Gentium*, 57.

27 *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

28 *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

29 *Lumen Gentium*, 61.

30 Pope St. John Paul II, Wednesday Audience, "*Mary's Offering Is Totally Unique*," April 9, 1997, nn. 1-2; (emphasis mine).

31 Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mater Populi Fidelis*, November 5, 2025, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20251104_ma
populi-fidelis_en.html.

32 Cf., for example, the 23-page Mariological commentary produced by the Theological Commission of the International Marian Association, *Response to Mater Populi Fidelis*, Dec. 8, 2025; https://internationalmarian.com/sites/marian/files/ima_response_to_mpf.pdf; Fr. Serafino Lanzetta, "A Very Dissonant Doctrinal Note: On 'Mater Populi Fidelis", Diane Montagna Substack, https://dianemontagna.substack.com/p/a-very-dissonant-doctrinal-note-on.

33 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis*, n. 31.

34 *1983 Code of Canon Law,* Canons 212, nn. 2, 3.

35 Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note, *Mater Populi Fidelis*, n. 22 (emphasis mine).

36 Cf. M. Miravalle, *With Jesus: The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix,* Queenship, 2003, pp. 101-103.

37 For references and other sources in defense of the Co-redemptrix title, see Robert Fastiggi and Mark Miravalle, "Mary's Coredemptive Role Is In Complete Union with Christ: A Response to Bishop Stagliano" https://eccematertua.com/sites/ecce/files/ecce_14.4_fastiggi_miravalle.pdf; Miravalle, *With Jesus*, pp. 149ff; 189ff.

38 Cf. Miravalle, *With Jesus*, cf. p. 213ff; p.235ff.

39 Diane Montagna, Interview with Cardinal Fernandez, "Cardinal Fernandez Clarifies Co-redemptrix", November 27, 2025, https://dianemontagna.substack.com/p/cardinal-fernandez-clarifies-co-redemptrix.

40 Cf. *Mater Populi Fidelis*, nn. 45, 67, 68.

41 Cf. International Marian Association, *Response of the Theological Commission of the International Marian Association to Mater Populi Fidelis*, December 8, 2025, nn. 19-21, https://internationalmarian.com/sites/marian/files/ima_response_to_mpf.pdf.

42 Gregory Palamas, Ed. of *Sophocles Oikonomos*, (Athens, 1861), 159; PG 151, 472A; cf. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 163.

43 *Sermo. In Sanctissimum Deiparam in Lateranum, Martin Jugie, ed., 1935,* as quoted in M. O'Carroll*, Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary, p. 340.*

44 Cf. for example, Tim Perry, *Mary for Evangelicals: Towards and Understanding of the Mother of the Lord*, 2007, sections on titles, "Co-redemptrix" and "Mediatrix of all graces."

45 Cf. *Response of the Theological Commission of the International Marian Association* to *Mater Populi Fidelis*, n.14, https://internationalmarian.com/sites/marian/files/ima_response_to_mpf.pdf.

46 Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, Wednesday Audience, "*Mary's Offering Is Totally Unique*," April

9, 1997, nn. 1-2; (emphasis mine);Cf., Theological Commission of the International Marian Association, *Response to Mater Populi Fidelis*, Dec. 8, 2026, https://internationalmarian.com/sites/marian/files/ima_response_to_mpf.pdf.

47 St. John Paul II, *Salvific Doloris*, nn. 24, 25.

48 Pope Leo XIV, Message to the Holy Father, Leo XIV to the Pontifical Biblical Commission on the occasion of the Plenary Session (13-17 April 2026), 13.04.2026. https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2026/04/13/260413b.html .

49 John Henry Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teachings*, Scholar Select, vol. 2, p. 78.

50 John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 444-445.

51 (Common consensus of the faithful).

52 John Henry Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," *Rambler*, 1859, cf. pp. 214-227.

53 John Henry Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," *Rambler*, 1859, cf. p. 213.

54 Ibid., p. 228.

55 In Newman's time, this applied especially to the Marian doctrinal development that led to the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854.

56 Cf. Manfred Hauke, *Mary, Mediatress of Grace*, Academy of the Immaculate, 2004, pp. 19, 21, 91, 40, 42; G. Dodd, *The Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace*, Academy of the Immaculate, 2012, p. 66ff.

57 Ibid.

58Guilhelmo Hentrich and Rudolfo Gualtero de Moos, *Petitiones de Assumptione corporea B.V. Mariae in caelum definienda ad Sanctam Sedem delatae propositae secundum ordinem hierarchicum, dogmaticum, geographicum, chronologicum ad consensum Ecclesiase manifestandum*, Vatican City: Tpyis Polygottis Vaticanis, 1942, volume 2,1031; 1053; cf. E. Lafferty, *Approaching the Assumption 1863-1950: Revelation, Scripture, and the Laity in the Development of a Marian Dogma*, Catholic University of America Press, p. 59.

59 Ibid., *Petitiones*, 2: 500-501.

60 Petition totals and receipts were presented to Cardinal Ratzinger in his office at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the presence of and witnessed by Archbishop Felix Alaba Adeosin Job of Ibadan, Nigeria, African Archbishop Patron of the *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* Movement, May 1999.

61 *Vox Populi Mariæ Mediatrici* Archives, 48765 Annapolis Rd, Hopedale, Ohio. Petition totals and receipts presented to Cardinal Ratzinger in his office at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the presence of Archbishop Felix Alaba Adeosin Job of Ibadan, Nigeria, May, 1999, and included letters and signatures of the 700 cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, from five continents.

62 Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Letter of August 14, 1993, *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* Archive, Ave Maria University, Ave Maria, Florida.