Fr. Perozich comments —

You are a co-redeemer with Jesus.

My personal experience of Catholics and of Catholicism is of a people who love Jesus, worship at Mass to unite to Him, participate in the sacraments, value belonging to the church, and who engage in parish activities and works of charity.

Fewer of us understand our role as united to Christ to participate in the redemption of souls, to be co-redeemers with and under Jesus for this purpose in our time on earth.

In engaging people for "synodality" to discuss women in the church, acceptance of intimacy outside of marriage, immigration any way and any time, power sharing, church governance by the laity, Christians lose sight and ***forgets*** *his real purpose: the salvation of souls with and through Jesus, the Christians' own soul and of others whom Jesus brings into their lives.*

Each Christian who witnesses to the name of Jesus is a co-redeemer with Jesus. While Mary, through the grace of God and walking with Jesus on earth in her life, reflects God more fully than any other mere human, and who now reigns in heaven interceding for everyone, she is co-redeeming with and under Jesus who is the unique and only Redeemer. Human beings are cooperating under His grace for the conversion of all souls in our given time and place on this side of the kingdom until Jesus admits the faithful to the fullness of the kingdom.

In the Great Commission (Mt:28:19ff) Jesus co-missioned his disciples and by extension Christians of all ages to be co-redeemers to baptize all nations and to teach them everything that he that He taught.

James 1:22-25 Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly ***forgets*** *what he looked like. But the one who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who* ***forgets*** *but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does.*

The Call to Become Co-Redeemers: The Real Issue Behind the Co-Redemptrix

Mary's unique cooperation in salvation is paradigmatic for every believer. The real issue behind Co-Redemptrix is whether we will answer the call to become co-redeemers with Christ



.R. Jared Staudt

A year ago, "Mater Populi Fidelis," produced under the direction of Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández at the DDF, sought to put an end to the controversy of the Marian title, "Co-Redemptrix," by calling it "inappropriate." Last December, however, the International Marian Association issued a 23-page response to the document, asking for clarification and even modification of its assertions. More recently, Cardinal Raymond Burke spoke on October 7 at an international Marian conference in Rome, De Maria numquam satis, on the topic, "Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Reign of Christ the King: The Mission of Co-Redemptrix and of Co-Redeemers." He is also scheduled to deliver an online lecture on December 2 for the Institute of Catholic Culture, titled "Mary's Maternal Mission: Our Lady of Guadalupe as Co-Redemptrix." The debate doesn't seem to be fading away.

This is how the DDF document itself, issued with Pope Leo's approval, explains its position on the title of Co-Redemptrix:

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. This title risks obscuring Christ's unique salvific mediation and can therefore create confusion and an imbalance in the harmony of

the truths of the Christian faith, for "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

I think that there is much more at stake than a controversial Marian title. This is why I was happy to see Cardinal Burke extend the discussion to "co-redeemers" (which the DDF document also criticizes, citing Pope Francis), because Mary's unique cooperation in the work of salvation is paradigmatic for the cooperation of all believers. Here is Burke's claim: "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, participated in an altogether unique way in the Mystery of Faith, the Mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation, and is rightly called Co-Redemptrix. So, too, **to the degree that we unite our hearts, one with her Immaculate Heart, to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, we participate in the saving mission of Christ. We can rightly be called *co-redeemers*.**" I'd like to reflect on this extension to co-redeemers more than on the Marian title itself.

The real problem, in my opinion, is not that Mary's role in Christ's work of redemption might be misunderstood but that redemption is already misunderstood, and this is why the place of any cooperation seems objectionable to many, especially Protestants. Cardinal Fernández pointed to the classic text used to object to the title "Co-Redemptrix" within his doctrinal note from Acts 4, noting that salvation is from no one else and no name other than Jesus Christ. To place someone alongside Christ as a seeming source of redemption would be to obscure the clear theological fact that Christ alone is redeemer.

All fine and good, but we must also understand how Christ relates to his Church. When pressed on the point, St. Joan of Arc responded to her judges: "About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they're just one thing, and we shouldn't complicate the matter." The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes this statement in paragraph 795 in explaining how "Christ and his Church thus together make up the 'whole Christ' (Christus totus). The Church is one with Christ." It also cites Aquinas, "Head and

members form as it were one and the same mystical person" (STh III, 48, 2).

The connection of the mystical identity of Christ and the Church to the title of Co-Redemptrix may not yet be clear, but let's ponder the objection a little further. Protestant theology often fears that Catholics seek to take things away from God and Christ by ascribing them to the saints. **Does honor belong only to God, who alone is sovereign, and who alone answers prayers, or does God work through many mediators**? Even considering the second option seems to contradict the theological truth of Christ as the sole mediator (1 Timothy 2:5), which is akin to the doctrine of the sole redeemer. When we think of the close mystical association of Christ and his own Body, however, the difficulty begins to dissolve.

When we read the Gospels carefully, we see that there is literally nothing that Christ seeks to keep for himself apart from his Bride, the Church, to whom he gives his all. He offers her his Body and Blood, he pours out his Spirit upon her, and even his utterly unique relationship with the Father as the only Begotten is shared in the gift of adoption. The way in which he saves and redeems us is to draw us to himself so that there is no longer a stark separation between us, but we become one flesh and Spirit with him.

Let's think, therefore, about the whole language of "co" affixed to particular titles. The one place you can find this explicitly in New Testament translations is Romans 8:15-17:

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs [or fellow or joint heirs] with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

There is a lot to be taken out of these three dense verses. **The Spirit of God does not belong properly to human beings. He must be received, and, when received, he imparts a spirit of sonship**. There is a general sense in which God's

creatures could be considered his children, but Paul is speaking of an adoption that enables us to share in what belongs most particularly to Christ—his divine sonship, which draws us into the inner life of God. **Yet, when we become sons in the Son, mystically embracing Jesus's identity, we must also embrace his mission. This mission is not just to teach, sharing the message he gave us, but to enter into the very work of redemption, to suffer with him so that we may also receive his same glorification.**

Being a co-heir, therefore, also means being co-crucified with Christ. St. Paul makes this clear to the Galatians: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (2:20). **To be "crucified with" is the linguistic equivalent of being co-crucified**, a reality Jesus makes abundantly clear in the Gospels. "And he said to all, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'" (Luke 9:23). Now "following after" might seem to imply a simple imitation. Jesus suffers on the Cross and I too must take up my separate cross every day. But Jesus reveals that his Cross is actually a yoke, which needs to be taken up in tandem: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29). This is why Jesus desired Simon of Cyrene to assist him (which need not have happened), because he wanted to reveal the Cross as something that required our cooperation.

St. Paul continues to unpack the layers of our cooperation in the work of redemption. We receive the Spirit of adoption, we suffer with Christ in his crucifixion, and this cooperation is redemptive for others. In Colossians 1, he explains:

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, of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints (24-26).

The Mystical Body, conformed to Christ in Baptism, still needs a further conformity as the work of redemption is brought to bear in its life through the cooperation of her ministers and holy ones. The sacraments come to us through the ministry of priests, and the prayers and sacrifices of all the faithful are efficacious to draw us into Christ's redemption. **It's completely obvious in the New Testament that the one redemption of Christ would need the cooperation of apostles, ministers, and teachers, etc. to spread into the world.** Paul literally calls himself a mother in labor in relation to the Galatians, "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (Galatians 4:19). In 2 Corinthians 11, he offers a litany of what these labor pains entailed in guiding the nascent churches. He suffered for them in Christ so that through his ministry they might come to accept the Gospel and allow it to bear fruit in their lives.

The entire point here is that **we gain nothing by separating our identity and actions from the work of Christ the sole redeemer, who invites us all to become co-redeemers.** This is even God's logic first in the work of creation. He made us as rational beings who intentionally share in his creative work in bringing forth human life (CCC 372) and in shaping the natural world creatively, which has been described by Pope St. John Paul II as acting as co-creators with God. **On a supernatural level, the saints have been drawn in more and more into his redemptive work. Not that they add to it or stand alongside it; rather, they enter into it, participate in it, cooperate with it. This mysteriously becomes a means of spreading the one redemption throughout time and space.** This is the same logic as the celebration of the Mass, which does not add to the one sacrifice but makes it present in our lives so that we may share in its grace.

All Christian doctrine is mysterious, and therefore, difficult to understand. In putting forward the title Co-Redemptrix, it is true that it can easily be misconstrued as positing the role of Mary as one that stands alongside rather than within the role of Christ

as the only Redeemer. This difficulty, however, is truly an opportunity to correct a much deeper misunderstanding on **the necessity for all the faithful to cooperate in Christ's work of redemption by being co-crucified with Christ**. The harder the doctrine, such as the Eucharist itself, the more we can witness to the faith through the power of the Spirit, who moves minds and hearts through his truth.

Note: If you would like to hear Cardinal Burke explain the proper understanding of Mary's title of "Co-Redemptrix," the Institute of Catholic Culture will be hosting a free, online lecture on December 2 at 8 p.m. ET, entitled "Mary's Maternal Mission: Our Lady of Guadalupe as Co-Redemptrix."



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