



## “Our Lady, the Perfect Disciple and Pilgrim”<sup>1</sup>

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I am going to focus attention today just a few days after Pentecost, on Our Lady as the perfect disciple and pilgrim, leading up to her active participation in her Son’s act of Redemption. A disciple is one who follows, and so a way is involved: Jesus, Who is the Way the Truth and the Life (cfr. Jn 14:6). A way involves a journey or a pilgrimage. So here is where I would suggest the link between Mary’s discipleship and our pilgrimage. Mary’s discipleship involved a life’s pilgrimage which took her to the Cross of Christ and beyond. Our lives are also a pilgrimage, and the pilgrimage which you have made to Rome, is a sign and pledge of the journeying which we all make through Christ in the Holy Spirit to God the Father. Our Lady indicates to us the way to go and intercedes for us when the going is hard and uneven. She also guides our steps in the ecumenical scene, and brings us closer in Christ.

### **Mary, the First Disciple**

The discipleship of Mary has been, in some ways, an acquisition of recent theology, and especially of ecumenical dialogue. The recent Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) document *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, also known as the Seattle

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<sup>1</sup> This is a longer and elaborated version of my discourse to the Church Club of New York at St. Mary Major’s Basilica, Rome, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

Statement, expressed this truth: “Within ... a pattern of anticipated eschatology, Mary can also be seen as the faithful disciple fully present with God in Christ. In this way, she is a sign of hope for all humanity.”<sup>2</sup> This discipleship of Our Lady is also an example for all Christians: “Mary’s ‘Amen’ to God’s ‘Yes’ in Christ to her is thus both unique and a model for every disciple and for the life of the Church.”<sup>3</sup> This discipleship is so much part of Mary’s life, that it is even manifested in her Assumption: “When Christians from East and West through the generations have pondered God’s work in Mary, they have discerned in faith that it is fitting that the Lord gathered her wholly to himself: in Christ, she is already a new creation in whom “the old has passed away and the new has come” (2 Co 5:17). Viewed from such an eschatological perspective, Mary may be seen both as a type of the Church, and as a disciple with a special place in the economy of salvation.”<sup>4</sup>

Recent deeper Biblical insights have increased our awareness of Mary as the model of faithful discipleship.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that Our Lady is her Son’s disciple is based on her divine Motherhood, in such a way that there can be no tension between these two aspects of Mary’s life. From the fact that Our Lady is “Mother of God” stem all the other aspects of her mission; aspects that are well illustrated by the titles with which the community of disciples of Christ in every part of the world honour her.<sup>6</sup> The Western concept of Mary as follower of Christ is based also on her obedience to her Son. However, in the West, this obedience has sometimes been conceived in an excessively moral sense and reduced simply to carrying out commands. Instead, what is required is the consideration of Mary’s total gift of correspondence to God’s economy of salvation. At the same time, Mary’s obedience is both a contrast to and a healing of Eve’s disobedience.

The account of Mary’s discipleship begins with a reflection on her obedience as the New Eve compared with the disobedience of the

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<sup>2</sup> ARCIC, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2004), 56

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 57. The same document (no. 65) makes clear that the concept of Mary’s discipleship is already a theological acquisition of Anglicanism “Anglicans have tended to begin from reflection on the scriptural example of Mary as an inspiration and model for discipleship....[We] walk together as pilgrims in communion with Mary, Christ’s foremost disciple, and all those whose participation in the new creation encourages us to be faithful to our calling (cf. 2 Co 5:17, 19).”

<sup>5</sup> See NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF US BISHOPS, *Behold Your Mother* (1973), 81.

<sup>6</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at General Audience* (7 January 2004), 3.

first Eve. This parallel is treated by several early Fathers of the Church, both from the East and from the West, such as St. Irenaeus, St. Justin and Tertullian.<sup>7</sup> In particular, Irenaeus (120-202), adopting his theory of recapitulation, in which the Eve-Mary parallel is set side by side with the Adam-Christ analogy, formulates the contrast as follows:

By the obedience that took place on a tree the Lord recapitulated the disobedience that took place on a tree; and, to the destruction of that seduction whereby the betrothed virgin Eve was evilly seduced, the glad tidings of truth were happily brought by an angel to Mary, virgin espoused. For, as Eve was seduced by the utterance of an angel to flee God after disobeying His word, so Mary by the utterance of an angel had the glad tidings brought to her, that she should bear God in obedience to His word. And whereas Eve had disobeyed God, Mary was persuaded to obey God, that the Virgin Mary might become patroness of the virgin Eve. And as the human race was sentenced to death by means of a virgin, by means of a virgin is it saved. A virgin's disobedience is balanced by a virgin's obedience.<sup>8</sup>

St. Irenaeus views the function of Mary as the Second Eve in relation to man's Redemption. The co-operation of the first Eve with Satan in effecting man's spiritual death is matched and outstripped by Mary's co-operation with God in effecting man's return to life. Her co-operation and discipleship involved activity of the moral order: she gave Gabriel and God a free consent. Her obedience was not compelled, but with clear vision and unfettered will she placed herself at God's disposal for the accomplishment of His designs.

Theodotus of Ancyra (d.438) introduces a concept of ministry in discipleship carried out by Mary:

In place of the virgin Eve, who had ministered to death, a virgin was graced by God and chosen to minister life.... This woman, worthy of her Creator, divine providence has given us as procurer of blessings, not provoking to disobedience but showing the way to obedience ... not holding out death-bringing fruit but offering life-giving bread.... It is not [Gabriel says] conception in iniquities

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<sup>7</sup> See P. HAFFNER, *The Mystery of Mary* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2002), pp.75-76 for the relevant texts.

<sup>8</sup> ST. IRENAEUS, *Adversus haereses*, Book 5, chapter 19, n.1 in PG 7, 1175-1176. See also *ibid.*, Book 3, chapter 22, n.4 in PG 7, 958-959.

or conception in sins that I shall announce to you; it is rather joy that I shall expound to you, joy that softens the sorrow which stems from Eve.<sup>9</sup>

Those who were Apostles and fellow workers of Christ are to be distinguished from those who simply followed Him as disciples. Among these disciples can be enumerated the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him (Mt 27:55) and Joseph, a rich man of Arimathaea who followed Jesus secretly (Mt 27:57). Above all, Mary the Mother of God is Jesus' first and principal disciple. She was the first of His disciples in time, because even when she found her adolescent Son in the temple she received from Him lessons that she kept in her heart (cf. Lk 2:51). Thus, in a sense, Mary as Mother became the first "disciple" of her Son, the first to whom he seemed to say: "Follow me," even before he addressed this call to the Apostles or to anyone else (cf. Jn 1:43).<sup>10</sup> She was the first disciple above all else because no one has been "taught by God" (cf. Jn 6:45) in such depth. She was "both mother and disciple," as St. Augustine said of her.<sup>11</sup> St. Augustine's proposal that Mary's discipleship was more important for her than her Motherhood has been taken up again in recent times. However, an objection to that view could be posed by saying that her discipleship is based on her Motherhood, since being is the basis for action (*agere sequitur esse*).<sup>12</sup> In the course of her Son's preaching Mary received His words, and he declared blessed those who heard and kept the word of God (cf. Mk 3:35; Lk 11:27f.) as she was faithfully doing (cf. Lk 2:19; 51).<sup>13</sup> As the perfect disciple, the Virgin Mary heard the Word of God and kept it, to the lasting joy of the messianic generations who call her blessed.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Mary, who always adapted herself to God's will, was the first to merit the words of praise that Christ spoke to his followers: "Anyone who does the

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<sup>9</sup> THEODOTUS OF ANCYRA, Homilia 6, *In sanctam Mariam Dei genitricem et in sanctam Christi nativitatem*, nn. 11-12 in *Enchiridion Marianum Biblicum Patristicum*, ed. D. Casagrande, (Rome: «Cor Unum», 1974), 1201.

<sup>10</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* (1987), 20.

<sup>11</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 73. See also St. Augustine, *Sermo* 25, 7 in *PL* 46, 937-938.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 51, a. 2; I, q. 77, a. 3 and I, q. 80, a. 2 as examples of a few instances of this notion.

<sup>13</sup> See VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

<sup>14</sup> See NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF US BISHOPS, *Behold Your Mother* (1973), 78.

will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Mt 12:50).<sup>15</sup>

As a believing disciple of Jesus, Mary can be called daughter of the Church, and our sister as well. For, like us, she has been redeemed by Christ, although in an eminent and privileged way.<sup>16</sup> Mary is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ’s disciples.<sup>17</sup> Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, remained throughout her earthly life faithful to what this name expresses. In this she confirmed that she was a true “disciple” of Christ, who strongly emphasised that His mission was one of service: the Son of Man “came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28). In this way Mary became the first of those who, “serving Christ also in others, with humility and patience lead their brothers and sisters to that King whom to serve is to reign.”<sup>18</sup> As regards discipleship,

the figure of the Blessed Virgin does not disillusion any of the profound expectations of the men and women of our time but offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city while being a diligent pilgrim towards the heavenly and eternal city; the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people’s hearts.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, Mary of Nazareth, the first disciple, willingly put herself at the service of God’s plan by the total gift of self. Having lived with Jesus and Joseph in the hidden years of Nazareth, and been present at her Son’s side at the key moments of His public life, the Blessed Virgin Mary teaches unconditional discipleship and diligent service.<sup>20</sup> During the Life and ministry of Jesus, Mary was in many ways a hidden disciple, who nevertheless was seen in key particular mo-

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<sup>15</sup> See POPE PAUL VI, *Signum Magnum*, 23.

<sup>16</sup> See NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF US BISHOPS, *Behold Your Mother* (1973), 114. See also PAUL VI, *Address on the Feast of the Purification* (2<sup>nd</sup> February 1965).

<sup>17</sup> See POPE PAUL VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 35.

<sup>18</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, 41. See also VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 36.

<sup>19</sup> POPE PAUL VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 37.

<sup>20</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consacrata* (1996), 18, 28.

moments. Christ's first sign, given at Cana (cf. Jn 2:1- 12), when He changed water into wine and opened the hearts of the disciples to faith, was effected thanks to the intervention of Mary, the first among believers.<sup>21</sup>

### **Mary as Exemplar of faith**

Mary's faith is evident from the moment of the Annunciation when she replied to the angel Gabriel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). Mary is called to believe in a virginal motherhood, for which the Old Testament mentions no precedent. In fact, the well-known prophecy of Isaiah: "Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel" (7:14), although not excluding such a view, was explicitly interpreted in this sense only after Christ's coming and in the light of the Gospel revelation. Mary is asked to assent to a truth never expressed before. She accepts it with a simple yet daring heart. With the question: "How can this be?", she expresses her faith in the divine power to make virginity compatible with her exceptional and unique Motherhood.<sup>22</sup>

Mary's faith grew and developed. One situation where this is evident is the Finding of the boy Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:41-52). Through this episode, Jesus prepares His Mother for the mystery of the Redemption. During those three dramatic days when the Son withdraws from them to stay in the temple, Mary and Joseph experience an anticipation of the Triduum of His Passion, Death and Resurrection. Letting his Mother and Joseph depart for Galilee without telling them of his intention to stay behind in Jerusalem, Jesus brings them into the mystery of that suffering which leads to joy, anticipating what He would later accomplish with His disciples through the announcement of his Passover.<sup>23</sup> For Mary, finding Jesus on the third day means discovering another aspect of His person and His mission. His Mother asked Jesus: "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously" (Lk 2:48). This question indicates precisely the pain of the growth in faith. Jesus' reply, in the form of a question, is highly significant: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's

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<sup>21</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (2002), 21.

<sup>22</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at General Audience* (3 July 1996), 3.

<sup>23</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at General Audience* (15 January 1997), 2.

house?” (Lk 2:49). This response discloses the mystery of His Person to Mary and Joseph in an unexpected, unforeseen way, inviting them to go beyond appearances and unfolding before them new horizons for His future. In this reply to His anguished Mother, the Son immediately reveals the reason for His behaviour. Mary had said: “Your father”, indicating Joseph; Jesus replies: “My Father”, meaning the heavenly Father. Referring to His divine origin, He indicates that He must be concerned about all that regards His Father and His plan and stresses that His Father’s will is the only norm requiring His obedience.<sup>24</sup> The fact of Mary’s invitation to a growth in faith is also indicated in the words of the Evangelist indicating that Mary did not fully “understand the saying which He spoke to them” (Lk 2:50) and yet at the same time “kept all these things in her heart” (Lk 2:51). The Mother of Jesus associated these events with the mystery of her Son, revealed to her at the Annunciation, and pondered them in the silence of contemplation, offering her co-operation in the spirit of a renewed “fiat”. In this way the first link is forged in a chain of events that will gradually lead Mary beyond the natural role deriving from her motherhood, to put herself at the service of her divine Son’s mission. At the temple in Jerusalem, in this prelude to his saving mission, Jesus associates his Mother with himself; no longer is she merely the One who gave him birth, but the Woman who, through her own obedience to the Father’s plan, can co-operate in the mystery of Redemption.<sup>25</sup>

In the episode of the wedding at Cana, St. John presents Mary’s first intervention in the public life of Jesus and highlights her faith co-operation in her Son’s mission. At the beginning of the account the Evangelist tells us that “the Mother of Jesus was there” (Jn 2: 1), and, as if to suggest that her presence was the reason for the couple’s invitation to Jesus and His disciples, he adds “Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples” (Jn 2:2). With these remarks, John seems to indicate that Mary presents the Saviour to the world at Cana, as she did in the Incarnation.<sup>26</sup> Turning to Jesus with the words: “they have no wine” (Jn 2:3), Mary expresses her concern to Him about this situation, expecting Him to solve it with an extraordinary sign. The choice made by Mary, shows the courage of her faith, since until that

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<sup>24</sup> *IBID.*, 2-3. This reference to his total dedication to God’s plan is highlighted in the Gospel text by the words: “I must be”, which will later appear in His prediction of the Passion (cf. Mk 8:31).

<sup>25</sup> *IBID.*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at General Audience* (26 February 1997), 1. See IDEM, *Redemptoris Mater*, 21.

moment we have no record of public miracles worked by Jesus. Jesus' answer to Mary's words, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (Jn 2:4), appears to express a refusal, as if putting His Mother's faith to the test. The expression rather shows how Jesus put Mary's co-operation on the level of salvation which, by involving her faith and hope, required her to go beyond her natural role of mother. The formulation Jesus gives: "My hour has not yet come" (Jn 2:4), is also full of significance. It refers to the first miracle in which the prophet of Nazareth's messianic power would be revealed. This "hour" is also linked with the Passion event. In any case her trust in her Son is rewarded. At Cana, Mary's trust in Jesus' as yet unrevealed power causes Him to perform His "first sign", the miraculous transformation of water into wine. She precedes in faith the disciples who, as John says, would believe after the miracle: Jesus "manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him" (Jn 2:11). Thus, Mary strengthened the faith of Jesus' disciples by obtaining this miraculous sign.<sup>27</sup>

Jesus, whom she has left totally free to act, works the miracle, recognising his Mother's courage and docility: "Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water'. And they filled them up to the brim" (Jn 2:7). Thus their obedience also helps to procure wine in abundance. Mary's request: "Do whatever he tells you", keeps its ever timely value for the disciples and for Christians of every age. It is an exhortation to trust without hesitation, especially when one does not understand the meaning or benefit of what Christ asks.<sup>28</sup>

### Mary as Associate of Christ

By being His first disciple, Mary was the associate of Christ in all His Life and Ministry. Mary was unimpeded by sin and was able to dedicate herself wholeheartedly, which she in fact did, to God's saving will. She devoted herself totally by the grace of Almighty God, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, serving the mystery of Redemption. Her co-operation was free, so she was not merely passively engaged by God, but was actively associated in the economy of man's salvation through faith and obedience.<sup>29</sup> The Blessed Virgin Mary was on this earth "above all others and in a sin-

<sup>27</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at General Audience* (26 February 1997), 2.

<sup>28</sup> See *IBID.*, 4.

<sup>29</sup> See VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 56.



gular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross.”<sup>30</sup> This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is revealed from the time of Christ’s virginal conception up to His death, as she co-operated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls.<sup>31</sup> Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ and His closest associate in the new economy of salvation. She participated in her Son’s sacrifice for our Redemption in such intimate fashion that He designated her the mother not only of John the Apostle but also of the human race, which he represented.<sup>32</sup>

The Gospels provide few details of Mary’s life; but they do delineate a remarkable portrait of the woman who gave herself wholeheartedly to her Son and His mission in perfect faith, love and obedience.<sup>33</sup> By accepting the Annunciation, she became intimately associated with all the saving mysteries of Jesus’ life, death, and Resurrection. From the time of the Annunciation, she was the living chalice of the Son of God made man.<sup>34</sup> Through her life of faith on earth, and now through her union with the risen Christ, the Mother of Jesus is the supreme example of loving association with the Saviour in His mission of redeeming mankind.<sup>35</sup>

The beginning of Jesus’ mission also meant separation from His Mother, who did not always follow her Son in His travels on the roads of Palestine. Jesus deliberately chose separation from His Mother and from family affection, as can be inferred from the conditions He gave His disciples for following Him and for dedicating themselves to proclaiming God’s kingdom. Nevertheless, Mary sometimes heard her Son’s preaching. We can assume that she was present in the synagogue of Nazareth when Jesus, after reading Isaiah’s prophecy, commented on the text and applied it to Himself (cf. Lk 4:18-30). She must have suffered greatly on that occasion, after sharing the general amazement at “the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth” (Lk 4:22), as she observed the harsh hostility of her fellow citizens

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<sup>30</sup> VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 61.

<sup>31</sup> See VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 57 and 61.

<sup>32</sup> See POPE PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Signum Magnum*, 8 and 10.

<sup>33</sup> See NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF US BISHOPS, *Behold Your Mother*, 69.

<sup>34</sup> See *IBID*, 131.

<sup>35</sup> See *IBID*, 18, 66.

who drove Jesus from the synagogue and even tried to kill Him. The drama of that moment is evident in the words of the Evangelist Luke: "They rose up and put Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down headlong. But passing through the midst of them He went away" (4:29-30). Realising after this event that there would be other trials, Mary confirmed and deepened her total obedience to the Father's will, offering Him her suffering as a mother and her loneliness. According to the Gospels, Mary had the opportunity to hear her Son on other occasions as well. First at Capernaum, where Jesus went after the wedding feast of Cana, "with His mother and His brethren and His disciples" (Jn 2:12). For the Passover, moreover, she was probably able to follow Him to the temple in Jerusalem, which Jesus called his Father's house and for which He was consumed with zeal (cf. Jn 2:16-17). Finding herself later among the crowd and not being able to approach Jesus, she hears Him replying to those who had told Him that she and their relatives had arrived: "My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk 8:21).<sup>36</sup>

These words of Christ express great praise to His Mother by affirming a far loftier bond with her than would arise from family ties.<sup>37</sup> As the messianic mission of her Son grew clearer to her eyes and spirit, her Motherhood was increasingly shaped by that new dimension which was to constitute her salvific role beside her Son.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, in listening to her Son, Mary accepts all his words and faithfully puts them into practice. We can imagine that, although she did not follow Jesus on His missionary journey, she was informed of her Son's apostolic activities, lovingly and anxiously receiving news of his preaching from the lips of those who had met Him. Separation did not mean distance of heart, nor did it prevent the Mother from spiritually following her Son, from keeping and meditating on his teaching as she had done during Jesus' hidden life in Nazareth. Her faith in fact enabled her to grasp the meaning of Jesus' words before and better than His disciples, who often did not understand His teaching, especially the references to His future Passion (cf. Mt 16:21-23; Mk 9:32; Lk 9:45).<sup>39</sup>

Following the events in her Son's life, Mary shared in His drama of experiencing rejection from some of the chosen people. This rejec-

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<sup>36</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at General Audience*, 12 March 1997, 1-2.

<sup>37</sup> See HAFFNER, *The Mystery of Mary*, pp.53-54, 63.

<sup>38</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> See *IBID.*, 2.

tion first appeared during his visit to Nazareth and became more and more obvious in the words and attitudes of the leaders of the people. Through this suffering borne with great dignity and humility, Mary shares the journey of her Son “to Jerusalem” (Lk 9:51) and, more and more closely united with Him in faith, hope and love, she co-operates in the salvation which He brings about.<sup>40</sup>

Mary was also associated in revealing Christ. For some Fathers of the Church, the first revelation of the Holy Trinity in the New Testament took place at the Annunciation:

You, O Mary, are resplendent with light in the sublime spiritual kingdom! In you the Father, who is without beginning and whose power has covered you, is glorified. In you the Son, whom you bore in the flesh, is adored. In you the Holy Spirit, who has brought about in your womb the birth of the great King, is celebrated. And it is thanks to you, O Full of grace, that the holy and consubstantial Trinity has been able to be known in the world.<sup>41</sup>

Through her hidden and at the same time incomparable sharing in the messianic mission of her Son, Mary was called in a special way to bring close to people that love which He had come to reveal: the love that finds its most concrete expression embracing the suffering, the poor, those deprived of their own freedom, the blind, the oppressed and sinners. Mary revealed God’s mercy in an exceptional way, and made possible with the sacrifice of her heart, her own sharing in revealing God’s mercy. This sacrifice is intimately linked with the Cross of her Son. Her sacrifice is a unique sharing in the revelation of mercy, that is, a sharing in the absolute fidelity of God to His own love, to the covenant that He willed from eternity and that He entered into in time with humanity; it is a sharing in the revelation that was definitively fulfilled through the cross. It was precisely this “merciful” love, which is manifested above all in contact with moral and physical evil, that the heart of Mary, the Mother of the crucified and risen One shared in an exceptional way.<sup>42</sup>

From this consideration flows the devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. Traditionally, the *Seven Sorrows of Mary* comprise the prophecy of Simeon (Lk 2:33-35), the flight into Egypt (Mt 2:13-15), the

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<sup>40</sup> See *IBID.*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> ST. GREGORY THAUMATURGUS, *Homilia 2 in Annuntiatione Virginis Mariae* in *PG* 10, 1169.

<sup>42</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 9.

loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:41-52), the meeting of Jesus and Mary on the Way of the Cross (Jn 19:17), the Crucifixion (Jn 19:25-30), the taking down of the Body of Jesus from the Cross (Jn 19:31-37), and the burial of Jesus (Jn 19:38-42). The prophecy of Simeon in one sense begun Mary's participation in Jesus' redemptive Passion:

When David, in the midst of all his pleasures and regal grandeur, heard, from the Prophet Nathan, that his son should die, he could kind no peace, but wept, fasted, and slept on the ground. Mary with the greatest calmness received the announcement that her Son should die, and always peacefully submitted to it; but what grief must she continually have suffered, seeing this amiable Son always near her, hearing from Him words of eternal life, and witnessing His holy demeanour! Abraham suffered much during the three days he passed with his beloved Isaac, after knowing that he was to lose him....Not for three days, but for three and thirty years had Mary to endure a like sorrow!<sup>43</sup>

During the Passion and Death of Christ, every torture inflicted on the body of Jesus, was a wound in the heart of his Mother. In this sense, Our Lady suffered more than a martyr. This is a new kind of martyrdom, a Mother condemned to see an innocent Son, and one whom she loves with the whole affection of her soul, cruelly tormented and put to death before her own eyes.<sup>44</sup>

Just as Mary shared intimately in her Son's Passion, it would follow that she also shared in the fruits of His Resurrection. The specific sharing which is her Assumption into glory will be treated later.<sup>45</sup> Concerning the episodes in which Our Lady experienced her Son's Resurrection, the biblical accounts do not mention Mary; but neither do they attempt to give a complete account of all that Jesus did or said: "There were many other signs that Jesus worked in the sight of the disciples, but they are not recorded in this book" (Jn 20:30). There remains pious tradition as to how Mary was a witness to this event. Having suffered at the foot of the Cross, it seems most probable that she would have also witnessed the joys of His Resurrection. George of Nicomedia infers from Mary's share in Our Lord's sufferings that be-

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<sup>43</sup> ST. ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI, *The Glories of Mary* (Rockford, Illinois: Tan, 1977), p.422.

<sup>44</sup> See ST. ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI, *The Glories of Mary*, p.443.

<sup>45</sup> See HAFFNER, *The Mystery of Mary*, chapter 8.

fore all others and more than all she must have shared in the triumph of her Son.<sup>46</sup> St. Ambrose states expressly: “Mary therefore saw the Resurrection of the Lord; she was the first who saw it and believed. Mary Magdalen too saw it, though she still wavered.”<sup>47</sup> Later authors like Rupert of Deutz, Eadmer, St. Ignatius of Loyola and Suarez all propose that the risen Christ appeared to His blessed Mother.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, it is consonant with the closeness of Mary to her Son that the risen Christ should have appeared first to His Blessed Mother. Though the Gospels do not expressly state this, it may be supposed that Mary was present when Jesus showed Himself to a number of disciples in Galilee and at the time of His Ascension (cf. Mt 28:7, 10, 16; Mk 16:7). Pope John Paul II affirmed concerning this tradition: “The Gospels do not tell us of an appearance of the risen Christ to Mary. Nevertheless, as she was in a special way close to the Cross of her Son, she also had to have a privileged experience of his Resurrection.”<sup>49</sup>

### Mary as Coredemptrix

Simeon’s prophecy found its fulfilment principally during the time of Our Lord’s suffering and Death. Mary’s role as disciple and associate of Christ thus came to a climax during the Passion of Our Lord.<sup>50</sup> Mary’s action as Coredemptrix is but a logical consequence of her discipleship. Many theologians acknowledge Mary’s role as Coredemptrix.<sup>51</sup> While many Protestant and other Christian writers have no difficulty expressing some acceptance of Mary’s discipleship, they do not make the step which leads from discipleship to coredemption. Some Christian writers from outside the Catholic tradition are however supportive of this truth, like J. Macquarrie who writes: “It is

<sup>46</sup> See GEORGE OF NICOMEDIA, *Oratio IX* in PG 100, 1500.

<sup>47</sup> ST. AMBROSE, *De Virginitate*, III, 14 in PL 16, 283.

<sup>48</sup> See RUPERT OF DEUTZ, *De divini officio*, VII, 25 in PL 159, 306; EADMER, *De excellentia Virginis Mariae*, c.6 in PL 159, 568; ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual exercises*, On the resurrection, First apparition; SUAREZ, *De mysteriis vitae Christi*, XLIX, I.

<sup>49</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at the Marian shrine in Guayaquil, Ecuador* (31 January 1985), in IG 8/1 (1985), pp.318-319.

<sup>50</sup> See J. ALFARO, *Cristologia e Antropologia* (Assisi: Cittadella, 1973), p.234.

<sup>51</sup> See J. GALOT, *Maria, la donna nell’opera della salvezza* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1991).

Mary who has come to symbolise that perfect harmony between the divine will and the human response, so that it is she who gives meaning to the expression *Corredemptrix*.<sup>52</sup>

Christ fulfils His role as Mediator by the Redemption of the human race. Some Scripture texts, notably 1 Timothy 2:5 and Acts 4:12, are invoked by Protestant critics to urge a difficulty against the Catholic teaching of all secondary agents of mediation in general, and of Our Lady in particular: "For there is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and humanity, Himself a human being, Christ Jesus, who offered Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tm 2:5-6). Thus they assert Christ is the sole Mediator in a way which excludes other subordinate mediation, since there is no salvation in any other name but His (Acts 4:12). In Catholic theology, on the other hand, extending the term "mediator" to those other than Christ, involves the use of analogy, by which one and the same word is expressive of concepts that are partly the same and partly different. Moreover, when the Apostle Paul proposes that we are all God's fellow workers (1 Co 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.<sup>53</sup> Christ is the one supreme, necessary and adequate Mediator between God and men; He alone offered the sacrifice which in accordance with the mandate of His Father was the price of our Redemption, and which made condign, sufficient, superabundant satisfaction for the injury wrought by the sin of Adam; but this unique mediation does not exclude secondary and subordinate mediators, nor is there anything in the thought of St. Paul to imply such exclusion. "No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among His creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold co-operation which is but a sharing in this one source."<sup>54</sup>

The fact that God is our Father does not exclude the existence of earthly fathers; the fact that Christ is the one High-priest does not prevent His sharing His priesthood with the apostles and their successors

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<sup>52</sup> J. MACQUARRIE, *Mary for All Christians* (London: Collins, 1990), p.113.

<sup>53</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at General Audience* (9 April 1997), 1.

<sup>54</sup> VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 62.2.

throughout the centuries; no more does the unique and necessary mediation of Christ rule out a mediation which is subordinate and dependent. Mary’s Coredemptive activity is, in this context, part and parcel of her discipleship:

Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross. There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, joining herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim, born of her: to be given, by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross, as a mother to his disciple, with these words: “Woman, behold your son.”<sup>55</sup>

Next is necessary to clarify what constitutes the Redemption. Since original sin was an offence against God, so the reparation, in order to be adequate had to be made by a Person who was divine.<sup>56</sup> Thus the Word was made flesh, lived His life among us and died the Victim for sin on the Cross. While it is true that every action of the God-man Christ was of infinite moral value, nevertheless it remains that, as Scripture and Tradition testify beyond doubt, it was by His final sacrifice of the Cross that Christ achieved the Redemption of mankind. By that oblation sins were forgiven, grace was again available to man and with it, the possibility of assimilation to the image and likeness of God and incorporation into the Church, the Body of Christ. The Redemption involves the concept of humanity being ransomed from sin and death (cf. Mt 10:45; 20:28; Gal 3:13; 1 Co 6:20; 7:23). There are several aspects contained in the doctrine of Redemption. The first considers Christ as Representative, in which He takes the place of human beings: “For the love of Christ overwhelms us when we consider that if one Man died for all, then all have died” (2 Co 5:14).<sup>57</sup> The second idea involves Christ as Victim, whereby His Redemption forgives the punishment which man should have had to undergo: “For our sake He

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<sup>55</sup> VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 58. See Jn 19:26-27.

<sup>56</sup> See ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q.1, a.2: “For an adequate satisfaction it is necessary that the act of him who satisfies should possess an infinite value and proceed from one who is both God and Man.”

<sup>57</sup> See G. O’COLLINS, *The Calvary Christ* (London: SCM, 1977), pp.106-109, who discusses the weaknesses inherent in the use of the expression “substitution”. See also ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation*, 9: “He takes to Himself a body capable of death that it, by partaking of the Lord who is above all, might be worthy to die instead of all... All are considered to have died in Him.”

made the sinless One a victim for sin, so that in Him we might become the uprightness of God" (2 Co 5:21).<sup>58</sup> Consideration of Christ as Victim also involves the concept of Redemption as the payment of a debt, or expiation: "they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by His blood, to be received by faith" (Rm 3:24-25).<sup>59</sup> Third, Christ is the Priest and Mediator, and the Redemption can be conceived as a physical and mystical solidarity. Here, the idea is that all humanity forms a unit, a community, of which the humanity of Christ forms part. However, in Him, human nature is joined in one Person to the divinity. So His redemptive power is mediated from His divinity through His humanity to all humanity to heal it: "For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross" (Col 1:19-20).<sup>60</sup> The Redemption should be framed within a Covenant perspective, in which the obedient death of Christ was the Covenant condition. Without obedience, the Passion and Cross of Christ would have been a tragedy, not a Redemption. Therefore, in the Redemption, which is of infinite and universal value, are found the aspects of covenant, sacrifice, and the restoration of a relationship between God and humanity. Our Lady participates in all aspects of the Redemption, but in a way which is particular to her.

A way forward to founding a theology of Marian coredeemption involves making various distinctions, so as to see the complete picture, and in order to affirm that no single individual can ever be imagined who has ever contributed like Mary, or will ever contribute so much, toward reconciling man with God.<sup>61</sup> One essential distinction lies between the objective and the subjective Redemption. The *objective Redemption* is, as has just been described, the once-for-all acquisi-

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<sup>58</sup> See ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation*, 8. Christ died so that "the law involving the ruin of men might be undone, inasmuch as its power was fully spent in the Lord's body."

<sup>59</sup> ST. ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation*, 9: "The Word of God... by offering His own temple and corporeal instrument for the life of all, satisfied the debt by His death." St. Anselm further developed the idea of Redemption as a debt which man had incurred through original sin.

<sup>60</sup> See ST. ATHANASIUS, *Second Oration Against the Arians*, 70: "Such a union was made so He might join what was by nature divine with what was by nature human, so (human) salvation and divinization might be secure."

<sup>61</sup> See POPE LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Fidentem Piumque*, 3.



tion by the sacrifice of Calvary of the claim to all grace and forgiveness. The *subjective Redemption* is the distribution of that grace and forgiveness throughout all ages after Calvary. In both phases of Redemption, Christ has admitted others who act as co-operators with Him. Here we will consider Mary co-operated in the objective Redemption as Coredemptrix. Pope Leo XIII indicated that Mary was a minister of both aspects of the Redemption: “For thereafter, by the divine plan, she so began to watch over the Church, so to be present to us and to favour us as Mother, that she who had been the minister of accomplishing the mystery of human redemption, would be likewise the minister of the dispensation of that grace, practically limitless power being given to her.”<sup>62</sup>

A further distinction now needs to be made between the *remote co-operation* in the objective redemption, whereby the Mother of the Redeemer, in faith and obedience furnished Him with the flesh and blood in which He could die, and the *immediate co-operation* which is an actual participation in the sacrifice of Calvary. As regards the remote co-operation, Mary by her free acceptance of the angel’s message became the Mother of God, and brought Him into the world at Bethlehem. She nurtured and cared for Him as an infant, and figured with Him in many of the mysteries of His life. Mary presented Him in the Temple, and suffered the sorrow of losing Him when He was twelve years old, when the Child vindicated the claims of His Father’s business. She was present at Cana, where the power of her influence was testified to by the miracle which changed the water into wine. Finally, she was present at Calvary where she offered immediate in the Redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

The question now arises, as to what kind of co-operation Mary offered in the actual sacrifice on Calvary. Various ideas have been proposed. The first is that Our Lady may be conceived in the capacity of co-offerer and co-priest with Christ the great High-priest, in which case her co-operation in Redemption would be physical and immediate. Such a possibility, however, has no foundation in fact. If it is said that Mary offered the sacrifice of the Cross, this would imply that she was endowed with the character of a priest, and tradition has rejected this possibility. Instead, it is more theologically sound to regard Mary as being the Associate of Christ, the High Priest, like Eve was the helpmate to Adam (Gn 2:18).

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<sup>62</sup> POPE LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Adiutricem populi*, (5<sup>th</sup> September 1895) in ASS 28 (1895), pp. 130-131.

Second, one might conceive the possibility of Our Lady persuading Christ to offer the sacrifice that was required for our Redemption. In this hypothesis, the Redemption would be in part the immediate effect of Mary's moral co-operation with Christ. Just as at Cana, Christ's miracle was immediately due to the plea of His Mother in the words, "They have no wine," so conceivably Christ's sacrifice might have been due to her request that we were all in need of' Redemption. Apart from other considerations, there is a particular objection against this supposition. Christ's sacrifice, as we know, was entirely in obedience to the will of His Father. So far as the evidence of Scripture and Tradition goes, that mandate was independent of Mary's prayers and wishes. We have but to recall the incident of the loss in the Temple, when the Christ-child explained His absence from His parents by the reply that He was about His Father's business.

A third option is that Our Lady would have co-operated immediately in Redemption in that her receptivity and compassion on Calvary constituted, together with the sacrifice of Christ, the total price of Redemption. Receptivity is precisely the quality which is characteristic of woman, and Mary exercised this to a supreme degree. In such a case her compassion, which literally means suffering with Christ, together with Christ's sacrifice, would have been ordained by the Father as the total adequate principle whereby the injury of original sin was to be repaired and grace restored. It is proposed that Our Lady collaborated in this immediate way in the act of Christ, so that she is entitled to the title Coredemptrix.

The basis in Tradition for justifying this title begins with the idea of Mary as the New Eve. As has already been seen, many early Fathers like St. Justin and St. Irenaeus proposed this theme.<sup>63</sup> Just as St. Paul had spoken of Christ as the New or Second Adam, the Fathers teach there was also a New or Second Eve. Just as the first Eve really contributed to bringing down the damage of original sin on our race, so the New Eve, Mary, really contributed to reversing that damage. St. Augustine actually used the expression co-operation in regard to Mary's role: "... certainly she is the Mother of His members, which we are; for she co-operated in love that the faithful might be born in the Church."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See HAFFNER, *The Mystery of Mary*, pp.75-76.

<sup>64</sup> ST. AUGUSTINE, *On Holy Virginity* 6, 6 in *PL* 40, 399: "...plane Mater membrorum eius, quod nos sumus; quia cooperata est charitate, ut fideles in Ecclesia nascerentur."

During the Middle Ages, further progress was made in understanding the part played by Mary in the Redemption. Eadmer regarded Mary as the Reparatrix of the lost world.<sup>65</sup> St. Bernard of Clairvaux (died 1153), developed the idea of Mary offering Christ as Victim to the Father, and in this sense represented a step forward in the doctrine of Marian coredemption.<sup>66</sup> A disciple and friend of St Bernard, Arnold of Chartres, shed light particularly on Mary’s offering in the sacrifice of Calvary: “Whoever then was present on the Mount of Calvary, might see two altars, on which two great sacrifices were consummated; the one in the body of Jesus, the other in the heart of Mary.”<sup>67</sup> St. Bonaventure took this a step further. He adopted the Eve-Mary parallel from the Fathers, saying that just as Adam and Eve were the destroyers of the human race, so Jesus and Mary were its repairers.<sup>68</sup> Bonaventure also considered how Mary merited reconciliation for the entire human race.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, he specified that “she paid the price [of Redemption] as a woman brave and loving - namely, when Christ suffered on the cross to pay that price in order to purge and wash and redeem us, the Blessed Virgin was present, accepting and agreeing with the divine will.”<sup>70</sup> He stated precisely how Mary shared in the Sacrifice of Calvary: “there was but one altar, that of the Cross of the Son, on which, together with this Divine Lamb, the victim, the Mother was also sacrificed.”<sup>71</sup> Participation in the sacrifice of Christ was also the line adopted by John Tauler (d.1361), in his development of Mary’s role. God accepted her oblation on Calvary as a pleasing sacrifice for the utility and salvation of the whole human race, and made her a sharer of all of His merits and afflictions, and so she co-operated

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<sup>65</sup> EADMER, *De excellentia Virginis Mariae*, c.9 in *PL* 159, 573. The phrase is “Reparatrix perditis orbis.”

<sup>66</sup> See ST. BERNARD, *Homilia II super Missus est* in *PL* 183,62; *Sermo III de Purificatione Beatae Mariae* in *PL* 183, 370; *Sermo II in Festo Pentecostes* in *PL* 183, 328.

<sup>67</sup> ARNOLD OF CHARTRES, *De VII verbis Domini in cruce*, tractatus 3 in *PL* 189, 1694: “Nimirum in tabernaculo illo duo videres altaria, aliud in pectore Mariae, aliud in corpore Christi. Christus carnem, Maria immolabat animam.”

<sup>68</sup> See ST. BONAVENTURE, *Sermo 3 de Assumptione in Opera Omnia* (Collegio San Bonaventura: Quaracchi, 1885), v.9, p. 695.

<sup>69</sup> See IDEM, *Commentarius in III Librum Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, dist. 4, a. 3, qu. 3, conclusio, in *Opera Omnia*, v. 3, p.115.

<sup>70</sup> IDEM, *Collatio 6 de donis Spiritus Sancti*, n. 5, n. 15, n. 16, n. 17, in *Opera Omnia*, v.5, p.486.

<sup>71</sup> IDEM, *Stimulus amoris*, part 1, chapter 3.

with Him in the restoration of men to salvation.<sup>72</sup> The word Corede-  
 mptrix first figured in the fourteenth century at least in a hymnal in  
 Salzburg, Austria.<sup>73</sup> Then, there are reasons to believe that the expres-  
 sion Coredeptrix appeared in the year 1521 in the sermons of Alain  
 de Varènes.<sup>74</sup> Lanspergius, or John Justus of Landsberg, (1489-1539)  
 formulated the doctrine in such a way that the idea of Mary's co-  
 operation was expressed in coredeption: "Christ was pleased that  
 she, the cooperatress in our Redemption, and whom He had deter-  
 mined to give us for our Mother, should be there present; for it was at  
 the foot of the Cross that she was to bring us forth as her children."<sup>75</sup>

By the sixteenth century the concept began to enjoy theological  
 currency, as for example in the writings of F. Suarez (1548-1617):  
 "For just as Christ, because He redeemed us, is our Lord and king by a  
 special title, so the Blessed Virgin also (is our queen), on account of  
 the unique manner in which she assisted in our redemption, by giving  
 of her own substance, by freely offering Him for us, by her singular

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<sup>72</sup> See J. TAULER, *Sermo pro festo Purificationis Beatae Mariae Virginis; Oeuvres complètes*, (Paris: 1911), vol.6, ed. E. P. NOEL, pp. 253, 259.

<sup>73</sup> See Prayer book of St. Peter's in Salzburg, in G.M. DREVES, *Analecta hymnica medii aevi*, (Lipsia: Reiland, 1905), t.46, 126 n.79:, where the following hymn is cited:

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

Loving, sweet, and kind,  
 Wholly undeserving of any sorrow,  
 If henceforth you chose weeping,  
 As one suffering with the Redeemer,  
 For the captive sinner,  
 Coredeptrix would you be.

<sup>74</sup> See R. LAURENTIN, *Le titre de Corèdeptrice. Etude historique* (Rome-Paris: 1951), pp. 10-11.

<sup>75</sup> IOHANNES IUSTUS LANSPERGIUS, *In Passionem agonemque Christi Iesu Salvatoris nostri*, homilia 48 in *Opera* (Coloniae Agrippinae: 1693), III, p. 112. "Voluit enim eam Christus... cooperatricem nostrae Redemptionis sibi adstare, quam futuram nobis constituerat dare misericordiae matrem. Debebat enim piissima Christi mater sub cruce nos parere filios adoptionis, ut quae naturalis - hoc est, corporalis - esset mater Christi, esset adoptione atque spiritualiter omnium quoque nostra mater: ut quomodo nos Christo sumus incorporati, unde mystica eius vocamur membra, ita Mariae simus quoque propterea filii, non carne, sed adoptione... Quomodo caput Christus, ita nos corporis eius membra, et filii sumus Mariae."

desire and petition for, and active interest in, our salvation.”<sup>76</sup> In the second half of the 17th century, Quirino de Salazar applied to Mary the title of “Redemptrix” which he had proposed in virtue of the intimate analogy between Christ and Mary.<sup>77</sup> Later, great figures like St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787) had no hesitation in expressing the basic truth that “if Mary’s lips were silent, her heart was not so, for she incessantly offered the life of her Son to Divine Justice for our salvation.”<sup>78</sup>

The Ordinary Magisterium during the past century or so has increasingly highlighted Mary’s immediate co-operation in the objective Redemption. Pope Leo XIII indicated how Mary progressed from being the Handmaid of the Lord to being a sharer in the laborious expiation for the human race. “Hence we cannot doubt that she greatly grieved in soul in the most harsh anguishes and torments of her Son. Further, that divine sacrifice had to be completed with her present and looking on, for which she had generously nourished the victim from herself. Finally this is more tearfully observed in the same mysteries: There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother... of her own accord she offered her Son to the divine justice, dying with Him in her heart, transfixed with the sword of sorrow.”<sup>79</sup> Pope St. Pius X made a particularly significant advance in the doctrine of Marian coredemption: “But when the final hour of her Son came, His Mother stood by the cross of Jesus, not just occupied in seeing the dread spectacle, but actually rejoicing that her Only-Begotten was being offered for the salvation of the human race... . from this common sharing of sufferings and will, she merited to become most worthily the Reparatrix of the lost world, and so the dispensatrix of all the gifts which were gained for us by the death and blood of Jesus.”<sup>80</sup> In 1918, Pope Benedict XV effectively affirmed the content of the doctrine of Marian coredemption: “With her suffering and dying Son she suffered and almost died, so did she surrender her mother’s rights over her Son for the salvation of human beings, and to appease the justice of God, so

<sup>76</sup> F. SUÁREZ, *De mysteriis vitae Christi*, disp. XXII, sect. II (ed Vivès, XIX, 327).

<sup>77</sup> Q. SALAZAR, *In Proverbis*, 1. (Cologne: 1621), p.627: “Quia id habuit commune cum Christo ut vere et proprie redemptionis nostrae dedisse atque attulisse dicatur..., propterea... redemptrix, reparatrix, Mediatrix, au(c)trix et causa salutis nostrae appellatur.”

<sup>78</sup> ST. ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI, *The Glories of Mary*, p.448.

<sup>79</sup> POPE LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Iucunda Semper*, (8<sup>th</sup> September 1884) in *ASS* 27 (1884), p. 178.

<sup>80</sup> POPE ST. PIUS X, Encyclical Letter *Ad diem illum*, (2 February 1904), 12-14.

far as pertained to her, she immolated her Son, so that it can be rightly said, that together with Christ she has redeemed the human race.”<sup>81</sup> Pope Pius XI, used the expression Coredemptrix on three occasions during his pontificate. Most significant was when he closed the Jubilee Year of 1935: “O Mother of piety and mercy, who as Coredemptrix stood by your most sweet Son suffering with Him when He consummated the Redemption of the human race on the altar of the cross... preserve in us, we beg, day by day, the precious fruits of the Redemption and of your compassion.”<sup>82</sup>

Pope Pius XII also taught the doctrine of the coredemption by Our Lady: “It was she, the second Eve, who, free from all sin, original or personal, and always more intimately united with her Son, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father for all the children of Adam, sin-stained by his unhappy fall, and her mother’s rights and her mother’s love were included in the sacrifice. Thus she who, according to the flesh, was the mother of our Head, through the added title of pain and glory became, according to the Spirit, the mother of all His members.”<sup>83</sup>

The Second Vatican Council, while not explicitly adopting the expression Coredemptrix, taught the doctrine: “So also the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully bore with her union with her Son even to the cross, where, in accord with the divine plan, she stood, vehemently grieved with her Only-Begotten, and joined herself to His Sacrifice with a motherly heart, lovingly consenting to the immolation of the victim born of her.”<sup>84</sup> Her coredemptive activity was expressed also in this form: “In conceiving Christ, in giving birth to Him, in feeding Him, in presenting Him to the Father in the Temple, in suffering with her Son as He died on the cross she co-operated in the work of the Saviour in an altogether singular way, by

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<sup>81</sup> POPE BENEDICT XV, Apostolic Letter *Inter Sodalicia* (1918) in AAS 10 (1918), p. 182.

<sup>82</sup> POPE PIUS XI, *Radio Message to Lourdes for the Solemn Closing of the Redemption Jubilee*, 28 April 1935 in *L’Osservatore Romano*, 29-30 April 1935, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> POPE PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis* (1943), 110.

<sup>84</sup> VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 58. The same conciliar document had also pointed out earlier ( 54 ) that the Council did not have it in mind to give a complete doctrine on Mary, nor does it wish to decide those questions which the work of theologians has not yet fully clarified. Those opinions therefore may be lawfully retained which are propounded in Catholic schools concerning Our Lady, who occupies a place in the Church which is the highest after Christ and yet very close to us.

obedience, faith, hope and burning love, to restore supernatural life to souls.”<sup>85</sup>

Pope John Paul II has often expressed the doctrine of Mary Coredeptrix, in various aspects. One is that co-operation was by way of obedience, which links closely with Redemption as covenant condition. Co-operation by way of obedience is clearly active.<sup>86</sup> The value of Christ’s Passion and Death depended on His obedience to the will of the Father (cf. Rm 5:19) for that obedience was the condition of the New Covenant, the essential interior disposition of the great sacrifice. Moreover, Mary’s co-operation consisted in the obedience of faith, and so was a share in the covenant condition, in His obedience; hence her obedience became “the counterpoise to the disobedience and disbelief embodied in the sin of our first parents.”

Pope John Paul II has used the expression *Coredemptrix* on at least five occasions. The most important and often cited was on 31 January 1985, in an address at the Marian shrine in Guayaquil, Ecuador: “Mary goes before us and accompanies us. The silent journey that begins with her Immaculate Conception and passes through the ‘yes’ of Nazareth, which makes her the Mother of God, finds on Calvary a particularly important moment. There also, accepting and assisting at the sacrifice of her son, Mary is the dawn of Redemption;...Crucified spiritually with her crucified Son (cf. Gal 2:20), she contemplated with heroic love the death of her God, she lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth....In fact, at Calvary she united herself with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church; her maternal heart shared to the very depths the will of Christ ‘to gather into one all the dispersed children of God’ (Jn 11:52)....In fact, *Mary’s role as Coredemptrix* did not cease with the glorification of her Son.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 61.

<sup>86</sup> See POPE JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* (1987), 18-19.

<sup>87</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse at the Marian shrine in Guayaquil, Ecuador* (31 January 1985), in *IG* 8/1 (1985) pp.318-319. See Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 58. The other four occasions were:

1) In his greetings to the sick after the general audience of 8 September 1982 the Pope said: “Mary, though conceived and born without the taint of sin, participated in a marvellous way in the sufferings of her divine Son, in order to be Coredeptrix of humanity” (*IG* 5/3 (1982), p.404).

2) In 4 November 1984, the Feast of his patron saint, Charles Borromeo, in his Angelus address in Arona: “To Our Lady—the Coredeptrix—St. Charles turned with singularly revealing accents” (*IG* 7/2 (1984) p.1151).

The Catechism stated that Mary was “associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of Christ’s redemptive suffering.”<sup>88</sup> The full doctrine of coredemption would conclude Mary’s proximate, immediate, objective, active and universal co-operation with Christ the Redeemer. Current theology continues to take an interest in Mary’s coredemptive role. For Balthasar, Mary had a coredemptive part to play, and Mary renews her fiat from a position of both proximity to the Crucified One and distance from him: “Hidden behind the multitude of sinners, embracing them all, she is objectively closest to him: she makes his suffering possible and guarantees its goal. Now, however, he can only see her as the farthest from him; this is how he *must* see her. He is forsaken *absolutely*, and the only way of fellowship with him is to take leave of him and plunge into forsakenness. He must withdraw from His mother just as His Father has withdrawn from Him: ‘Woman, behold your Son.’”<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the fact that the Son is accompanied by a witness to God’s atoning action means that the revelation of the Trinity on the Cross cannot be expounded on the basis of the Crucified Christ alone. This witness, the Mother of the Lord, is an icon of the fruitful receptivity by which the Son greets the love of the Father in the Holy Spirit. It is because she witnesses in her poverty, the humiliation of which the Magnificat speaks, standing behind sinners and with them, that she is able to receive the measureless outpouring of the Son on the Cross in his sacrifice of praise and petition to the Father, and receive it in such a way that she becomes the Bride of the Lamb and the Womb of the Church,

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3) On 31 March 1985, in the Angelus message on Palm Sunday and World Youth Day: “Mary accompanied her divine Son in the most discreet concealment pondering everything in the depths of her heart. On Calvary, at the foot of the Cross, in the vastness and in the depth of her maternal sacrifice, she had John, the youngest Apostle, beside her....May Mary our Protectress, the Coredemptrix, to whom we offer our prayer with great outpouring, make our desire generously correspond to the desire of the Redeemer.” (*IG* 7/1 (1985) pp.889-890).

4) In commemorating the sixth centenary of the canonization of St. Bridget of Sweden on 6 October 1991: “Bridget looked to Mary as her model and support in the various moments of her life. She spoke energetically about the divine privilege of Mary’s Immaculate Conception. She contemplated her astonishing mission as Mother of the Saviour. She invoked her as the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Sorrows, and Coredemptrix, exalting Mary’s singular role in the history of salvation and the life of the Christian people.” (*IG* 14/2 (1991) p.756).

<sup>88</sup> CCC 618. Cf. Lk 2:35.

<sup>89</sup> H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama. Theological Dramatic Theory, IV. The Action* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1994), p. 356.



in a “nuptial relationship that begins in the utter forsakenness and darkness they both experience.”<sup>90</sup>

Laurentin explains that the expression Coredemptrix has been used by the Popes and therefore requires respect. It would be gravely temerarious to attack its legitimacy.<sup>91</sup> For Gherardini, the truth of Marian Coredemption meets totally and in an amply verifiable way the conditions by which a doctrine is and must be considered Church doctrine. Its foundation is indirect and implicit, yet solid, in the Scriptures; extensive in the Fathers and Theologians; unequivocal in the Magisterium. It follows, therefore, that the Coredemption belongs to the Church’s doctrinal patrimony.<sup>92</sup> The prefix “co” does not mean equal, but comes from the Latin word, “cum” which means “with”. The title of Coredemptrix applied to the Mother of Jesus never places Mary on a level of equality with Jesus Christ, the divine Lord of all, in the saving process of humanity’s Redemption. Rather, it denotes Mary’s singular and unique sharing, as disciple of her Son, in the saving work of Redemption for the human family.

**Sommario:** *L’articolo considera il ruolo di Maria, Madre di Dio, come discepola di Cristo e pellegrina verso la sua Croce. Cominciando dalla Sacra Scrittura e dalla Patristica, mostra come Maria è associata intimamente con Cristo nella sua Incarnazione, e nella sua vita e ministero. Questa associazione arriva al suo culmine nell’opera Redentrice di Cristo, e lì vediamo che la dottrina di Maria Corredentrice è un’estensione della dottrina di Maria come discepola. L’importanza ecumenica di queste dottrine Mariologiche è brevemente esaminata.*

**Parole chiave:** Maria, Discepola, Pellegrina, Corredentrice, ecumenismo, partecipazione.

**Key words:** Mary, Disciple, Pilgrim, Coredemptrix, ecumenism, participation.

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>91</sup> R. LAURENTIN, *Le titre de corédemptrice* (Rome: Marianum, 1951), pp.27ff.

<sup>92</sup> See B. GHERARDINI, “The Coredemption of Mary : Doctrine of the Church” in AA.VV., *Mary at the Foot of the Cross: Acts of International Symposium on Marian Coredemption 2001*, vol. 2 (Libertyville, IL: Academy of the Immaculate, 2002), pp.37-48. Gherardini points out that up till now there has not been a solemn dogmatic or *ex cathedra* definition of the Coredemption. Hence it is not at present in the strict sense a dogma of the Faith. Yet, the Coredemption is a part of the Church doctrine because it is indirectly and derivatively ascribable to the “sacred deposit”. Consequently, the theological note *de fide* is not to be given it: the doctrinal assertion *proxima fidei* (close to faith) is appropriate for this doctrine. This means it belongs to Revelation, and even if not explicit, it is beyond doubt. The term *proxima fidei* best synthesizes all the intrinsic and extrinsic considerations involved in study of the Coredemption: in particular its connection with Revelation and its presence, even if not in a formal manner, within the ecclesiastical Magisterium.