

I wish to comment on the Pope's recent words on the Blessed Virgin Mary and her role of "Co-Redemptress," a title that Jesus happily applies to his beloved Mother in the message from May 1, 1925 of the prophetic revelations of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, and he elaborates on it on April 16, 1926 and January 27, 1928.

I summarize my response below in the following four points:

- 1) Pope Francis' words of March 24, 2021 are theologically consistent with the teachings of the Church and Tradition on Jesus Christ's sole mediation (1 Tim. 2: 5-6) in the work of Redemption.
- 2) In tradition Mary has been honoured for her active role of perfectly cooperating with and dispensing to mankind and indeed to all creatures, in a manner subordinate to that of Christ, the fruits or graces that Christ had purchased for all creatures and that derive from his work of Redemption.
- 3) In 1996 (nearly 25 years ago) a Theological Commission stated that the title of Co-Redemptrix (Co-Redemptress) and the doctrine inherent in it require further study and theological clarity.
- 4) Since 1996 recent scholarship has offered further study and an abundance of theological clarifications on the manner, altogether consistent with the Deposit of Faith, by which one may appreciate Mary's role of dispensing to mankind and creation the fruits of Christ's Redemption. By virtue of the foreseen merits of Christ, Mary – who from the moment of her Immaculate Conception remained inseparably united with her divine Son, indissolubly united with him in the work of Redemption and who was herself redeemed in a manner more sublime than any other creature – participates more actively and universally than any other creature in Christ's work of Redemption.

## **1. Pope Francis' words are theologically consistent with the teachings of the Church and Tradition on Jesus Christ's sole mediation (1 Tim. 2: 5-6) in the work of Redemption.**

### **What did the Pope say?**

In his General Audience of March 24, 2021 Pope Francis stated, *"It's true that Christian piety always gives beautiful titles to her, like a son to the mother ... how many beautiful things does a son say to the mother? But one must be attentive: the [beautiful] things that the Church, the saints, say to Mary, take nothing away from Christ's uniqueness as a Redeemer... He [Christ] is the only Redeemer. They [Marian titles] are expressions of love like a son to the mother, sometimes exaggerated, but we know love always makes us do exaggerated things – [they are the] promptings of love."*

## **Pope Francis' words are consistent with the teachings of the Christian Churches and of previous Pontiffs**

Pope Francis' comments are theologically consistent with the comments of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and St. Pope John Paul II. In 2000, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, stated,

*"The formula 'co-redemptrix' departs to too great an extent from the language of Scripture and of the Fathers, and therefore gives rise to misunderstandings... Everything comes from Him [Christ], as the Letter to the Ephesians and the Letter to the Colossians, in particular, tell us; Mary, too, is everything she is through Him... The word 'co-redemptrix' would obscure this origin. A correct intention being expressed in the wrong way."*

In his Oct. 1, 1997 General Audience St. Pope John Paul further articulated Mary's role in assisting in Christ's work of Redemption,

*"Mary's maternal mediation does not obscure the unique and perfect mediation of Christ. Indeed, after calling Mary "Mediatrice," the Council is careful to explain that this 'neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator' (Lumen Gentium, n. 62). And on this subject it quotes the famous text from the First Letter to Timothy: 'For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all' (1 Tim. 2:5-6)... The Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men... flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it" (Ibid., n. 60)...*

*In proclaiming Christ the one mediator (cf. 1 Tim 2:5-6), the text of St Paul's Letter to Timothy excludes any other parallel mediation, but not subordinate mediation."*

Other Pontiffs have emphasized the sole mediation of Christ in the work of Redemption. During session 25 of the Council of Trent Pope Pius IV stated, "...the saints, who reign with Christ, offer up their prayers to God for me; and that it is good and useful to invoke them suppliantly and, in order to obtain favors from God through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who alone is our Redeemer and Savior... But if anyone should teach or maintain anything contrary to these decrees, let him be anathema" (Denz. 984-987).

During the Council of Florence, Pope Eugene IV stated, "The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes, and teaches that no one conceived of man and woman was ever freed of the domination of the Devil, except through the merit of the mediator between God and men, our Lord Jesus Christ; He who was conceived without sin, was born and died, through his death

alone laid low the enemy of the human race by destroying our sins, and opened the entrance to the kingdom of heaven, which the first man by his own sin had lost with all succession...” (Denz. 711).

During the Council of Chalcedon and in his letter to Flavian, Pope St. Leo the Great, stated, “*Let him heed what the blessed apostle Peter preaches, that sanctification by the Spirit is effected by the sprinkling of Christ’s blood (1 Pet. 1:2); and let him not skip over the same apostle’s words, knowing that you have been redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your fathers, not with corruptible gold and silver but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without stain or spot (1 Pet. 1:18).*”

In his Apostolic Constitution of 1854 *Ineffabilis Deus* Pope Pius IX addressed the manner by which Mary was redeemed by Christ, “*...Mary, the most holy Mother of God, by virtue of the foreseen merits of Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, was never subject to original sin, but was completely preserved from the original taint, and hence she was redeemed in a manner more sublime.*”

### **Why is Christ the sole Redeemer?**

The word “redemption” derives from the Latin Vulgate rendering of Hebrew *kopher* and Greek *lytron*, which signifies in Sacred Scripture the ransoming at a great price (1 Corinthians 6:20: “For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body”), which Jesus Christ the Redeemer paid for our liberation. The act of Christ’s Redemption was two-fold: it offered to God “satisfaction” by virtue of Jesus’ meritorious actions on our behalf, and it “restored” mankind his former divine adoption while delivering him from Satan and sin and elevating him to a supernatural state. Inasmuch as Original Sin is an offense against an infinite God, only one who is infinite, namely Jesus Christ, may offer infinite satisfaction in atonement for such sin.

**2. In tradition Mary has been honoured for her active role of perfectly cooperating with and dispensing to mankind and indeed to all creatures, in manner subordinate to that of Christ, the fruits or graces that Christ had purchased for all creatures and that derive from his work of Redemption.**

Since the earliest centuries, the Greek Fathers and the Church’s saints have upheld Mary’s unique role in her cooperation in Christ’s economy of Redemption. This may be summed up by the fifth century Fathers in these statements:

In his work *Against Heresies* St. Irenaeus (130-202) refers to Mary's obedience to the will of God as "the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race."

St. Ephraem of Syria (306-373) taught that Mary is the only virgin chosen to be the instrument of our salvation and called her the "dispensatrix of all goods."

Theodosius of Ancyra (+ c. 446) refers to Mary as the "Mother of the Economy" and the "dispensatrix of good things."

The Patriarch Proclus of Constantinople refers to Mary as the "Mother of Salvation."

St. Cyril of Alexandria (+ 444) affirmed, "Hail, Mary, Mother of God, by whom all faithful souls are saved."

St. Ambrose of Milan He interprets the sword in the prophecy of Simeon quite differently from Origen and the Greek fathers following him. In the view of Ambrose this sword is rather Mary's foreknowledge of the Passion, because she is 'not ignorant of the heavenly mystery.'

St. Germanus, the Patriarch of Constantinople (634-733) stated, "*No one is saved except through you, O Theotokos; no one secured a gift of mercy, save through you . . . in you all peoples of the earth have obtained a blessing.*"

St. Andrew of Crete (660-740) referred to Mary as the "*Mediatrice of the law and grace,*" as "*the mediation between the sublimity of God and the abjection of the flesh*" and as "*the first reparation of the first fall of the first parents.*"

St. John of Damascus (675-749) spoke of Mary fulfilling the "*office of Mediatrice.*"

St. Anselm (1033-1109) declared, "*God is the Father of all created things, and Mary is the Mother of all re-created things. God is the Father of the constitution of all things, and Mary is the Mother of the restitution of all things . . . For God generated him through whom all things were made, and Mary gave birth to him through whom all things were saved.*"

In his Christmas vigil sermon, St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) related, "*God wished us to have nothing that would not pass through the hands of Mary.*" He also affirmed, "*As every mandate of grace that is sent by a king passes through the palace-gates, so does every grace that comes from heaven to the world pass through the hands of Mary.*"

St. Albert the Great (1200-1280) referred to Mary as "*...the adjutrix of the Redemption by her co-passion. And just as the whole world is bound to God by His supreme Passion, so also*

*it is bound to the Lady of all by her co-passion.” He added, “The Blessed Virgin is very properly called ‘gate of heaven,’ for every created or uncreated grace that ever came or will ever come into this world came through her.”*

St. Bonaventure (1217-1274) states, *“Just as they [Adam and Eve] were the destroyers of the human race, so these [Jesus and Mary] were its repairers.”* He adds, *“That woman (namely Eve) drove us out of Paradise and sold us; but this one [Mary] brought us back again and bought us.”*

St. Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444) affirms, *“Every grace which is communicated to this world has a three-fold course. For, in accord with excellent order, it is dispensed from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, from the Virgin to us . . . I do not hesitate to say that she has received a certain jurisdiction over all graces . . . They are administered through her hands.”*

St. Gregory Palamas (+ 1359) affirms, *“No divine gift can reach either angels or men, save through her mediation.”*

St. Louis de Montfort (1673-1716) relates, *“It is by her that He [Jesus] applies His merits to His members, and that He communicates his virtues and distributes His graces. She is His mysterious canal; she is His aqueduct, through which He makes his mercies flow gently and abundantly.”*

*“...Mary, whom he has appointed to be... Treasurer of his riches, Distributor of his graces, Worker of his great miracles, Restorer of the human race, Mediatrix of men, Destroyer of God’s enemies, and faithful Companion of his great works and triumphs.”*

St. Alphonsus de Liguori (1696-1787) affirms, *“God, who gave us Jesus Christ, wills that all graces that have been, that are, and will be dispensed to men to the end of the world through the merits of Jesus Christ, should be dispensed by the hands and through the intercession of Mary.”*

**3. In 1996 (nearly 25 years ago) a Theological Commission stated that the title of Co-Redemptrix and the doctrine inherent in it require further study and theological clarity.**

In August of 1996, the twelfth International Mariological Congress was asked by the Holy See to study the possibility and the opportuneness of a definition of the Marian titles of “Mediatrix,” “Coredemptrix” and “Advocate.” A commission was established, composed of fifteen theologians which concluded: *“Even if the titles were assigned a content which could be accepted as belonging to the deposit of the faith, the definition of these titles, however, in the*

*present situation would be lacking in theological clarity, as such titles and the doctrines inherent in them still require further study in a renewed Trinitarian, ecclesiological and anthropological perspective.*” In March of 2011, the Pontifical Theological Academy released a publication by Cardinal Angelo Amato (“*Maria – la Theotokos, conoscenza ed esperienza,*” Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2011), in which Cardinal A. Amato elaborates on the theological significance of the expression “coredemptrix” (pp. 278-283). He highlights the theological contributions of Jean Galot, Mark Miravalle and Brunero Gherardini, all of whom qualifiedly support this title. Noteworthy is Luisa’s pre-conciliar application of Mary’s “co-redemptrix” title, which offers “theological clarity” to the title, as it is predicated on Mary’s “universal mediation” and role of the new Eve who cooperates with Jesus’ redemptive sufferings, and which appears consistent with later theological contributions to this title (pp. 279-280).

On p. 278 of his publication, Cardinal A. Amato notes that although about 50 fathers of Vatican Council II were in favor of the title of “coredemptrix,” the council chose not to adopt it “*to avoid the exaggeration of confusing the one mediational action of Jesus with that of Mary [...],*” which was indeed erroneously proposed in J. Lebon’s work entitled, *Comment je conçois j’établis et je défends la doctrine de la médiation mariale* (in “Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses” 26 [1939] 655-744).

**4. Since 1996 recent scholarship has offered further study and significant theological clarifications on the manner, altogether consistent with the Deposit of Faith, by which one may appreciate Mary’s role of dispensing to mankind and all creation the fruits of Christ’s Redemption. By virtue of the foreseen merits of Christ, Mary – who from the moment of her Immaculate Conception remained inseparably united with her divine Son, indissolubly linked with him in the work of Redemption and who was herself redeemed in a manner more sublime than any other creature – participates more intimately and actively than any other creature in Christ’s work of Redemption.**

As noted above, in his Oct.1, 1997 General Audience St. Pope John Paul articulated Mary’s role in assisting in Christ’s work of Redemption when affirming, “*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.*” He added,

*In fact, before emphasizing the one exclusive mediation of Christ, the author urges “that supplications prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men” (1 Tim. 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. After stressing that 'no creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer' (n. 62), Lumen Gentium describes how it is possible for creatures to exercise certain forms of mediation which are dependent on Christ. In fact, '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' (Lumen gentium, n. 62)."*

In his 1984 Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, Pope John Paul II affirmed,

*"At the side of Christ, in the first and most exalted place, there is always his Mother through the exemplary testimony that she bears by her whole life to this particular Gospel of suffering. In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that they were not only a proof of her unshakeable faith but also a contribution to the redemption of all"* (*Salvifici Doloris*, 25).

The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103 provides explicit corroboration of such an association by stating that Mary "is inseparably linked to her Son's saving work."

This follows from the teaching of Blessed Pope Pius IX in his Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of 8 December 1854: *God, by one and the same decree, had established the origin of Mary and the Incarnation of Divine Wisdom."*

Pope Pius XI stated, "You young people [Spanish pilgrims] ought to associate yourselves with the thoughts and desires of our Blessed Lady, who is our Mother and Co-redemptrix. You too must make every effort to be co-redeemers and apostles in the spirit of Catholic Action."

He added in his "Prayer of the Solemn Closing of the Redemption Jubilee," April 28, 1933, "O Mother of love and mercy who, when thy sweetest Son was consummating the Redemption of the human race on the altar of the cross, did stand next to Him, suffering with Him as a Co-redemptrix... preserve in us, we beseech thee, and increase day by day the precious fruit of His Redemption and the compassion of His Mother."

In his papal Encyclical of 1943 *Mystici Corporis Christi* Pope Pius XII stated, "He [Christ] willed to do so only through a visible Church made up of men, so that through her all might cooperate with him in dispensing the graces of Redemption. As the Word of God willed to make use of our nature, when in excruciating agony He would redeem mankind, so in the same way throughout the centuries He makes use of the Church that the work begun might endure."

In his Apostolic Letter of 1918 *Inter Sodalicia* Pope Benedict XV wrote, “*For with her suffering and dying Son, Mary endured suffering and almost death. She gave up her Mother’s rights over her Son to procure the salvation of mankind, and to appease the divine justice, she, as much as she could, immolated her Son, so that one can truly affirm that together with Christ she has redeemed the human race. But if for this reason, every kind of grace we receive from the treasury of the redemption is ministered as it were through the hands of the same Sorrowful Virgin, everyone can see that a holy death should be expected from her, since it is precisely by this gift that the work of the Redemption is effectively and permanently completed in each one.*”

In his 1894 Encyclical *Iucunda Semper Expectatione* dedicated to the Rosary, Pope Leo XIII affirmed, “*In the Rosary all the part that Mary took as our co-Redemptrix comes to us, as it were, set forth, and in such wise as though the facts were even then taking place; and this with much profit to our piety, whether in the contemplation of the succeeding sacred mysteries, or in the prayers which we speak and repeat with the lips.*”

## **Conclusion**

In light of the preceding, it is evident that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary’s role of dispensing the graces that Jesus, the sole Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5-6), acquired for all creation is part and parcel of the Church’s eastern and western traditions, hagiographic literature and the prophetic revelations of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta. Mary’s preeminent role of dispensing all grace to all creatures is far greater than any creature that ever was, is or will be. So exalted is Mary that she surpasses in holiness all of the angels and saints combined (cf. Jesus message to Luisa of May 1, 1925), and is extolled by the Church with a singular type of veneration known as *hyperdulia*, which is far greater than the *dulia* veneration given to the saints.

While Mary is the Co-redemptrix of all of the grace Christ acquired, they both invite all men and women to be co-redeemers with Christ by uniting each day their thoughts, words and actions, as well as their joys, sorrows, prayers, sacrifices and works of mercy with those of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary for the betterment of souls. It is in this sense that the Blessed Virgin Mary may be referred to as the Co-redemptrix who mediates all grace to all creation in a manner subordinate to that of her divine Son Jesus Christ, and who invites us to assist her and her divine Son in this holy endeavor.

I conclude with Jesus’ words to the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta:

“In addition to Me, there is My heavenly Mother, who received the unique mission of being the Mother of the Son of God, and the office of Co-Redemptrix of mankind. On account of

*the mission of her divine motherhood, she was enriched with so much grace that all other creatures combined, both in heaven and on earth, will never be able to match her. But this was not enough to draw down the Word into her maternal womb; it was necessary that she embrace all creatures by loving them, making reparation for them and adoring the Supreme Majesty on their behalf. By this means, she alone accomplished in herself everything that all human generations should offer to God. In this way, in her virginal heart she had an inexhaustible current of love for God and for all souls. When the divinity found in this Virgin its requital of love for all [creatures], it felt enraptured and formed within [her] its conception, that is, the Incarnation of the Word.*

*And as she conceived Me, she took on the office of Co-Redemptrix and shared and embraced together with Me all the pains, substitutions, reparations and maternal love on behalf of all. In the heart of My Mother there was a fiber of maternal love for each soul. This is why, in truth and with justice, when I was on the Cross I declared her Mother of all. She excelled together with Me in love, in sufferings — in everything; she never left My side. If the Eternal One had not placed so much grace in her as to be able to receive from her alone the love of all, he would never have moved from heaven to come down to earth and redeem mankind. That is why to fulfill her mission as Mother of the Word it was necessary and fitting that she embrace and surpass everything*” (L. Piccarreta, volume 17, May 1, 1925).

*“In order to live in My Will, the soul must live more of God than of itself; Indeed ‘the nothing’ must give life to ‘the All’ to be able to accomplish everything, and for its act to exercise primacy over all the other acts of all creatures. Such was the life of my Divine Mother. She was the true image of the living in my Will; her living in My Will was so perfect that she did nothing but receive from God, continuously, all that she was to do in order to live in the Supreme Will. So, She received the act of supreme adoration in order to be exercise in her person primacy over all the acts of adoration that all souls would be obliged to render to their Creator. In fact, true adoration has life within the three Divine Persons. Our perfect concord, Our reciprocal love, Our one Will form the most profound and perfect adoration within the Most Holy Trinity... My beloved Mother obtained everything from Us in order to be able to diffuse herself in all things and exercise in her person primacy over every act of every creature – over every act of their love, over of every step, word, thought of theirs - indeed over every created thing. She placed her prime act upon all things, and this imparted to her the rightful claims of the Queen of all and everything. She surpassed in sanctity, in love and in grace all the saints who have been and will be, as well as all angels united together... constituting her the Queen and Mother of her very Creator”* (L. Piccarreta, volume 19, April 16, 1926).

*“It behooves you to know that when Our Divinity decides to unleash an Act outside of Itself to perform a work – a good, We first choose the creature in whom to deposit Our work... So, in the Redemption, the depository of all of My Acts was My inseparable Mother. It may be*

*said that as I was about to breathe, to cry, to pray, to suffer and everything else I did, I first called her to receive My breaths, My tears, My sufferings, and so forth in order to deposit them within her, and then I breathed, cried and prayed. To Me it would be unbearable and a sorrow that would surpass any other, if I did not have My Mother in whom to deposit My Acts.*

*Now, since all the acts of the Kingdom of My Divine Will are enclosed in those of Redemption... as I deposited in the Sovereign Queen of Heaven everything that regarded the Kingdom of Redemption, so I deposited in you what regards the Kingdom of the Supreme Fiat”* (L. Piccarreta, volume 23, January 27, 1928).

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