

Two interviews with Fr. Manfred Hauke on Marian Coredemption

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“Is Coredemption ‘Inappropriate’? You are rebuking saints and doctors of the Church”⁴

For the director of the German Society of Mariology, the title of Co-Redemptrix does not present any misunderstandings regarding the unique salvific mediation of Christ. If that were the case, it would be necessary to intervene regarding the writings of Newman and John Paul II.

We asked for an opinion on some critical points of the doctrinal Note, *Mater Populi Fidelis*, from Father Manfred Hauke, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Faculty of Theology in Lugano, member of the Pontifical International Marian Academy and director of the German Society of Mariology.

The principal concern of the Note seems focused on the fact that some Marian titles, such as Co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces, would obscure the uniqueness of Christ's salvific mediation. In your opinion, does this risk actually exist?

In my opinion, this risk does not exist in a healthy catechetical and theological context. Who could accuse, for example, Saint John Paul II of imbalance, given that he used the two titles just mentioned

⁴ This interview was published in Italian by *La Nuova Bussola Quotidiana* on November 7, 2025: <https://lanuovabq.it/it/corredenzione-sconveniente-rimproverate-santi-e-dottori>. It is published here in English with permission. The translation is provided by the editors of *Ecce Mater Tua*.

various times? The Note itself recalls that he used the title "Co-Redemptrix" "on at least seven occasions" (n. 18). Should perhaps the title of "Doctor of the Church" be taken away from Cardinal John Henry Newman, who was declared such by Pope Leo XIV this past November 1st, because the English convert defended the title of "Co-Redemptrix" against the Anglican Edward Pusey? Or should there be an intervention against the writings of Saint Alphonsus de' Liguori, also a Doctor of the Church? Should we go against numerous saints, among whom are Saint Edith Stein and Saint Teresa of Calcutta? According to Newman, the Marian titles "Second Eve," "Mother of Life," and "Mother of God" are far stronger than the criticized title [of Co-redemptrix] (Letter to Pusey). Or perhaps we should reproach Pope Leo XIII, praised by the reigning Pontiff with the choice of his pontifical name, who granted an indulgence to a prayer with the Marian title (in Italian) "Co-Redemptrix of the World" (*Acta Sanctae Sedis* 18, 93)? It is more likely, instead, for misunderstandings to arise in the Protestant world, which denies man's cooperation in salvation with the principle of *sola gratia*. For this reason, the theological commission of Vatican II omitted "certain expressions and terms used by the Supreme Pontiffs, which, although most true in themselves, could be difficult for the separated brethren (in this case, the Protestants) to understand. Among other terms ... 'Co-redemptrix of the human race' [is listed]" (*Acta synodalia*, I, 99). Is it right to sacrifice an expression that is most true in itself for ecumenical motives? In any case, for Protestants, the problem is not only with the terminology, but also with the doctrine taught by Vatican II regarding Mary's unique cooperation in the redemption. A false ecumenism can damage Catholic doctrine, which must be professed in all its richness. If the Church were to remove all expressions disliked by Protestants, it would also have to eliminate the title of Mother of God (*Theotokos*) mentioned in the Note (nos. 9, 11, 15). Here too, one could consider possible misunderstandings of such a title among those not well catechized.

Almost all newspapers, including Catholic ones, are now running headlines stating that Mary is not co-redemptrix. It is quite astonishing to read that a title like "Co-redemptrix," which has in fact entered the vocabulary of theology, as well as the teachings of the Popes, is suddenly declared "inappropriate" and "unsuitable" by the Note

The title "Co-Redemptrix" is the most concise expression to describe Mary's unique cooperation in the redemption. The misunderstanding that Mary would be placed on the same level as Jesus is avoided by specifying that Mary's cooperation depends entirely on Christ and is subordinate to Him. Prohibiting a concise title that expresses a central truth taught with great clarity by Vatican II would be rather difficult.

We should, however, take note of Cardinal Fernández's clarification in the initial presentation: "This is not about correcting the piety of the faithful people of God..." Among the faithful, though, the expressions "Co-redemptrix of the human race" (for example, in the *Calls from the Message of Fatima* by the Venerable Servant of God, Sister Lucia) and even more so "Mediatrice of all graces" are widespread; this latter invocation makes use of the title of the liturgical feast introduced by Pope Benedict XV in 1921 and has even been used by Popes Benedict XVI (Letter of January 10, 2013 to Archbishop Sigismondo Zimowski) and Francis: "One of the most ancient titles by which Christians have invoked the Virgin Mary is precisely 'the Mediatrice of all graces.' Entrust to her your aspirations and the good intentions that you hold deep within; may she inspire in you the joy of following Christ and serving him with humility and docility in the Church..." (Message to Archbishop Gian Franco Saba of Sassari, Sardinia, May 13, 2023).

In your opinion, did the Note intend to reject only the title of Co-Redemptrix, or also important aspects of Mary's singular cooperation in the work of Redemption?

In spite of the critical observations on the two titles, the Note presents the doctrine of the conciliar and pontifical magisterium (nos. 4-15), especially concerning "the singular cooperation of Mary in the plan of salvation" (no. 3; see also nos. 36s and 42). The document also cites the clearest text on this point, the Marian catechesis of Saint John Paul II of April 9, 1997, which distinguishes Mary's participation in the objective redemption accomplished by Christ on earth from our cooperation in the process of salvation (nos. 3, 37b).

Saint Pius X (in *Ad diem illum*) taught that the Blessed Virgin, by virtue of her singular holiness and association with the work of Redemption, "merits for us in a congruous manner (*de congruo*), as it is said, what Christ merits for us in a condign manner (*de condigno*)." The Note seems to contain a hesitation, if not a reversal, on this point, when it states that "only the merits of Jesus Christ [...] are applied in our justification" (n. 47). What are your thoughts on this?

The important distinction made by Pius X is not explicitly cited, but there seems to be a hint – unfortunately almost hidden – to the distinction between Christ's condign merit and Mary's congruous merit (n. 47f). A reference to this type of merit is indispensable when discussing the universal extension of the maternal mediation of Mary in Christ

In the concluding paragraphs of the Note, a much-discussed theme is revisited: that the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to Pope Francis, "is more of a disciple than a mother" (n. 73). What is true about this statement, and what are the potential dangers?

According to Saint Augustine, Mary conceived the Word of God first in her heart and then in her womb (Sermon 215, 4). On the other hand, it is not possible to separate in Mary the roles of disciple and Mother of God, as well as "Mother of the faithful people." Mary's specific dignity comes precisely from her mission of being the Mother of God, who generated the human nature of the Savior. This is also the basis for all her salvific cooperation

Why Mary is Co-redemptrix: replies to doubts and objections: An interview with Fr. Manfred Hauke⁵

The word "Co-redemptrix" – also accepted by the Holy Office under Pius X, and used several times by Pius XI and John Paul II – does not equate Mary with Jesus, but indicates the unique cooperation (not only "subjective" but also "objective") of the Mother in the redemptive work of the Son. The truth that Christ is the only Redeemer and that the Virgin Mary was redeemed does not contradict co-redemption, which depends on the grace received in prevision of Jesus' merits and the maternal function of Mary. This doctrine is taught by Vatican II and the Catechism, and with respect to it "we could speak of a theologically certain doctrine (*sententia theologice certa*) or one pertaining to the faith (*ad fidem pertinens*)."

La Bussola interviews Father Manfred Hauke, a Mariologist and full professor of Dogmatic Theology.

⁵ This interview was originally published in Italian in *La Nuova Bussola Quotidiana* on April 18, 2021: <https://lanuovabq.it/it/perche-maria-e-corredentrica-risposte-a-dubbi-e-obiezioni>. It is published here in English with permission. The translation is provided by the editors of *Ecce Mater Tua*.

Recent statements of Pope Francis have once again raised doubts about the participation of the Blessed Virgin in the work of redemption. We asked Father Manfred Hauke to help us understand the meaning of this theological truth and to respond, even if synthetically, to the main objections raised. Manfred Hauke is a full professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Theological Faculty of Lugano; a member since 1992 of the Pontifical Marian Academy International; president since 2005 of the Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Mariologie and responsible for the Mariology series of Eupress FTL and the “Mariologische Studien” (Mariology Studies) series.

Professor Hauke: What can we say about the term, “Co-redemptrix”?

The term "Co-redemptrix" first appeared in the 15th century, within the tendency of associating Mary with the work of Christ the Savior and to affirm her "compassion". Even though the context clearly shows the dependency of the Blessed Virgin's contribution on the redemption accomplished by Christ, the word "Co-redemptrix" could be perceived as too strong an expression. This explains its course through history, which somewhat resembles a rollercoaster ride (*“montagne russe”*): used since the 16th century even by prominent theologians such as Salmerón, a participant in the Council of Trent; censored by the Holy Office (1620, 1723, 1747); accepted during the pontificate of Saint Pius X, even by the Holy Office (in the expression "Co-redemptrix of the human race"); used three times by Pius XI (1933-35) and five times (1982-1991) by Saint John Paul II; and disapproved three times by Pope Francis (2019-21).

Perhaps we need to understand the meaning of this term. Let's try to clarify what it means to affirm that Mary is Co-Redemptrix and what it does not mean.

The term might be perceived as equalization, the placing of Mary on the same level as Jesus, which would obviously be a serious error. However, the way Mariologists use the term avoids this misunderstanding. The first theological monograph dedicated to this Marian title, published in Belgium in 1920, defines co-redemption as simply cooperation in the Redemption. The subsequent discussion, for example in the work of the Servite Mariologist Gabriele Maria Roschini, often underlines the fact that Mary cooperated directly in the "objective" Redemption (accomplished by Christ on earth), beginning with her "yes" before the Incarnation of the Word, in contrast to the mere cooperation in the "subjective" Redemption that concerns all of us, in order to receive and transmit the salvific gifts

The participation of the Virgin Mary in redemption is well-explained in chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*.

The Second Vatican Council, in contrast to a minimalist current still present in some circles before the Council, speaks clearly about the fact that Mary "cooperated in a unique way in the work of the Savior" (*Lumen Gentium*, 61). In 1916, for example, a Roman theologian, in an expert opinion for the Holy Office, criticized the expression "Co-redemptrix" used by the Belgian bishops because Mary did not cooperate in the Redemption. According to Vatican II, Mary's unique cooperation in the work of redemption undoubtedly corresponds to the current meaning of "co-redemption," even though the conciliar commission (in the schema *De beata*) did not use the term "Co-redemptrix," which, although absolutely true in itself, could have caused difficulties of understanding among Protestants. In reality, Protestants have difficulty not only with the term "Co-redemptrix," but even with the very concept of Mary's cooperation in the Redemption. The term "Co-redemptrix," on the other hand, could also be understood in a minimalist sense, and therefore refer only to cooperation in subjective redemption, as occurs in the believing

response of each of us. There is no need to dwell on the term "Co-redemptrix" unless there is first clarified the meaning of the title, which expresses Mary's unique collaboration in the Redemption, especially from the moment of her "yes" at the Annunciation up to her maternal association with the sacrifice of Jesus at the foot of the Cross..

At this point I ask you: is the doctrine of Marian co-redemption a theological thesis or something more?

The singular cooperation of Mary in the Redemption (co-redemption) is a magisterial doctrine taught with clarity by, among others, the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 968. Having recourse to technical terms, we could speak of a *sententia theologice certa* (a theologically certain doctrine) or *ad fidem pertinens* (a doctrine that pertains to the faith).

Let's now address some recurring objections that are raised. The first: to affirm that the Madonna is Co-Redemptrix means contradicting the truth of faith that Christ is the only Redeemer.

Mary's salvific cooperation is intrinsic to her maternal function towards humanity, an influence that "flows from the superabundance of Christ's merits, is founded on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and derives its entire efficacy from it." The unique mediation of the Redeemer "does not exclude, but rather gives rise to a varied cooperation in creatures, participating in the one source" (*Lumen gentium* 60, 62; CCC 970). It is a maternal mediation in Christ.

Another theological objection raised is the following: to affirm that the Virgin Mary was redeemed excludes the possibility of her also being considered Co-redemptrix.

Mary's cooperation depends entirely on the grace bestowed upon her in view of Christ's merits. God preserved Mary from original sin so that she could be associated with the work of redemption, which culminates in the sacrifice of the Cross. By the will of God, the New Eve unites her maternal sacrifice to the offering of Christ, which in itself would be sufficient for redemption.

Some maintain that the New Testament is very moderate regarding the figure of Mary, emphasizing exclusively her dimension as a disciple and mother of Jesus.

In the biblical testimony, Mary is the mother of the Son of God and the "Woman," a title that prepares the presentation of her as the New Eve, as found in the Fathers of the Church. The entrustment of John to Mary is a point of departure for the prominence given to spiritual maternity. Terms such as "Co-redemptrix," "Mediatrix," "associate of the Redeemer," etc., do nothing more than highlight Mary's spiritual motherhood towards us, as does the title (contested by some hyper-ecumenical voices) of "Mother of the Church," desired by Pope Francis for the liturgy of Pentecost Monday.

In the present theological panorama of the Catholic world, what in your opinion is the underlying obstacle that leads to the rejection of Marian Co-redemption?

In contemporary Catholic theology, I don't see any real rejection of Mary's unique cooperation in salvation, apart from perhaps some extreme voices close to Protestantism. The principal obstacles to the use of the term "Co-redemptrix" lie, instead, in the lack of a systematic effort—which includes the explanation of terms—and in an overly timid ecclesiastical diplomacy. It would be appropriate to present the entire Catholic doctrine in an ecumenical context, without being afraid of using specific terms, provided that they are clearly explained. For

Protestants, the problem usually lies already in Mary's cooperation in the Redemption, a cooperation stemming from free will, which was denied by Martin Luther. Contemporary Protestants, however, would often find it difficult to uphold the denial of free will, which is at the heart of Mary's "fiat" in relation to the Incarnation.