

“WITH JESUS” *The Story of Mary Co-Redemptrix*, Mark Miravalle, Queenship Publishing, P.O. Box 220, Goleta, CA, 93116, 2003.

A review by Thomas Mary Sennott.

Dr. Mark Miravalle is Professor of Theology and Mariology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. He has just published a beautiful book on Mary Co-redemptrix entitled “With Jesus” *The Story of Mary Co-Redemptrix*.. Notice the quotation marks around the title “With Jesus.” A more precise and theologically accurate title would be hard to imagine. Dr. Miravalle begins with careful definitions of his terms:

“What then does the Church mean when she calls the Blessed Virgin Mary the ‘Co-Redemptrix?’ Let us first look at the etymological meaning of the title itself.

“The prefix, ‘co-‘ derives from the Latin term ‘*cum*,’ which means ‘with’ (and not ‘equal to’). Although some modern languages, such as English, use the prefix ‘co’ with connotations of equality, the true Latin meaning remains ‘with.’ And in English, for example, the prefix ‘co’ is at other times properly used to signify ‘with’ in a context of subordination or dependence, in cases such as “pilot and co-pilot’; ‘star and co-star’; ‘Creator and co-creator’ in the theology of the body and nuptial love, and so forth.

“In the revealed word of God, St. Paul identifies the early Christians as ‘co-workers with God’ (1 Cor.3:9) in a meaning and context of ‘co’ which cannot possibly denote equality. So too, we are ‘co-heirs’ with Christ (Rom. 8:17), without meaning that we are equally heirs to heaven as the only-begotten Son of God is heir to Heaven.

“The Latin verb ‘*redimire*’ (or re[d]-emere), signifies literally ‘to buy back.’ The Latin suffix ‘-trix’ is feminine, denoting ‘one who does something.’ The etymological meaning of Co-Redemptrix therefore refers to the ‘*woman with the Redeemer*,’ or more literally: ‘the woman who buys back with.’

“In summation, then, the title ‘Mary Co-Redemptrix’ as used by the Church denotes the unique and active participation by Mary the Mother of Jesus, in the work of Redemption as accomplished by Jesus Christ, the divine

and human Redeemer. The title of Co-Redemptrix never places Mary on a level of equality with Jesus Christ, the divine Lord of all, in the accomplishment of human salvation. It would wound the Heart of Mary more than any other heart, hers an immaculate and transparent Heart created to reflect perfectly the glories of her Son, if she were to be mistakenly perceived as an equal or parallel redeemer with her own divine Son.

“The Co-Redemptrix title, rather, identifies Mary’s singular and unparalleled sharing with her Son in the restoration of grace for the human family. The Mother of the Redeemer participates in a wholly secondary and subordinate way in the buying back of humanity with and under her Divine Son. For *Jesus Christ alone* in his divinity, the Sovereign Alpha and Omega, could satisfy the just compensation for the sins of mankind necessary in reconciling humanity with God, the Father of all mankind.

“Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, is the Redeemer of the universe. Mary, the Church teaches, is the woman completely ‘with the Redeemer’ who like no other creature, angel or saint, shared in his saving work. She gave Jesus her own flesh and blood; she suffered with Jesus in all his earthly suffering; she walked with Jesus the steps to Calvary; she offered with Jesus at Golgotha in obedience to the Father; she died with Jesus in her Heart. What does the Church mean when she calls Mary the Co-Redemptrix? In a phrase: Mary is ‘*With Jesus*’ from the *Annunciation to Calvary.*” (pp.9- 11)

Dr. Miravalle begins by commenting on the passages in Holy Scripture on Our Lady, which illustrate some aspect of the doctrine of Mary Co-Redemptrix. His commentary on the Presentation in the Temple is especially moving.

“Simeon recognizes the child as the ‘salvation’ (Lk. 2:30) prepared in the presence of all peoples, as ‘a light for the revelation of the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel’ (v.32). But then the holy Simeon turns his gaze to the Mother of salvation and prophesies that she too, in virtue of her motherly relation to the sign of contradiction, will experience a life and mission of suffering ‘with Jesus’: ‘Behold this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is rejected – and a sword shall pierce through your own soul, too – that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed’ (Lk. 2:34- 35).

“If the Sign is rejected, then the mother of the Sign will be rejected. What mother does not share in the suffering of her son when her son is contradicted? But if her son is the prophesied sign of contradiction, in relation to which all hearts will be ‘revealed,’ either for or against the true Redeemer), then she experiences not merely a moment of pain at the

Temple, but a lifetime of pain as the Mother united to the Sign, a mother of suffering 'with Salvation.' No greater sacrifice will ever be asked by the Father of all mankind than the one asked of this Son and Mother, with its defining moment at the tree of Calvary. Yet this sacrifice begins long before. Indeed, the sufferings of the Mother begin before the sufferings of the Son." (p.41)

Dr. Miravalle has so many excellent commentaries on the doctrine of Mary Co-Redemptrix in Holy Scripture, that it would take up too much space to try to do them justice here. So let me go on to the early Fathers of the Church who loved to compare Mary with Eve, calling her the "New Eve" Here is the first to do so, St. Irenaeus (c. 202):

"Just as she [Eve]... having disobeyed, became the cause of death for herself and for the entire human race, so Mary...being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the entire human race...Thus the knot of Eve's disobedience received unloosing through the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve bound by unbelief, that the virgin Mary unfastened by faith.' 4" (p.67)

Mary Co-Redemptrix is a classic model for the development of doctrine, and Dr. Miravalle traces this development in a fantastic display of scholarship through the Middle Ages. Here he is on the great Marian Doctor, St. Bernard (c. 1153):

"...St. Bernard is the first Doctor of the Church to preach that Mary provided 'satisfaction' for the disgrace and ruin brought about by Eve: 'Run, Eve, to Mary; run, mother to daughter. The daughter answers for the mother; she makes satisfaction to Thee, Father, for the mother...O woman singularly to be venerated...Reparatrix of parents.' 37" (p.86)

Although the meaning always remained the same, it wasn't until later in the history of the Church that the unique title "Co-Redemptrix" developed, which most clearly expresses Mary's collaboration "With Jesus." We come now to what Dr. Miravalle calls "The Golden Age of Mary Co-Redemptrix." Here is another great Marian saint, St. John Eudes (c. 1680):

"The salvation of immortal souls is also the great work of the Mother of God. Why did Almighty God choose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother of God? Why did He preserve her from original sin and make her holy from the very first moment of her life? Why did He shower upon her so many privileges, ornamenting her grace and virtue? Why did He confer upon her so much wisdom, goodness, meekness and such great power in heaven, hell, and on earth? It was simply that she might be worthy to cooperate with her Divine Son in man's redemption. All the Fathers of the Church say clearly that she is Co-Redemptrix with Christ in the work of our

salvation. I hear Our Lord and His Blessed Mother saying to St. Bridget, whose revelations are approved by the Church, that Adam and Eve lost the world by eating an apple, but that they saved it by a heart: *quasi uno Corde salvavimus* (*Revel. Extravag. Cap. 3*), that is Our Lord and His Mother had but one heart, one love, one sentiment, one mind, and one will with each other. As the Sacred Heart of Jesus was a furnace of love for men, so the heart of his loving Mother was inflamed with charity and zeal for souls. Christ immolated Himself upon the cross for the redemption of mankind and Mary made a similar sacrifice in undergoing untold sufferings and sorrows.’³¹ “ (pp.123,124)

This review can only be a sampler of this wonderful book, so let me jump ahead again this time to the Magisterium of the Church on Mary Co-Redemptrix:

“The first official use of Co-Redemptrix comes on May 13, 1908, in a document by the Congregation of Rites. In a positive response to a petition to raise the rank of the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary to a double rite of second class for the universal Church, the Congregation of Rites expresses the hope that ‘the devotion of the Sorrowful Mother may increase and the piety of the faithful and their gratitude toward the merciful Co-Redemptrix of the human race may intensify.’¹¹ “ (p.155)

This was during the reign of Pope St. Pius X, and Dr. Miravalle continues with Benedict XV:

“The following pontiff, Benedict XV (1914- 1922) provides an invaluable contribution to the exactness of the doctrine of Coredemption as the unequivocal teaching of the papal Magisterium. In his classic text from the Apostolic Letter, *Inter Sodalicia* (1918) Pope Benedict articulates the Mother’s co-suffering participation in the Passion, her immolation of her Son in appeasement of the Father’s justice, and concludes with the explicit papal teaching that Mary ‘redeemed the human race together with Christ’: ‘to such extent did [Mary] suffer and almost die with her suffering and dying Son; to such an extent did she surrender her maternal rights over her Son for man’s salvation, and immolated Him – insofar as she could – in order to appease the justice of God, that we rightly say that she redeemed the human race together with Christ.’¹⁶ “ (pp.157,158)

Notice the title of Dr. Miravalle’s book. Let me continue to pick out a few samples from the Magisterium:

“...Pius XI (1939) becomes the *first pontiff to use the title of Co-Redemptrix in papal addresses*.

“The first occasion is on November 30, 1933, in a papal allocution to the pilgrims of Vicenza, Italy. Pastorally sensitive as well as doctrinally

sound, Pius XI explains in this first papal usage of ‘Co-Redemptrix’ precisely why it is a legitimate term under which to invoke the Mother of the Redeemer: ‘By necessity, the Redeemer could not but associate [Italian, *‘non poteva, per necessita di cose, non associare’*] his Mother in his work. For this reason we invoke her under the title of Coredemptrix. She gave us the Savior, she accompanied Him in the work of Redemption as far as the Cross itself, sharing with Him the sorrows of the agony and of the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of mankind.’¹⁷ (p.158)

We come now to Vatican Council II. Here is the first draft or “schema” on Our Lady entitled “On the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of Men.”

“All these things developed from the Pontiffs and the theologians, and a terminology was created in which Mary is soon called the ‘spiritual Mother of men, Queen of heaven and earth; in other ways, ‘New Eve, Mediatrix, Dispensatrix of all graces,’ an indeed ‘Coredemptrix’...To that which pertains to the title ‘Co-redemptrix,’ and ‘Associate of Christ the Redeemer,’ some things must be added.

“Already in the tenth century, the title of “Redemptrix” was used: “Holy Redemptrix of the world, pray for us.” When in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, this familiar title was used, already an immediate cooperation of the Blessed Virgin in the work of our Redemption was recognized, and to the name, Redemptrix” is added “co,” and therefore the Mother of God was called “Co-Redemptrix,” while Christ continued to be called, “Redeemer.” From that time to the seventeenth century, the title Co-Redemptrix was brought into use not only in devotional works of piety and holiness, but also in a great number of theological tracts.⁹ This also pertains to the Roman pontiffs, as it has occurred in certain texts of Pius X and Pius XI...¹⁰” (pp.169,170)

Unfortunately this great *schema* was rejected by certain members of the theological commission on the grounds that “Co-Redemptrix is a term that ‘may be understood’ by Protestant Christians ‘with difficulty.’” (p.171) Miravalle reacts in righteous indignation:

“Is it not fair to examine the prohibition of the Co-Redemptrix term in the light of the entire genus of Catholic terminology? One is compelled to consider what would happen to the entire Catholic theological tradition if all our theological titles were to be measured by the same standard. Certainly, Catholic terms such as ‘transubstantiation,’ ‘papal infallibility’ or even ‘Mother of God’ would suffer, since these terms run the danger of being ‘understood with difficulty’ by our brother and sister Christians who are not in full Catholic communion.” (pp.171,172)

But Dr. Miravalle insists that while the Council does not use the term Co-Redemptrix, it emphatically teaches the **fact** of Coredemption.

“The Council’s most profound testimony to Coredemption comes in number 58 of *Lumen Gentium*. Substantiated by the papal teaching which led up to the Council, the Fathers synthesize the previous ordinary teachings of the Magisterium regarding Mary’s co-suffering with Jesus at Calvary:”

“In the public life of Jesus Mary appears prominently; at the very beginning when at the marriage feast of Cana, moved with pity, she brought about by her intercession the beginning of miracles of Jesus the Messiah. (cf. Jn. 2:1- 11). In the course of her Son's preaching she received the words whereby, in extolling a kingdom beyond the concerns and ties of flesh and blood, he declared blessed those who heard and kept the word of God (cf. Mk. 3:35); par. Lk. 11:27- 28) as she was faithfully doing (Cf. Lk. 2:19;51). Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ dying on the cross as a mother to his disciple, with these words ‘Woman, behold thy son’ (Jn. 19:26- 27).” (pp.177,178)

But Vatican Council II was followed by Pope John Paul II who more than made up for the Council’s omission of the term Co-Redemptrix. Indeed, Dr. Miravalle calls him “The Pope of Mary Co-Redemptrix.” There are so many beautiful citations from our Holy Father on this point that it is hard to choose which one to use.

“The next usage of the Co-Redemptrix title by the Holy Father is his most important to date At a Marian sanctuary in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on January 31, 1985, Pope John Paul II delivers a homily in which he professes the Co-Redemptrix title within a penetrating theological commentary of scriptural and conciliar teaching on Coredemption:

“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 her self had brought forth” (*Lumen Gentium*, 58)...

“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). Having suffered for the Church, Mary deserved to become the Mother of all the disciples of her Son, the Mother of their unity...

“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. In fact Mary’s role as Coredemptrix did not cease with the glorification of her Son.’

“The Guayaquil homily by the Vicar of Christ cannot be dismissed as either marginal or devoid of doctrinal weight. ⁵ ‘Spiritually crucified with her crucified son...’; ‘she united herself with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church...’; ‘her role as Coredemptrix did not cease with glorification of her Son...’ – all of these declarations constitute sublime confessions to the doctrine of Mary Co-Redemptrix. They are packed with the doctrinal depth and conviction by the Holy Father, to whom the believing Catholic heart should assent with obedience, thanksgiving and awe.” (pp.191,192)
