

# On the Fittingness of the Title *Mediatrix of All Graces* as applied to the Blessed Virgin Mary

MELISSA EITENMILLER  
*Dominican House of Studies*

## I. Introduction

Most Protestants and even some Catholics balk at the idea of Mary and the saints interceding for us here on earth, often citing the Scriptural text which declares, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5).<sup>1</sup> How much more chagrin and shock they must feel, then, should they hear the popular title, “Mediatrix,” applied to Mary, as is the case in popular devotion and in various ecclesial documents.

In this essay, I propose to show that the title, “Mediatrix of All Graces,” is fittingly applied to the Blessed Virgin due to her participation in Christ’s mediation, which, in her case, is a participation beyond that of any other creature, on account of her divine maternity, her special role in our redemption as the Coredemptrix and New Eve, and her spiritual motherhood of all mankind.

To demonstrate this, I will first discuss what is meant by “mediator” in general, and then, in particular, when referred to Christ in 1 Timothy 2:5, as cited above. I will also show how all Christians, and in a special way, the Most Blessed Virgin, are called to participate in Christ’s mediation. Next I will review the title of “Mediatrix” as used of the Blessed Virgin both by some of the early Church fathers and other saints, as well as in ecclesial documents up to the present date. I will speak about how this designation relates to three other Marian titles: “Mother of God,” “Coredemptrix,” and “Mother of the Church.” I will also clarify the differences between the mediation of Mary and that of Christ, as well as differences in their merit. I will then examine the causality of Our Lady and why it is important that the words, “of all graces,” be added to her title of “Mediatrix.” Finally, I will discuss briefly the question of whether Mary’s mediation should be declared a “Fifth Dogma” of the Catholic Church.

## II. What it Means to be a Mediator

As mentioned, in 1 Timothy 2:5, Christ is called the “one mediator between God and men.” The Greek term used for “mediator” in this passage is *mesitēs*

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<sup>1</sup> All Biblical references in this essay are taken from the *Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2006).

(μεσίτης). The role of a *mesites* is explained in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* as follows: “The μεσίτης is the One who represents God to men and men to God, and brings them together.”<sup>2</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas elucidates this definition by pointing out in the *Summa Theologiae*, “The office of a mediator is to join together and unite those between whom he mediates: for extremes are united in the mean (*medio*).”<sup>3</sup> In other words, the mediator joins together two extremes by acting as a mean between them, i.e., as a go-between. There are, therefore, “two things in a mediator: first, that he is a mean; secondly, that he unites others.”<sup>4</sup>

One should note the significance Aquinas attributes to the fact that not only is the mediator a type of *representative*; he is a “*mean*”—that is, he is “distant from each extreme.”<sup>5</sup> This is important, because Christ, “as man, ... is distant both from God, by nature, and from man by dignity of both grace and glory .... And therefore, He is most truly called Mediator, as *man*.”<sup>6</sup> St. Paul also brings out this key concept when he speaks of the “mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim 2:5)<sup>7</sup> In other words, it is not *as God* that Christ mediates, because, as Aquinas explains, “as God, He does not differ from the Father and the Holy Ghost in nature and power of dominion ...,”<sup>8</sup> and so, could not really be a mean, i.e., distant

<sup>2</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, vol. IV (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967, reprinted 1990), s.v. “μεσίτης.”

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas* (=STh), Part III, vol. 15 (London, Great Britain: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1913) q. 26, a. 1, resp. “...mediatoris officium proprie est coniungere eos inter quos est mediator, nam extrema uniuntur in medio.” Latin text from third part of the *Summa* is taken from S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa Theologiae*, vol IV, Tertia Pars, 3rd ed. (Madrid, Spain: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1964), unless otherwise noted. NB: The first and second parts of the *Summa* is taken from a multi-volume series of *The Summa Theologiae of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. I (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace; NovAntiqua, 2008); and vol. IV, (NovAntiqua, 2010), and vol. VII (NovAntiqua, 2014). Part III is taken from another multi-volume series: vol 15 (cited above), vol. 16, (London, Great Britain: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1926), vol. 17 (London, Great Britain: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1914).

<sup>4</sup> Aquinas, STh, III, q. 26, a. 2, resp. “...in mediatore duo possumus considerare, primo quidem, rationem medii; secundo, officium coniungendi.”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*. “...distet ab utroque extremorum...”

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*. Italics added. “...secundum quod est homo, distat et a Deo in natura, et ab hominibus in dignitate et gratiae et gloriae.... Et ideo verissime dicitur mediator secundum quod homo.”

<sup>7</sup> Here, as George Montague points out, St. Paul uses the more generic Greek term, ἄνθρωπος, meaning “human being,” rather than the term, ἄνθρωπος, “man as the gender-specific male.” George T. Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 56.

<sup>8</sup> Aquinas, STh, III, q. 26, a. 2, resp. “...secundum quod Deus, non differt a patre et spiritu sancto in natura et potestate domini....”

from both extremes, since as a divine person, He is completely united to the Godhead without any separation at all. That is, it is only *as man*, i.e., in his humanity, that Christ can truly be a mediator between God and the human race.

Yet, how does Christ unite men to God? The task of Christ, as mediator, appears to be two-fold: On the one hand, he “communicat[es] to men both precepts and gifts”<sup>9</sup> (i.e. law and grace) from God, and on the other hand, he also “offer[s] satisfaction and prayers to God for men.”<sup>10</sup> That is, there is a descending and ascending mediation, respectively.

This is stated in a comparable way by Emil Neubert, who explains that the two-fold office of Christ as Mediator is “first of all, to merit the grace of reconciliation for all mankind [ascending mediation]; and then, to apply this grace to each of the individuals composing the human race [descending mediation]—in other words, to give us the grace of reconciliation, first *by right* and then *in fact*. The first act Jesus accomplishes by the Redemption, the second by the distribution of graces.”<sup>11</sup> In a parallel manner, Neubert points out that “Mary’s mediation, like that of Jesus, will be twofold through her participation in the mystery of the Redemption and in the distribution of grace.”<sup>12</sup> In the same way, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange speaks of a “double mediation [of Mary], ascending and descending,”<sup>13</sup> in which “she cooperated by satisfaction and merit in the sacrifice of the cross [ascending]; and ... does not cease to intercede for us, to obtain for us, and to distribute to us all the graces that we receive [descending].”<sup>14</sup> I will further demonstrate this point later on.

Of course, there have been others before Christ who served as a kind of mediator in the Old Testament, with the most prominent of these being Moses. This mediatorship “is perhaps most profoundly expressed in his intercession.”<sup>15</sup> That is, not only does Moses speak to the people on God’s behalf, teaching them all His commands (descending mediation), but when the people disobey God, Moses also intercedes for them (ascending mediation).<sup>16</sup> However, Moses’s mediation was limited to a mediation between God and a particular people at a particular time, i.e., Israel at the time of the Exodus. With the advent of Christ, this mediatorship is

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*. “...praecepta et dona hominibus exhibendo...”

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*. Latin text: “...pro hominibus ad Deum satisfaciendo et interpellando.”

<sup>11</sup> Emil Neubert, *Mary in Doctrine*, (Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1954), 72-73. Words in brackets added.

<sup>12</sup> Neubert, *Mary in Doctrine*, 73.

<sup>13</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, Vol. 1, (London, England, UK: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 163.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*. Words in brackets added.

<sup>15</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “μεσότης.”

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Holy Bible*, RSV-CE, Ex 32:30; 33:12-16; Num 16:45-50; 21:7, etc.

expanded to one between God and *all* people of every time and place. Christ is the one mediator, says St. Paul, “who gave himself as a ransom for *all*” (1 Tim 2:6).<sup>17</sup> As is pointed out in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, “The universal validity of his mediatorial self-offering to death gives all a share in salvation from God’s stand-point.”<sup>18</sup> In this essay, I am claiming that Our Lady also exercises a kind of universal mediation, but one that is subordinated to that of Christ, as we shall see.

### *Heis vs. Monos*

When St. Paul calls Christ the “one mediator between God and men” (εἷς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων), what does this “one” (εἷς) signify? Does it mean Christ is the unique mediator to the *exclusion* of all others, or does it mean that He is the one principal mediator, who is the *source* of the mediation of others, i.e., in whom other “mediators” participate?

Mark Miravalle notes that “there is another Greek word that St. Paul could have used if he wanted to refer to Christ’s mediation as completely exclusive, namely ‘monos’, which means ‘sole’, ‘only’, or ‘exclusive one’.”<sup>19</sup> Michael O’Carroll also observes, “The use of ‘one’ (*heis* not *monos*) emphasizes Christ’s transcendence as a mediator, through the unique value of his redemptive death.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, Christ is certainly *the Mediator*, beyond all others, and yet, this is *not* to the exclusion of others. Miravalle explains:

The proper understanding of “Christ the one Mediator” text of 1 Tim 2:5 presupposes a critical and fundamental distinction: the one and perfect mediation of Jesus Christ *does not prevent or prohibit*, but rather *provides and calls for* a sharing and participation by others in a subordinate and secondary fashion in this one perfect mediation of the Lord. The perfect mediation of Jesus Christ allows for, as a quality and manifestation of its perfection, the par-

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<sup>17</sup> Italics added. The Greek text: ὁ δοὺς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων.

<sup>18</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “μεσίτης.”

<sup>19</sup> Mark Miravalle, “Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Foundational Presence in Divine Revelation,” in *Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations—Towards a Papal Definition?* (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1995), footnote 91, 272.

<sup>20</sup> Michael O’Carroll, *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982), 238.

participation of others in his one and primordial mediation to the Father.<sup>21</sup>

A parallel idea can be seen in the Gospel of Matthew, where Christ commands his disciples, saying, “And you are not to be called rabbi, for you have *one* teacher .... And call no man your father on earth, for you have *one* Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for you have *one* master, the Christ” (Mt 23:8-10).<sup>22</sup> In the Greek, the word used for “one” in each of the above statements is “εἷς” (*heis*). In using this word, it is obvious that Christ did not mean to exclude the possibility of anyone else being called “teacher,” “father,” and “master”—in fact, these terms continue to be used today. Rather, the footnote given in the RSV-CE states with regard to the word, *father*, “i.e., ‘Do not use the title without reference to God’s universal fatherhood.’ He cannot mean that the title is never to be used by a son to his father.”<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, we can say that, although Christ is the *only* Son of God, all are called to share in that one divine Sonship. As St. Paul declares in his letter to the Galatians, “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal 4:4-6). Therefore, just as we can be called sons of God, without in any way diminishing Christ’s unique Sonship, but rather, by participating in it, so also, St. Paul does not mean that we are never to apply the term, “mediator” to anyone other than Christ, but rather that, in using it, one must always keep in mind the transcendent, primary, and universal mediation of Christ, in whom all other mediators participate. Consequently, as Aquinas points out, “Nothing hinders certain others from being called mediators, in some respect, between God and man, forasmuch as they cooperate in uniting men to God, dispositively or ministerially.”<sup>24</sup>

### III. The Doctrine of Participation

In order to properly understand Mary’s mediation, it is important to first understand the metaphysical meaning of the term, “participation.” In *De Hebdomadi-*

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<sup>21</sup> Mark Miravalle, “The *Whole Truth about Mary*, Ecumenism and the Year 2000,” in *Mary Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations II, Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1996), 24.

<sup>22</sup> Italics added.

<sup>23</sup> RSV-CE footnote, Mt 23:9.

<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, *STh*, III, q. 26, a. 1, resp. “Nihil tamen prohibet aliquos alios secundum quid dici mediatores inter Deum et hominem, prout scilicet cooperantur ad unionem hominum cum Deo dispositively vel ministerialiter.”

bus, St. Thomas Aquinas notes that “to participate” means “to grasp a part.”<sup>25</sup> He then explains three types of participation, saying, “When something receives in a particular way that which belongs to another in a universal way, it is said to ‘participate’ in that, as human being is said to participate in animal ...; a subject participates in accident, and matter in form ...; [and] an effect is said to participate in its own cause, and especially *when it is not equal* to the power of its cause ...”<sup>26</sup>

The first two types of participation Aquinas mentions are known as logical participation (i.e., the species participates in the genus, and the individual in the species), and real participation (i.e., the subject participates in the accident, and matter in the form). The third mode of participation, in which the effect participates in its cause, is known as “causal participation,” and is what most concerns us here. This is the kind of participation which Aquinas will apply, on a natural level, to being and natural perfections (goodness, wisdom, etc.), and on a supernatural level in this life, to grace (when speaking of our participation in Christ, in the life of God, and in the sacraments.) In the next life, the blessed will also be allowed to participate in the *lumen gloriae*, by which they will enjoy the vision of God.

There is an important relationship between participation and causality. Aquinas points out, “Whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, with regard to our participation in being, which belongs essentially to God as *Ipsium Esse per se subsistens*, Aquinas explains, “all beings apart from God are not their own being, but are beings by participation. Therefore it must be that all things which are diversified by the diverse participation in being, ... are caused by one First Being, Who possesses being most perfectly.”<sup>28</sup> I will discuss causal participation further with regard to Christ (and Mary) in a later section.

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<sup>25</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *An Exposition of the “On the Hebdomads” of Boethius* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 19 (Chpt. 2, line 71). The Latin (1992 Leonine ed.) is “partem capere,” 18.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*. “...quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet uniuersaliter, dicitur participare illud, sicut homo dicitur participare animale...; subiectum participat accidens, et materia formam...; effectus dicitur participare suam causam, et precipue quando non adequat uirtutem sue cause...” Italics added.

<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, *STb*, I, q.44, a.1, resp. “Si enim aliquid invenitur in aliquo per participationem, necesse est quod causetur in ipso ab eo cui essentialiter convenit...”

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*. “Relinquitur ergo quod omnia alia a Deo non sint suum esse, sed participant esse. Necesse est igitur omnia quae diversificantur secundum diversam participationem essendi, ... causari ab uno primo ente, quod perfectissime est.”

## The Importance of Analogy with Regard to Our Understanding of Participation

First, however, it is important to note that participation in God's being, goodness, truth, beauty, or other perfections, must be understood analogously in order to maintain our discernment of the transcendence of God, and *not* univocally. That is, the *res significata* (i.e. the thing signified, whether it be being or some other perfection) is more properly applied to God than creatures, although it is, in some way, applied to both. The *modus significandi* (i.e. the mode of signification), however, is different between God and creatures; that is, we can only understand these things as applied to creatures, although they are in God without the limitations and defects of creatures (*via negationis*) and "in a more eminent way than in creatures" (*via eminentiae*).<sup>29</sup> Consequently, analogy allows us to speak of the perfections of God "according to proportion,"<sup>30</sup> because "univocal predication [i.e. one and the same] is impossible between God and creatures."<sup>31</sup>

However, the afore-mentioned mode of participation is merely on the natural level, and applicable to all creatures in varying degrees, since any perfection found in creatures must first "pre-exist in God" (according to His mode of being) as their principle and cause.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the rational creature is called to a higher level of participation than other creatures, and one way rational creatures uniquely participate in God's perfection is by grace. Aquinas speaks of grace as "the expression or participation of the Divine goodness"<sup>33</sup> at a supernatural level, and elsewhere speaks of it as "a participation of the Divine Nature,"<sup>34</sup> citing 2 Peter 1:4 ("that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine Nature."<sup>35</sup>) In other words, mankind is called to a special participation in God's own life by means of grace.

Aquinas also lists other ways in which human beings are called to participate in God's perfections. He declares, "For as man in his intellectual powers participates in the Divine knowledge through the virtue of faith, and in his power of will participates in the Divine love through the virtue of charity, so also in the nature of the soul does he participate in the Divine Nature, *after the manner of a likeness*, through a certain regeneration or re-creation."<sup>36</sup> He uses the phrase, "after the manner of a

<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, *STh*, I, q. 13, a. 3, resp. "...secundum eminentiorum modum quam in creaturis."

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 5, resp. "...idest proportionem."

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem.* "...impossibile est aliquid praedicari de Deo et creaturis univoce."

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem.* "in Deo praexistunt..."

<sup>33</sup> Aquinas, *STh*, I-II, q.110, a.2, ad 2. "...expressio vel participatio divinae bonitatis..."

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 3, resp. "...participatio divinae naturae..."

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem.* "...ut per haec efficiamini divinae consortes naturae."

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 4, resp. Italics added. "Sicut enim per potentiam intellectivam homo participat cognitionem divinam per virtutem fidei; et secundum potentiam voluntatis amorem divinum,

likeness,” to once more indicate that these perfections in which we participate, can only be predicated of God and man analogically, not univocally. Similarly, it must be said that “mediatorship,” like “sonship,” can only be predicated analogically of Christ and men, with Christ’s mediatorship being the primary analogate in which we participate.

### Participation in Christ’s Mediation

The causal type of participation, mentioned above, can be seen even when speaking of the soul of Christ, since Christ is one Divine Person with two distinct natures, and so, “the soul of Christ is not essentially Divine. Hence it behooves it to be Divine by participation, which is by grace.”<sup>37</sup> In addition, it is because of the participation in which Christ’s humanity shares in His divinity that His humanity is able to be “the instrument of the Godhead.”<sup>38</sup> Consequently, the participation of Christ’s humanity in His divinity results in His humanity becoming an instrumental cause, i.e. it allows His humanity to participate in the action of the His divinity, which is the principal agent. As St. Thomas also notes, “To give grace or the Holy Ghost belongs to Christ as He is God, authoritatively; but instrumentally it belongs also to Him as man, inasmuch as His manhood is the instrument of His Godhead. And hence by the power of the Godhead His actions were beneficial, i.e. by causing grace in us, both meritoriously and efficiently.”<sup>39</sup>

In a similar way, the Christian’s ontological participation by grace in Christ allows him to act as Christ’s instrument, which is also true of the Blessed Virgin, as we shall discuss further in the section on Mary’s Causality. According to Cornelio Fabro, the hypostatic union, in which Christ’s human nature is united to the Divine Person of the Son (and made thereby a participant in the divine life), “has become the primary source of all participation in grace by believers inasmuch as the human nature of Christ is the close instrument of the divinity.”<sup>40</sup> Aquinas explains Fabro’s point here more fully,

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per virtutem caritatis; ita etiam per naturam animae participat, secundum quam similitudinem, naturam divinam, per quam regenerationem sive recreationem.”

<sup>37</sup> Aquinas, *STb*, III, q. 7, a. 1, ad 1. “...anima Christi non est per suam essentiam divina. Unde oportet quod fiat divina per participationem, quae est secundum gratiam.”

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, ad 3. “...instrumentum divinitatis...”

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 8, a. 1, ad 1. “...dare gratiam aut spiritum sanctum convenit Christo secundum quod Deus, auctoritative, sed instrumentaliter ei convenit secundum quod est homo, inquantum scilicet eius humanitas fuit instrumentum divinitatis eius. Et ita actiones ipsius ex virtute divinitatis fuerunt nobis salutiferae, utpote gratiam in nobis causantes, et per meritum et per efficientiam quamdam.”

<sup>40</sup> Cornelio Fabro, “The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, trans. by B. M. Bonansea, vol. 27, n. 3 (March 1974), 481.



The closer a substance stands to the goodness of God, the more fully it participates in His goodness .... Consequently the humanity of Christ also, because it is connected with the divinity more closely than the others and in a more special way, has participated in the divine goodness through the gift of grace in a more excellent way.<sup>41</sup>

For this reason, explains St. Thomas, it was fitting that Christ should also communicate this grace to us through his humanity. He continues,

And because in some sense Christ communicates the effects of grace to all rational creatures, this is why He is in some sense the source of all grace in His humanity, just as God is the source of all being. Then, as all the perfection of being is united in God, in Christ the fullness of all grace and virtue is found, and because of it He not only is capable of the work of grace Himself but can bring others to grace. For this reason He has the headship.<sup>42</sup>

By “headship,” Aquinas is speaking here of Christ as the head of the Church in his humanity, and it is in this way that he is the principle and source of all grace for his members, who are incorporated into his Mystical Body. One of the actions pertaining to the head, explains St. Thomas, is that of having power over the body, “because the power and movement of the other members, together with the direction of them in their acts, is from the head.”<sup>43</sup> In this way, Christ “has the power of bestowing grace on all the members of the Church,”<sup>44</sup> and, I would argue, it is also in this way that the members of Christ’s Body can be said to be His instruments.

As we have noted, therefore, Christ, in his *humanity*, is able to be the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim 2:5). It is in this one mediation that we are *all* called to participate. The Second Vatican Council points out, “Just as the priest-

<sup>41</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, in *Quaestiones Disputatae*, q. 29, a.5, resp, as found online, dhspriority.org. “Unaquaeque autem substantia tanto a Deo plenius bonitatem eius participat, quanto ad eius bonitatem appropinquat.... Unde et humanitas Christi, ex hoc ipso quod prae aliis vicinius et specialius divinitati erat coniuncta, excellentius bonitatem divinam participavit per gratiae donum.”

<sup>42</sup> Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 29, a.5, resp. “Et quia Christus in omnes creaturas racionales quodammodo effectus gratiarum influit, inde est quod ipse est principium quodammodo omnis gratiae secundum humanitatem, sicut Deus est principium omnis esse: unde, sicut in Deo omnis essendi perfectio adunatur, ita in Christo omnis gratiae plenitudo et virtutis invenitur, per quam non solum ipse possit in gratiae opus, sed etiam alios in gratiam adducere. Et per hoc habet capitis rationem.”

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, *STb*, III, q. 8, a. 1, resp. “...quia virtus et motus ceterorum membrorum, et gubernatio eorum in suis actibus, est a capite,....”

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*. “...virtutem habuit influendi gratiam in omnia membra Ecclesiae,....”

hood of Christ is shared [*participatur*] in various ways by the ministers and by the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is really communicated in different ways to His creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing [*participatam*] in this one source.”<sup>45</sup> In other words, we are all called to participate in the mediation of Christ. How do we participate in it? One of the most important ways is by our intercession. The then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger explains, “Christ as the only mediator does not take away our task to stand before God as persons linked to each other and responsible for each other. We all in different ways and in union with Jesus Christ, can be *mediators for each other* in our approach to God.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, all human persons are called to participate in Christ’s mediation to some degree, but Our Lady participates in it in a special way.

#### IV. Mary Mediatrix in Sacred Tradition

Before continuing my explanation of the way in which Mary participates in Christ’s mediation, I would like to look at how she has often been given the title, “Mediatrix,” or some similar title, by Church Fathers and saints throughout the ages, as well as by numerous ecclesial documents. In the following two subsections, I will review just some of these.

##### In the Church Fathers and Other Saints

Although St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. ca. 202) in his work *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* did not specifically use the term “Mediatrix,” he did speak of the Virgin Mary as “having become another virgin’s [i.e., Eve’s] advocate (*advocata*).”<sup>47</sup> Since there is no Greek version of this text extant, it is hard to know how exactly to translate *advocata*. Armitage Robinson translates it as “intercessor.”<sup>48</sup> Luigi Gam-

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<sup>45</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Vatican translation, (Strathfield, NSW, Australia: St. Paul’s Publications, 2009), 62 (70). Latin text: “...sicut sacerdotium Christi variis modis tum a ministris tum a fidei populo participatur, et sicut una bonitas Dei in creaturis modis diversis realiter diffunditur, ita etiam unica mediatio Redemptoris non excludit, sed suscitatur variam apud creaturas participatam ex unico fonte cooperationem,” as found online, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>46</sup> Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *The Sign of the Woman: An Introduction to the Encyclical, “Redemptoris Mater,”* in *Mary: God’s Yes to Man*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988), 31.

<sup>47</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 33, as found in *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: the Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, by Luigi Gambero (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999) 55. St. Irenaeus also uses the same title, *advocata*, for Mary in *Adversus Haereses*, 5.19, which is often translated as “patroness.”

<sup>48</sup> St. Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 33, as translated from the Armenian version by Armitage Robinson (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1920) as found at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/irenaeus/demonstr.txt>. Note: The title given by Robinson (i.e., *The*

bero suggests that the original Greek word may have been “*parákletos* (defender, advocate, intercessor).”<sup>49</sup> In any event, Gambero points out that this is the first-time in ancient Christian literature that we find the title, *advocata*, applied to the Blessed Virgin. He also notes, “Present-day doctrine about Mary’s collaboration in the redemption of man and the mediation of divine grace has its distant but discernible roots in the teaching of the great bishop of Lyons.”<sup>50</sup>

St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) gives a series of praises of Mary as the *Theotokos* (i.e., God-bearer) in his famous *Homily 11*, and in his long list of acclamations, he attributes the work of salvation to Mary, since, although it had God as its principal efficient cause, St. Cyril understands it to have been worked through Mary, as the Mother of God. Consequently, he exclaims, “Hail, Mary, *Theotokos*, through whom has gone forth ineffable grace, about which the Apostle would say, ‘The salvific grace of God has appeared to all men.’ Hail Mary, *Theotokos*, through whom has gone forth the true light, Our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>51</sup> And again, further on, he says, “Hail, Mary, *Theotokos*, through whom John and the Jordan are sanctified, and the devil is dishonored. Hail, Mary, *Theotokos*, through whom every believing spirit is saved.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, he makes it clear that as the Mother of God, it was through Mary that God accomplished the work of saving the human race.

St. Cyril also points out, when speaking of the wedding feast at Cana, in his *Commentary on John*, that “Having great moment [literally, “weight”] in [causing] the miracle to take place, the persuasive woman overcame, as was fitting, her son, the Lord.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, it is only through Mary’s mediation that Our Lord consented to perform his first public miracle, that of changing the water into wine.

*Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*) is slightly different from the title the work is normally known by (i.e., *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*).

<sup>49</sup> Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, *op. cit.*, 56.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily 11*, PG 77, 1034A. Translation mine, giving preference to the Greek. The original Greek text reads, Χαίριος, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι’ ἧς προῆλθε τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ... Χαίριος, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι’ ἧς προῆλθεν ἡ χάρις ἡ ἀνεκλάλητος, περὶ ἧς ὁ Ἀπόστολος βοῶν ἔλεγεν, «Ἐπεφάνη ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις.» And the Latin: *Salve, Maria Deipara, per quam prodiit lux vera, Dominus noster, Jesus Christus ... Salve, Maria Deipara, per quam ineffabilis gratia prodiit, de qua Apostolus dicebat: “Apparuit gratia Dei salutaris omnibus hominibus.”*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, PG 77, 1034C. Translation mine, giving preference to the Greek. The original Greek text reads, Χαίριος, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι’ ἧς ὁ Ἰωάννης καὶ Ἰορδάνης ἀγιάζονται, καὶ διάβολος ἀτιμάζεται. Χαίριος, Μαρία Θεοτόκε, δι’ ἧς πᾶσα πνοὴ πιστεύουσα σώζεται. And the Latin text, *Salve, Maria Deipara, per quam Joannes et Jordanis sanctificantur, et diabolus rejicitur. Salve, Maria Deipara, per quam salvatur omnis spiritus fidelis.*

<sup>53</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John 2, 1*, PG 73, 225CD. Translation mine, giving preference to the Greek. The Greek text reads, Πολλὴν ἔχουσα τὴν ῥοπήν εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι τὸ

St. Germanus of Constantinople (d. ca. 733) preaches Mary's mediation in liberating the city of Constantinople from the Arabs, saying, "May the Ever-Virgin—radiant with divine light and full of grace, mediatrix first through her supernatural birth and now because of the intercession of her maternal assistance—be crowned with never-ending blessings."<sup>54</sup> It is important to note here that the word translated "mediatrix" is "mesiteusasa" (μεσιτεύσσα), the feminine participle of "mesiteuw" (μεσιτεύω), which means "to mediate"<sup>55</sup> and is related to the word, "mesitēs" (μεσίτης), the very word, as we have noted above, used in 1 Timothy 2:5 to speak of Christ as the "one mediator."

Many other saints have also referred to the Blessed Virgin in a similar manner. The following are a few examples of those living in the second millennium. In a sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) exhorts his listeners, "My dearest brethren, with every fiber, every feeling of our hearts, with all the affection of our minds, and with all the ardour of our souls, let us honour Mary, for such is the will of God, Who would have us obtain everything through the hands of Mary."<sup>56</sup> St. Bernard does not deny that Jesus is the mediator whom the Father has given us, but he says, "Assuredly the Son will listen to the Mother and the Father will listen to the Son. My little children, behold the sinner's ladder."<sup>57</sup> He continues, "My brethren, let us seek grace and let us seek it through Mary,"<sup>58</sup> and he compares her with an Aqueduct that "reached up to the Fountain of grace."<sup>59</sup>

One of the saints who is particularly noted for the promulgation of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in general, and especially as mediatrix of all graces, is St. Louis Marie de Montfort (1673-1716). In his masterpiece, *True Devotion to Mary*, de Montfort points out,

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θαῦμα νενικηκεν ἡ γυνὴ πείθουσα διὰ τὸ πρόπον ὡς υἱὸν τὸν Κύριον. And the Latin text, *Magnam habens auctoritatem ad miraculum elicendum mulier Dominum filium suum, ut par erat, persuasit.*

<sup>54</sup> St. Germanus of Constantinople, *Homily for the Liberation of Constantinople* 23, ed. V. Grumel in *Revue des études Byzantines* 16 (1958): 198, n.26. The Greek text reads, Τοῦτοις γὰρ ἄπασιν ἡ θεαυγῆς καὶ κεχαριτωμένη ἀειπάρθενος Θεῶ μεσιτεύσσα ὑπερφυεῖ κωροριεῖ τὸ πρότερον, καὶ τανῶν μητρικῆς παρρησίας πρῶσβεία, μακαρισμοῖς ἀσιγήτοις περιστρεφέσθω. English translation as found in Gambero's *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 387.

<sup>55</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, transl. by W. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).

<sup>56</sup> St. Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary," in *St. Bernard's Sermons on the Blessed Virgin Mary*, transl. by "a priest of Mount Melray" (Chulmleigh, Devon, England: Augustine Publishing Company, 1984), 86.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 86, 87.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

God the Holy Ghost enriched His faithful spouse with gifts undreamed of. And He selected her to distribute all that is His, as she wills, when she wills, as much as she wills, to whom she wills. No heavenly gift comes to earth that does not pass through her virginal hands. This is the will of God; that whatever we receive, we receive through Mary.<sup>60</sup>

It is clear here that in speaking of Our Lady's mediation of graces, St. Louis does not mean the mediation of Jesus Christ is in any way decreased or set aside. On the contrary, de Montfort explains that Mary "never asks, wills, or does anything contrary to the eternal, changeless will of God."<sup>61</sup> Therefore, whatever she asks for is in perfect conformity with what He has already decreed.

De Montfort, in speaking of the Blessed Mother as mediatrix, specifically notes that her role is also that of being "our mediator with the Mediator."<sup>62</sup> He affirms, "Through her the Mediator came to us, through her we must go to the Mediator."<sup>63</sup> He summarizes this understanding by saying, "In order to go to the Father, we must first go to the Son, our Mediator, our Redeemer. In order to go to the Son, we must first go to Mary, our mediatrix, our intercessor."<sup>64</sup>

For the sake of better understanding what kind of mediation the saints attribute to Our Lady, it is also helpful to note St. Alphonsus Liguori's (1696-1787) explanation in *The Glories of Mary*. In this work, St. Alphonsus points out that there are two main kinds of mediation: the mediation of justice (which belongs only to Christ, and is by way of merit) and the mediation of grace (which is the kind of mediation attributed to Mary, and is by way of prayer.) He states,

We readily admit that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator of justice . . . . By His merits He obtains for us all grace and salvation. But we also say that Mary is the Mediatrix of grace. She does indeed receive through Jesus Christ all she obtains, and prays for it in the name of Jesus Christ. Yet, whatever graces we receive, they come to us through her intercession.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary* (Brooklyn, NY: Montfort Publications, 1956), 8.

<sup>61</sup> De Montfort, *True Devotion*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>65</sup> St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary* (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 1981), 98-99.

In addition, St. Alphonsus goes so far as to say that “Mary’s intercession is not only useful but necessary for salvation: not absolutely, but morally, necessary.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, it is a necessity based on God’s own will that we should seek Our Lady’s intercession in all our needs, since He has “decreed that all the graces He gives human beings should pass through Mary’s hands.”<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, it is evident that from the early periods of Church history to modern day, Our Lady has been understood to be a type of advocate (St. Irenaeus), mediatrix (St. Germanus), or a vessel through whom God pours His graces onto mankind (St. Cyril, St. Bernard, St. Louis, St. Alphonsus) as can be seen in the writings of some of the greatest Church Fathers and other saints.

### **Ecclesial Documents Concerning the Mediation of Mary**

Several popes and the Second Vatican Council have referred to Mary with either the title, “Mediatrix,” or have used similar language of her. In this section, I will briefly review much of what has been said of her mediation in ecclesial documents, although this list is not exhaustive.

Pope Blessed Pius IX (reigned 1846-1878), in his papal bull declaring the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (*Ineffabilis Deus*), commends Our Lady, saying,

All our hope do we repose in the most Blessed Virgin—in the all fair and immaculate one who has crushed the poisonous head of the most cruel serpent and brought salvation to the world: ... in her who is the safest refuge and the most trustworthy helper of all who are in danger; in her who, with her only-begotten Son, is *the most powerful Mediatrix and Conciliatrix in the whole world*; in her who is the most excellent glory, ornament, and impregnable stronghold of the holy Church; in her who has destroyed all heresies and snatched the faithful people and nations from all kinds of direst calamities; in her do we hope who has delivered us from so many threatening dangers.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>67</sup> St. Alphonsus, *The Glories of Mary*, 97.

<sup>68</sup> Pope Blessed Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (December 8, 1854). The Latin text reads “Certissima vero spe et omni prorsus fiducia nitimur fore, ut ipsa beatissima Virgo, quae tota pulchra et Immaculata venenosum crudelissimi serpentis caput contrivit, et salutem attulit mundo, ... quaeque tutissimum cunctorum periclitantium perfugium, et fidissima auxiliatrix, ac *totius terrarum orbis potentissima apud unigenitum Filium suum mediatrix, et conciliatrix*, ac praeclarissimum Ecclesiae sanctae decus et ornamentum, firmissimumque praesidium, cunctas semper interemit haereses, et fideles populos, gentesque a maximis omnis generis calamitatibus eripuit, ac Nos ipsos a tot ingruentibus periculis liberavit...” Italics added. The Latin text is archived

Pope St. Pius X (1903-1914) quotes the italicized text above in his encyclical commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of *Ineffabilis Deus*. He states,

It cannot, of course, be denied that the dispensation of these treasures is the particular and peculiar right of Jesus Christ, for they are the exclusive fruit of His Death, who by His nature is the mediator between God and man. Nevertheless, by this companionship in sorrow and suffering already mentioned between Mother and the Son, it has been allowed to the august Virgin to be *the most powerful mediatrix and advocate of the whole world* with her Divine Son.<sup>69</sup>

It would appear that, in citing the italicized phrase from *Ineffabilis Deus*, the Holy Father wishes to especially bring to the attention of the faithful the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary is our Mediatrix with her Son, Our Lord. In fact, he also points this out in asking the rhetorical question, “For can anyone fail to see that there is no surer or more direct road than by Mary for uniting all mankind in Christ and obtaining through Him the perfect adoption of sons, that we may be holy and immaculate in the sight of God?”<sup>70</sup> And in another place, Pope St. Pius X affirms boldly, “the Virgin is more powerful than all others as a means for uniting mankind with Christ.”<sup>71</sup> This, as we have noted, is precisely the role of a mediator—to act as a mean uniting two extremes.

Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), in his Encyclical On the Rosary (*Octobri Mense*) points out clearly that just as the Blessed Virgin, “in the place of all human na-

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online at <https://archive.org/stream/bullineffabilisi00cath#page/n3/mode/2up>, in *The Bull “Ineffabilis” in Four Languages; or, The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Defined*, transl. and ed. Rev. Ulick J. Bourke (Dublin, Ireland: John Mullany, 1868), 75-76.

<sup>69</sup> Pope St. Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (February 2, 1904), 13, as found online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Latin text taken from *ASS (Acta Sanctae Sedis)* 36:454, ed. Victorii Piazzesi, (Romae: S. Congr. de Propaganda Fide, 1903-1904): “Equidem non diffitemur horum erogationem munerum private proprioque iure esse Christi; siquidem et illa eius unius morte nobis sunt parta, et Ipse pro potestate mediator Dei atque hominum est. Attamen, pro ea, quam diximus, dolorum atque aerumnarum Matris cum Filio communione, hoc Virgini augustae datum est, ut sit *totius terrarum orbis potentissima apud unigenitum Filium suum mediatrix et conciliatrix.*” Note that although the English translations of the two texts are slightly different, the Latin phrase (in italics) is exactly the same.

<sup>70</sup> St. Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*, 5. Latin text from *ASS* 36:451: “Nam cui exploratum non sit nullum, praeterquam per Mariam, esse certius et expeditius iter ad universos cum Christo iungendos, perque illum perfectam filiorum adoptionem assequendam ut simus sancti et immaculati in conspectu Dei?”

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. Latin text from *ASS* 36:452: “...nullus etiam hac Virgine efficacior ad homines cum Christo iungendos.”

ture,<sup>72</sup> freely consented to becoming the Mother of God, so also, “it may be affirmed with no less truth and justice that absolutely nothing from this immense treasury of all the graces brought forth by the Lord ... is imparted to us, by the will of God, except through Mary. Thus, just as no one can go to the supreme Father except through the Son, so, as a rule, no one can go to Christ except through the Mother.”<sup>73</sup>

The Second Vatican Council strongly reaffirmed this doctrine of Mary’s mediation in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. After taking pains to make it clear that Christ is the “one Mediator” and quoting 1 Timothy 2:5-6, the Council then explains,

The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no wise obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His power. For all the salvific influence of the Blessed Virgin on men originates, not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. It 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. In no way does it impede, but rather does it foster the immediate union of the faithful with Christ.<sup>74</sup>

The document then explains that because Mary gave her consent to become the Mother of God by the ordaining of divine providence and was united in a special manner with Christ as He suffered on the Cross, she was able to cooperate with Him in giving life to souls. Therefore, say the Council Fathers, “she is our mother in the order of grace,”<sup>75</sup> and this special maternity of Mary will last “until

<sup>72</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Octobri Mense* (September 22, 1891) 4, as found in Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum; Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43<sup>rd</sup> ed., (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2012), 379 (§3274). The Latin text is a quotation of the *STb* of St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 30, a. 1, “Per annuntiationem expectabatur consensus Virginis, loco totius humanae naturae.”

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. “Ex quo non minus vere proprieque affirmare licet, nihil prorsus de permagno illo omnis gratiae thesauro, quem attulit Dominus, ... nihil nobis, nisi per Mariam, Deo sic volente, impertiri: ut, quo modo ad summum Patrem, nisi per Filium, nemo potest accedere, ita fere, nisi per Matrem, accedere nemo possit ad Christum.”

<sup>74</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, 60. “Mariae autem maternum munus erga homines hanc Christi unicam mediationem nullo modo obscurat nec minuit, sed virtutem eius ostendit. Omnis enim salutaris Beatæ Virginis influxus in homines non ex aliqua rei necessitate, sed ex beneplacito divino exoritur et ex superabundantia meritorum Christi profluit. Eius mediacioni innititur, ab illa omnino dependet, ex eademque totam virtutem haurit; unionem autem immediatam credentium cum Christo nullo modo impedit sed fovet.”

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 61. “Quam ob causam mater nobis in ordine gratiæ existit.”



the eternal fulfillment of all the elect.”<sup>76</sup> The Council Fathers also note that Mary, “by her constant intercession *continues* to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation.”<sup>77</sup> Therefore, they declare, “the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of *Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix*. This, however, is to be so understood that it neither takes away from not adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the One Mediator.”<sup>78</sup>

Pope St. John Paul II reaffirms this teaching by quoting part of this text from the Second Vatican Council in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*. He states, “Mary’s motherhood continues unceasingly in the Church as the mediation which intercedes, and the Church expresses her faith in this truth by invoking Mary ‘under the titles of *Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix* and *Mediatrix*.”<sup>79</sup>

As can be seen, therefore, over the last several hundred years, the ordinary Magisterium has consistently emphasized Our Lady’s role of Mediatrix, teaching the faithful to invoke her under this title.

## V. Principles of Mary’s Mediation

Pope St. John Paul II, in repeating the above teaching of Vatican II regarding Mary’s mediation, declares, “Since by virtue of divine election Mary is the earthly Mother of the Father’s consubstantial Son and his ‘generous companion’ in the work of redemption, ‘she is a mother to us in the order of grace.’”<sup>80</sup> In this succinct statement, we see the three principles from which flow the Church’s understanding of the Blessed Virgin’s unique role as Mediatrix. They are 1) her divine maternity, 2) her role as coredemprix and the New Eve, and 3) her spiritual motherhood of all mankind. We will discuss each of these in the following three subsections.

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 62. “...usque ad perpetuam omnium electorum consummationem.”

<sup>77</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 62. “...sed multiplici intercessione sua *pergit* in aeternae salutis donis nobis conciliandis.” Italics added. Note: the Vatican English translation reads, “continued,” but the Latin verb, “pergit,” is in the *present* tense.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 62. “B. Virgo in Ecclesia titulis *Advocatae, Auxiliatricis, Adjutricis, Mediatrix* invocatur. Quod tamen ita intelligitur, ut dignitati et efficacitati Christi unius Mediatoris nihil deroget, nihil superaddat.” Italics added.

<sup>79</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, in *Mary: God’s Yes to Man* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988) 40, (131). “...maternitas Mariae in Ecclesia indesinenter perdurat ut mediatio intercedens, atque Ecclesia fidem in hanc veritatem enuntiat invocans Mariam nominibus *Advocatae, Adjutricis, Auxiliatricis, Mediatrix*.” Italics added.

<sup>80</sup> St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 38 (125). Latin text: “Maria, cum sit ex: divina electione Mater terrestris Filii consubstantialis Patri, ac «generosa socia» in opere Redemptionis, «mater nobis in ordine gratiae existit.»”

## 1) “Mother of God”: The Divine Maternity

Since Our Lady is a human person like we are, she also participates in Christ’s mediation in a way similar to us, and yet, says Ratzinger, her participation “surpasses the mediating role that all of us, as members of the communion of saints, are allowed to exercise.”<sup>81</sup> What makes Mary’s mediation special is the fact that it is *maternal*: “Mary’s mediation is unique because it is maternal mediation, related to Christ who is always born anew into this world.”<sup>82</sup>

Pope St. John Paul II also emphasizes this in *Redemptoris Mater*, declaring, “Mary’s motherhood, completely pervaded by her spousal attitude as the ‘handmaid of the Lord’, constitutes the first and fundamental dimension of that mediation which the Church confesses and proclaims in her regard.”<sup>83</sup> In the same encyclical, St. John Paul II explains that “the first moment of submission to the one mediation ‘between God and men’—the mediation of Jesus Christ—is the Virgin of Nazareth’s acceptance of motherhood.”<sup>84</sup> Again, he declares, “Mary’s mediation is *intimately linked with her motherhood*,”<sup>85</sup> and it is this “specifically maternal character”<sup>86</sup> which distinguishes it from the mediation of other creatures, who all “in various and always subordinate ways share in the one mediation of Christ, although her own mediation is also a shared mediation.”<sup>87</sup>

The Holy Father cites the Wedding Feast of Cana (Jn 2:1-11), as “*a sort of first announcement of Mary’s mediation*, wholly oriented toward Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power.”<sup>88</sup> St. John Paul II explains that Our Lady is present at Cana as the *Mother of Jesus* (Jn 2:1) and that, in the way St. John presents the story, it appears that Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding *because of Mary*. In her solicitude for others, Mary intercedes for the newlyweds, asking her Son to perform the miracle of providing wine, which had run short. Although at

<sup>81</sup> Ratzinger, *The Sign of the Woman*, in *Mary: God’s Yes to Man*, 32.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>83</sup> St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, in *Mary: God’s Yes to Man*, 39 (126), referring to Mary’s response to the Angel Gabriel in Luke 1:38. Latin text: “*Maternitas Mariae, quae penitus animo sponsali « ancillae Domini » imbuebatur, est prima et fundamentalis ratio illius mediationis, quam, eius respectu, Ecclesia profitetur atque pronuntiat. . . .*”

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 39 (125-126). Latin text: “*Primum, quod in obtemperacione huic mediationi unice « inter Deum et homines » — quae est mediatio Christi — occurrit, est acceptio maternitatis, a Nazarethana Virgine facta.*”

<sup>85</sup> St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 38 (124). “*Mediatio enim Mariae intime conectitur cum eius maternitate. . . .*”

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*. “*. . . indolem prae se ferens proprie maternam. . . .*”

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*. “*. . . quae varia ratione quidem, sed semper « subordinata », Christi unicam mediationem participant; illius ergo etiam mediatio est participata.*”

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 (89). “*. . . paene praebet nobis praenuntiationem Mariae intercessionis, quae vertitur tota in Christum tenditque ad illius aperiendam salutaris virtutem.*” Italics original.

first Jesus appears to refuse her request, her faith in commanding the servants to do whatever He tells them prompted the miracle of changing the water into wine.

As the Supreme Pontiff points out, though the need for wine may appear to be of little real importance in the whole scheme of things, the symbolism of this story is of great value:

This coming to the aid of human needs means, at the same time, bringing those needs within the radius of Christ's messianic mission and salvific power. Thus there is a mediation: Mary places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs, and sufferings. *She puts herself "in the middle,"* that is to say *she acts as a mediatrix not as an outsider, but in her position as mother ....* Her mediation is thus in the nature of intercession: Mary "intercedes" for mankind. And that is not all. As a mother she also *wishes the messianic power of her Son to be manifested.*<sup>89</sup>

Finally, the Holy Father notes that in the words of Mary to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5), we find an "essential element of Mary's maternal task."<sup>90</sup> That is, "*the Mother of Christ presents herself as the spokeswoman of her Son's will, pointing out those things which must be done so that the salvific power of the Messiah may be manifested.*"<sup>91</sup> Here we see the "descending mediation" of Mary, as well as the "ascending mediation" of her intercessory prayer. It is through "the intercession of Mary and the obedience of the servants [that] Jesus begins 'his hour'."<sup>92</sup> Consequently, as Miravalle points out, "this first public manifestation of the glory of the Mediator in his adult mission of salvation was *in turn mediated by his Mother.*"<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 (87-88). "...occurrere hominis necessitatibus simul idem est atque inducere eum ipsum in muneris messianici circuitum ac salutiferae Christi virtutis. Habetur igitur hic mediatio: mediam sese collocat Maria inter Filium suum atque homines in vera ipsorum conditione privationum et inopiarum et dolorum. « Media » consistit, id est mediatricem agit haud sane ut aliena, sed in suo matris statu;... Indolem ergo intercessionis exhibet eius mediatio: Maria pro hominibus « intercedit. » Neque id dumtaxat: ut Mater item messianicam virtutem palam fieri cupit,..." Italics in original.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem.* "...pernecessaria materni muneris Mariae..."

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem.* "Christi Mater coram hominibus se praebet uti *voluntatis Filii interpretem*, indicem earum necessitatum, quae sunt procurandae ut salvifica Messiae virtus comprobetur." Italics original.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem.* "Deprecante ideo Maria in Cana obtemperantibusque administris, Iesus initium facit « suae horae. »"

<sup>93</sup> Miravalle, "Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Foundational Presence in Divine Revelation," in *Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 277.

St. Louis de Montfort demonstrates a kind of parallel between Our Lady's relationship to the Most Holy Trinity (particularly at the moment of the Incarnation) on the one hand, and her relationship of mediation to us, on the other. He explains,

To give ourselves to Jesus through Mary is to imitate God the Father, Who has given us His Son only through Mary, and Who communicates His grace to us only through Mary. It is to imitate God the Son, Who has come to us only through Mary, and Who, "by giving us an example, that as He has done, so we do also" (John xiii, 15), has urged us to go to Him by the same means by which He has come to us—that is, through Mary. It is to imitate the Holy Ghost, Who bestows His graces and gifts upon us only through Mary. "Is it not fitting," asks St. Bernard, "that grace should return to its author by the same channel which conveyed it to us?"<sup>94</sup>

In other words, as I shall discuss further, just as Mary is the one through whom God the Father chose to send His Son, and the one through whom the Son came into the world, so she continues to be the one through whom the Holy Spirit pours forth His grace upon us, and through whom we also should go to God. In other words, she is our Mediatrix, one who unites the two extremes.

We have already seen above how St. Cyril of Alexandria, who was the great promoter of the Marian title, *Theotokos* (God-bearer), against Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus (431), united this title of *Theotokos* with Mary's mediation in the salvation of souls. Charles Journet notes,

The concept of *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, which Christians venerate, on which, from the very beginning the infallible intuition of the Church has focused and from which are deduced—not by weak argument of convenience but by an authentic unfolding—all the privileges of the Blessed Virgin and the fullness of Christ-conforming grace in her, is the existential, detailed evangelical concept of "the worthy Mother of a Savior God."<sup>95</sup>

Garrigou-Lagrange also observes that "Mary ... became therefore Mother of the Redeemer in His role of Redeemer at the Annunciation."<sup>96</sup> Already at that mo-

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<sup>94</sup> St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *The Secret of Mary* (Bayshore, NY: Montfort Publications, 1996), 29.

<sup>95</sup> Charles Cardinal Journet, *The Theology of the Church*, transl. by Victor Szczurek (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2004), 91.

<sup>96</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1993), 158.

ment, “the Fathers could say that our salvation depended on Mary’s consent.”<sup>97</sup> Therefore, Mary’s position of mother and Mediatrix of men flows, as its primary principle, from her great privilege of being the Mother of God.

## 2) “Coredemptrix”: Mary’s Mediation as Stemming from her Role in Our Redemption

The second principle from which flows the Church’s understanding of the Blessed Virgin as Mediatrix is her role as Coredemptrix and the New Eve. Here we see, in a particular way, the principle of her ascending mediation between God and mankind, brought about by her participation in the Passion of her Son. In addition to her being Mother of God, it is in virtue of Our Lady’s participation in our Redemption (ascending mediation) that she is able to distribute all graces to us (descending mediation).

St. Thomas Aquinas explains how Christ’s Passion satisfies for sin by stating, “He properly atones for an offense who offers something which the offended one loves equally, or even more than he detested the offense.”<sup>98</sup> That is to say, Christ’s willingness to suffer more than compensated to the Father for our offenses. The reasons for this are, “First of all, because of the exceeding charity from which He suffered; secondly, on account of the dignity of His life which He laid down in atonement, for it was the life of one who was God and man; thirdly, on account of the extent of the Passion, and the greatness of the grief endured.”<sup>99</sup> I would like to propose that Mary’s union in the Passion of her Son was a real participation in the satisfaction which He made for sin: first, by her own great charity; second, by her own dignity as the Mother of God; and third, by the greatness of her sorrow.

Garrigou-Lagrange describes Mary’s participation in her Son’s suffering for souls:

Mary endured the *very suffering of the Savior*; she suffered for sin in the degree of her love for God, whom sin offends; for her Son, whom sin crucified; for souls, whom sin ravishes and kills .... She thus cooperated in the sacrifice of the cross by way of satisfaction or reparation, by offering to God for us, with great sorrow and most ardent love, the life of her most dear Son.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>98</sup> Aquinas, *STh*, III, q. 48, a. 2, resp. “...ille proprie satisfacit pro offensa qui exhibet offenso id quod aeque vel magis diligit quam oderit offensam.”

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*. “Primo quidem, propter magnitudinem caritatis ex qua patiebatur. Secundo, propter dignitatem vitae suae, quam pro satisfactione ponebat, quae erat vita Dei et hominis. Tertio, propter generalitatem passionis et magnitudinem doloris assumpti....”

<sup>100</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, 165. Italics added.

In other words, by Mary's extreme love (greater than any other, besides that of her Son) she was perfectly united to Him in making satisfaction for sin. We can see the Blessed Virgin's "ascending mediation" also highlighted by Pope Bl. Paul VI in *Marialis Cultus*, where he states,

This union of the Mother and the Son in the work of redemption reaches its climax on Calvary, where Christ "offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to God" (Heb 9:14) and where Mary stood by the cross (cf. Jn 19:25), suffering grievously with her only-begotten Son. There she united herself with a maternal heart to His sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim which she herself had brought forth' and also was offering to the eternal Father.<sup>101</sup>

In the preceding quote, Pope Bl. Paul VI is citing from *Lumen Gentium*, which also declares, regarding the role of the Blessed Virgin in our salvation,

Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption. Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her as used by God *not merely in a passive way*, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience.<sup>102</sup>

That is, because Mary had been immaculately conceived (having been redeemed by her Son at the very moment of her conception), she had no sin and was able to offer herself together with her Son as a "perfect victim." Consequently, Miravalle points out,

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<sup>101</sup> Pope Bl. Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, "For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary" (February 2, 1974; Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1974), 20. The Pope is citing from *Lumen Gentium*, 58. Latin text: "Haec autem Matris et Filii coniunctio in opere Redemptionis (Cf CONC. VAT. II, Const. dogm. de Ecclesia Lumen Gentium, 57: AAS 57 (1965), 61) summe enituit in Calvariae monte, in quo Christus semetipsum obtulit immaculatum Deo (Heb 9, 14), atque Maria, prope Crucem stans (cf Io 19, 25), vehementer cum Unigenito suo condoluit et sacrificio Eius se materno animo sociavit, victimae de se genitae immolationi amanter consentiens (Ibid., 58: AAS 57 (1965), 61), quam et ipsa aeterno Patri obtulit (cf. Pius XII, Litterae Encyclicae Mystici Corporis: AAS 35 (1943), 247)."

<sup>102</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, 56. Latin text: "...ac salvificam voluntatem Dei, pleno corde et nullo retardata peccato, complectens, semetipsam ut Domini ancillam personae et operi Filii sui totaliter devovit, sub Ipso et cum Ipso, omnipotentis Dei gratia, mysterio redemptionis inserviens. Merito igitur SS. Patres Mariam non mere passive a Deo adhibitam, sed libera fide et oboedientia humanae saluti cooperantem censent." Italics added.

She who was once known only as *Mary* is now publicly established by the dying Saviour as the *Woman*, the *Mother*, and the *Mediatrice* of the graces of redemption. The Mediator granted his Mother the gift of Mediatrice of graces as the fruit of his dying sacrifice for humanity and of her coredemptive participation. Again, she is the Mediatrice of graces because she was first the Coredemptrix.<sup>103</sup>

Miravalle also notes that this relation of Coredemptrix and Mediatrice “is consistently taught by the Magisterium.”<sup>104</sup> By uniting her own sufferings to those of Christ, Mary, standing at the foot of the cross, shared in our redemption, although, of course, in a way subordinate to Christ, our Redeemer. Nevertheless, as Pope St. John Paul II teaches in *Salvifici Doloris*, Mary’s sufferings were “also a contribution to the redemption of all.”<sup>105</sup> This is made abundantly clear by Pope Saint Pius X, in his encyclical, *Ad Diem Illum*, where he declares,

When the supreme hour of the Son came, beside the Cross of Jesus there stood Mary His Mother, not merely occupied in contemplating the cruel spectacle, but rejoicing that her Only Son was offered for the salvation of mankind, and so entirely participating in His Passion, that if it had been possible she would have gladly borne all the torments that her Son bore (S. Bonav. 1. Sent d. 48, ad Litt. dub. 4). And from this *community of will and suffering* between Christ and Mary she merited to become most worthily the Reparatrice of the lost world (Eadmeri Mon. De Excellentia Virg. Mariae, c. 9) and *Dispensatrice of all the gifts that Our Savior purchased for us by His Death and by His Blood*.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Miravalle, “Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrice, Advocate: Foundational Presence in Divine Revelation,” in *Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrice, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 281. Italics original.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, Footnote 129.

<sup>105</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* (February 11, 1984) 25, as found online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Latin text: “. . .verum etiam ad redemptionem omnium conferrent.”

<sup>106</sup> Pope St. Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (February 2, 1904), 12, as found online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Italics added. Latin text from *AS* 36:453-454: “Quum vero extremum Filii tempus advenit, stabat iuxta crucem Iesu Mater eius, non in immani tantum occupata spectaculo, sed plane gaudens quod Unigenitus suus pro salute generis humani offerretur, et tantum etiam compassa est, ut, si fieri potuisset, omnia tormenta quae Filius pertulit, ipsa multo libentius sustineret. — Ex hac autem Mariam inter et Christum communione dolorum ac voluntatis, prome ruit illa ut reparatrice perditis orbis dignissime fieret, atque ideo universorum munerum dispensatrix quae nobis Iesus nece et sanguine comparavit.”

William Most points to this statement as one piece of evidence that Mary cooperated with her Son, not only in the “subjective redemption” (i.e., “the *distribution* of that forgiveness and grace”<sup>107</sup>—descending mediation), but also in the “objective redemption” (i.e., “Christ’s atonement and once-for-all *acquisition* of the entire treasury of grace for us”<sup>108</sup>—ascending mediation), “*at least remotely* ... by being the Mother of the Redeemer.”<sup>109</sup>

Of course, Mary’s share in our redemption was *de congruo* (i.e., by reason of fittingness) rather than *de condigno* (by reason of justice), as we shall see. With respect to her real sharing in our redemption, however, Most also points to a text of Pope Benedict XV, in his encyclical, *Inter Sodalicia*, which states:

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*.<sup>110</sup>

It is in this sense that the Blessed Virgin is given the title of Coredemprix, and it is this unique participation in our redemption (as well as her Divine Maternity) that also gives rise to her role of mediation of all graces. Journet uses the following metaphor to explain how Our Lady, the Church, and all Christians relate to Christ and to one another by means of a co-redemptive mediation which is participatory:

Just as the sun carries the earth, which carries the moon, though all the weight of the earth and the moon weigh ultimately on the sun, so the redemptive mediation of Christ bears the universal co-redemption of the Virgin, who in turn bears the collective co-redemptive mediation of the Church and the particular co-redemptive mediation of Christians; for, there are some souls that carry others, as a planet its moons.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> William G. Most, *Mary in Our Life: Our Lady in Doctrine and Devotion* (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, reprint 2014, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1937), 19.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>110</sup> Pope Benedict XV, *Inter Sodalicia*, (March 22, 1918), *AAS (Acta Apostolicae Sedis)* 10:182 (Romae: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis), as found in Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 21. Italics added. Latin text reads: “Scilicet ita cum Filio patiente et moment e passa est et paene commortua, sic materna in Filium iura pro hominum salute abdicavit placandaeque Dei iustitiae, quantum ad se pertinebat, Filium immolavit, ut dici merito queat, Ipsam cum Christo humanum genus redemisse.”

<sup>111</sup> Journet, *The Theology of the Church*, 94.



This metaphor shows how, in the one family of God, all members of the family have their unique role, while at the same time, they sustain and aid the weaker members. In this, it is clear that all the members are called to participate, to a greater or lesser degree, in the one mediation of Christ.

Finally, the fact that Christ addresses his mother as “Woman” both at the wedding feast of Cana and at the foot of the Cross indicates that Mary is the New Eve, replacing the first “Woman” of the book of Genesis (Gen 2:23). This is significant because, just as the first Eve cooperated with Adam in the fall into Original Sin, so also, Mary, the New Eve, cooperated with her Son, the New Adam, in our redemption. “Then,” explains Most, “the Redemption would really be parallel to the fall: in both we would have a head of the race, whose work alone was sufficient and necessary, joined by an inferior sharer, whose work alone would be definitely insufficient.”<sup>112</sup>

### 3) “Mother of the Church”: Mary’s Spiritual Motherhood

In 1964, at the close of the third session of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Blessed Paul VI gave Mary the title of “Mother of the Church” (a title first used by St. Ambrose of Milan in the fourth century), saying, “Since Mary is the Mother of Christ, who, having at once assumed human nature in her virginal womb, joined to himself as Head His Mystical Body, which is the Church, therefore, Mary, insofar as [she is] Mother of Christ, must also be considered Mother of all the faithful and Pastors, namely, the Church.”<sup>113</sup>

Pope St. John Paul II explains in *Redemptoris Mater* that Mary’s being elected by God the Father to the supreme dignity of bearing His own Son “refers, on the ontological level, to the very reality of the union of the two natures in the person of the Word (*hypostatic union*).”<sup>114</sup> There is, therefore, in her, “from the very beginning

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<sup>112</sup> Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 20.

<sup>113</sup> Pope Bl. Paul VI, *Conclusionione della III Sessione del Concilio Vaticano II: Allocuzione del Santo Padre, Paolo VI*, (November 21, 1964), 30, as found online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Translation mine. Latin text: “...quandoquidem Maria Mater Christi est, qui statim ac in ipsius virginali utero humanam naturam assumpsit, sibi ut Capiti adiunxit Corpus suum Mysticum, quod est Ecclesia. Maria igitur, utpote Mater Christi, Mater etiam fidelium ac Pastorum omnium, scilicet Ecclesiae, habenda est.” The Italian text is a little more straightforward: “...a gloria della Beata Vergine e a nostra consolazione dichiariamo Maria Santissima Madre della Chiesa, cioè di tutto il popolo cristiano, sia dei fedeli che dei Pastori...,” i.e., “...to the glory of the Blessed Virgin and for our consolation, we declare Most Holy Mary, Mother of the Church, that is, of all the Christian people, both of the faithful as well as of Pastors...” Translation from the Italian also mine.

<sup>114</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, in *Mary: God’s Yes to Man*, 39 (127). Italics original to the text. Latin text: “in ordine ontologico refertur ad ipsam veritatem unionis utriusque naturae in persona Verbi (quae est unio hypostatica).”

a complete openness to the person of Christ, to his whole work, to his whole mission.”<sup>115</sup> In collaborating with Christ in his mission, explains the late Holy Father, Mary’s motherhood was transformed with a “ ‘burning charity’ toward all those to whom Christ’s mission was directed”<sup>116</sup> seeking to give life to souls in union with her Son. In this manner, “Mary entered, in a way all her own, into the one mediation ‘between God and men’ which is the mediation of the man Christ Jesus.”<sup>117</sup>

The late Roman Pontiff also points out that it is Our Lord’s words from the Cross, “Woman, behold your son,” and then to the disciple, “Son, behold your Mother” (Jn 19:26-27), which “determine *Mary’s place in the life of Christ’s disciples*, and they express ... the new motherhood of Mother of the Redeemer: a spiritual motherhood, born from the heart of the Paschal Mystery of the Redeemer of the world.”<sup>118</sup>

Pope Pius XII further explains how Mary’s spiritual motherhood is intimately linked to her role as the New Eve:

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, stained by his unhappy fall, and her mother’s rights and her mother’s love were included in the holocaust. 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>119</sup>

It was through her Immaculate Conception that Our Lady was *free from all sin, original or personal*, and thus, declares St. John Paul II,

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<sup>115</sup> St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 39. “...ab initio est animus plane patens personae Christi, toti eius operi, toti eius missioni.”

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, (in *Mary: God’s Yes to Man*, 127-128). “...« flagranti caritate » in omnes est repleta, ad quos Christi missio spectabat.”

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, (in *Mary: God’s Yes to Man*, 128). “*Maria ingressa est modo prorsus personali in unicam mediationem « inter Deum et homines », quae est mediatio hominis Christi Iesu.*” Italics original.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, (in *Mary: God’s Yes to Man*, 140). Latin text: “Quibus verbis locus statuitur, quem Maria in vita Christi discipulorum obtinet.... significatur nova eius maternitas ut Matris Redemptoris: maternitas spiritualis, exorta e profundo mysterii paschalis Redemptoris mundi.”

<sup>119</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, (June 29, 1943) 110, as found online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Latin text from *AAS (Acta Apostolicae Sedis)* 35:247-248: “Ipsa fuit, quae vel propriae, vel hereditariae labis expertis, arctissime semper cum Filio suo coniuncta, eundem in Golgotha, una cum maternorum iurium maternique amoris sui holocausto, nova veluti Eva, pro omnibus Adae filiiis, miserando eius lapsu foedatis, Aeterno Patri obtulit; ita quidem, ut quae corpore erat nostri Capitis mater, spiritu facta esset, ob novum etiam doloris gloriaeque titulum, eius membrorum omnium mater.” Italics added.

[since] she was the first to experience within herself the supernatural consequences of this one mediation [of Christ]—in the Annunciation she had been greeted as ‘full of grace’—then we must say that through this fullness of grace and supernatural life, she was especially predisposed to cooperation with Christ, the one Mediator of human salvation. *And such cooperation is precisely this mediation subordinated to the mediation of Christ.*<sup>120</sup>

Yet, the question may arise, how could Mary, being a finite creature, possibly know all our needs? Fr. Most notes that our needs, although many, are not infinite. He also points out that Mary, participating in the Beatific Vision, sees God Himself, and all things that concern her in Him. St. Thomas Aquinas explains in the third part of the *Summa Theologica*, “no beatified intellect fails to know in the Word whatever pertains to itself.”<sup>121</sup> “But she has been constituted Mother of all men,” continues Most, “—hence, obviously, the needs of all do pertain to her, and therefore she sees the needs of all of us.”<sup>122</sup>

## VI. The Differences between the Mediation of Mary and That of Christ

It would behoove us here to identify the different classes of mediation and compare Our Lady’s mediation with the mediation of Christ. According to Antonio Royo Marin, there is a three-fold division of mediation which one must take into account: first, with regard to the mediator; second, with regard to the mediation itself; and finally, with regard to the effects of the mediation.<sup>123</sup>

With regard to the mediator, Royo Marin observes that there are two types of mediation: the first is an *ontological* mediation, or a mediation which pertains to the mediator by his very *being*, and the second is a *dynamic* mediation, or that which belongs to the mediator by his *office*. The former, explains Royo Marin, “is that which

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<sup>120</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, in *Mary: God’s Yes to Man*, 39 (128). Latin text: “Quoniam ipsa prima in se est experta effectus supernaturales unice huius mediationis — iam in annuntiatione ut « plena gratia » est salutata — affirmandum est eam ob talem plenitudinem gratiae viteque supernaturalis peculiari ratione para tam fuisse ad cooperandum Christo, unico Mediatori humanae salutis. Quae cooperatio est ipsa mediatio subordinata mediationi Christi.” Words in brackets added.

<sup>121</sup> Aquinas, *STh*, III, q. 10, a. 2, resp. Latin text: “...nulli tamen intellectui beato deest quin cognoscat in verbo omnia quae ad ipsum spectant.”

<sup>122</sup> Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 39.

<sup>123</sup> Antonio Royo Marin, *La Virgen Maria: Teología y espiritualidad marianas*, (Madrid, Spain: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1968), 182-183. All of the page numbers in this section should be understood as referring to this work. All the translations from the Spanish text that follow are my own.

corresponds to that being who, *by his own nature*, is located between the two extremes which he is going to reconcile, and who, for the same reason, is most apt to carry out the mediation.<sup>124</sup> The dynamic mediation, on the other hand, consists in the actual carrying out of this mediation as an office. Both kinds of mediation, of course, correspond to Christ: the ontological mediation, “because in virtue of his human nature, he is situated between God and men, since by his human nature he is inferior to the Father (Jn 14:28), and by his plenitude of grace, he is immensely superior to men”;<sup>125</sup> and the dynamic mediation, “because, by his death on the cross, he redeemed us from the slavery of the devil, realizing in fact the mediation between God and men.”<sup>126</sup>

Royo Marin explains that both types of mediation also pertain to the Blessed Virgin Mary, although “in a proportional degree, and with an entire dependence on Christ”<sup>127</sup>: First, the ontological, “since, by her divine maternity, she is located ontologically between God and men: inferior to God, but much superior to men”<sup>128</sup>; and second, the dynamic, “since she carried out in fact, associated with Christ the Redeemer, the coredemption of the world.”<sup>129</sup>

The second class of the triple division given by Royo Marin is with respect to the mediation itself. Here he explains that the mediation could be principal or secondary. The principal mediation “is that which the mediator realizes by his own excellence and his own merits, without relation or recourse to any other person.”<sup>130</sup> The secondary mediation, on the other hand, “is that which a mediator realizes, who also puts in something on his part, but in a narrow and essential dependency on another, more important mediator, who is the principal mediator.”<sup>131</sup> It is clear here that Christ is the principal mediator, since he “carried out the redemption *by*

<sup>124</sup> 182. “...es la que corresponde a aquel ser que *por su propia naturaleza* está colocado entre los dos extremos a los cuales va a reconciliar, y que, por lo mismo, es aptísimo para realizar la mediación...”

<sup>125</sup> 184-185. “...porque en virtud de su naturaleza humana está situado entre Dios y los hombres, ya que por su naturaleza humana es inferior al Padre (Jn 14, 28) y por la plenitud de su gracia es inmensamente superior a los hombres.”

<sup>126</sup> 185. “...porque, por su muerte en la cruz, nos redimió de la esclavitud del demonio, realizando de hecho la mediación entre Dios y los hombres.”

<sup>127</sup> 187. “...en grado proporcional y con entera dependencia de Cristo...”

<sup>128</sup> 187. “...puesto que, por su maternidad divina, está colocada ontológicamente entre Dios y los hombres: inferior a Dios, pero muy superior a los hombres.”

<sup>129</sup> 187. “...puesto que realizó de hecho, asociada a Cristo Redentor, la corredención de mundo.”

<sup>130</sup> 182. “...es la que realiza el mediador por su propia excelencia y propios méritos, sin relación o recurso a ninguna otra persona.”

<sup>131</sup> 182. “...es la que realiza un mediador que pone algo de su parte también, pero en estrecha y esencial dependencia de otro mediador más importante, que es el mediador principal.”

*his own merits*, without relation or recourse to any other person,<sup>132</sup> and Mary is the secondary mediator, “since she joined her sufferings to the blood of Christ, contributing secondarily and proportionately to the redemption of the world.”<sup>133</sup>

The third class of mediation has to do with its effects and is three-fold: *dispositive*, *perfective* and *ministerial*. “The first,” explains Royo Marin, is limited to *preparing* for the mediation; the second *realizes* it in fact, and the third *applies* it.”<sup>134</sup> Christ’s “mediation was not merely *dispositive* (like that of the just of the Old Testament), but *perfective* in the full and absolute sense of the word; it was He who carried out the mediation in fact.”<sup>135</sup> Of course, Christ also *applies* the effects of His mediation, in particular, sanctifying grace, to us “through the sacraments and through His vital influx [which we receive] as members of His Mystical Body.”<sup>136</sup>

According to Royo Marin, Our Lady also carries out this triple mediation, although he divides it according to different periods of her life: The dispositive mediation, “before the incarnation, hastening it with her prayers ... and afterwards feeding and taking care of the divine Victim, during the thirty years at Nazareth, who ... would have to save humanity”<sup>137</sup>; the perfective mediation, “at the foot of the cross, because ... with her ineffable sufferings and with her tears, the Coredemptrix carried out the universal mediation in a way [which was] *secondary and essentially dependent* on the principal mediation of Christ”<sup>138</sup>; and the ministerial mediation, “insofar as, by the divine disposition, she applies and distributes to each one of us, all and every one of the graces which we receive from God.”<sup>139</sup> However, the nature of Mary’s causality in distributing these graces is disputed, as we shall see later.

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<sup>132</sup> 185. “...puesto que realizó la redención *por sus propios méritos*, sin relación o recurso a ninguna otra persona.”

<sup>133</sup> 187. “...puesto que asoció sus dolores a la sangre de Cristo, contribuyendo secundaria y proporcionalmente a la redención del mundo.”

<sup>134</sup> 183. “La primera se limita a *preparar* la mediación; la segunda la *realiza* de hecho, y la tercera la *aplica*.”

<sup>135</sup> 185. “...su mediación no fue meramente *dispositiva* (como la de los justos del Antiguo Testamento), sino *perfectiva* en el sentido pleno y absoluto de la palabra; fue El quien *realizó* de hecho la mediación.”

<sup>136</sup> 185. “...mediante los sacramentos y a través de su influjo vital como miembros de su Cuerpo místico.”

<sup>137</sup> 187. “...antes de la encarnación, adelantándola con sus oraciones...y alimentando y cuidando después, durante los treinta años de Nazaret, a la divina Víctima, que...había de salvar a la humanidad.”

<sup>138</sup> 188. “...al pie de la cruz, porque...con sus dolores inefables y con sus lágrimas de Corredentora realizó la mediación universal de una manera *secundaria y esencialmente dependiente* de la mediación principal de Cristo.”

<sup>139</sup> 188. “...en cuanto que, por divina disposición, aplica y distribuye a cada uno de nosotros todas y cada una de las gracias que recibimos de Dios....”

## Types of Merit

In order to have a better understanding of Our Lady's mediation of graces in comparison with her Son's, it is also helpful to discuss the different types of merit, so as to contrast Mary and Her Son's ability to merit grace for others, and to see how Our Lady's merit compares to the merits of others.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, "Merit and reward refer to the same, for a reward means something given anyone in return for work or toil, as a price paid for it. Hence as it is an act of justice to give a just price for anything received from another, so also is it an act of justice to make a return for work or toil."<sup>140</sup> However, since "justice is a kind of equality,"<sup>141</sup> there is simple justice only where there is simple equality. Where there is no equality, neither is there strict justice. In the same way, "where there is justice simply, there is the character of merit and reward simply. But where there is no simple right, but only relative, there is no character of merit simply, but only relatively, in so far as the character of justice is found there, since the child merits something from his father and the slave from his lord."<sup>142</sup>

Moreover, as Aquinas points out, there is no equality between man and God. Therefore, "there can be no justice of absolute equality [between them] ..., but only of a certain proportion, inasmuch as both operate after their own manner."<sup>143</sup> Aquinas notes here that since "the manner and measure of human virtue"<sup>144</sup> is from God Himself, "hence man's merit with God only exists on the presupposition of the Divine ordination, so that man obtains from God, as a reward of his operation, what God gave him the power of operation for."<sup>145</sup> Nevertheless, even though man only has the power to do good due to the Divine motion, "since the rational creature moves itself to act by its free-will, hence its action has the charac-

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<sup>140</sup> Aquinas, *STh*, I-II, q. 114, a. 1, resp. "meritum et merces ad idem referuntur, id enim merces dicitur quod alicui recompensatur pro retributione operis vel laboris, quasi quoddam pretium ipsius. Unde sicut reddere iustum pretium pro re accepta ab aliquo, est actus iustitiae; ita etiam recompensare mercedem operis vel laboris, est actus iustitiae."

<sup>141</sup> *Ibidem*. Latin text: "Iustitia autem aequalitas quaedam est...."

<sup>142</sup> *Ibidem*. Latin text: "...in his in quibus est simpliciter iustum, est etiam simpliciter ratio meriti et mercedis. In quibus autem est secundum quid iustum, et non simpliciter, in his etiam non simpliciter est ratio meriti, sed secundum quid, in quantum salvatur ibi iustitiae ratio, sic enim et filius meretur aliquid a patre, et servus a domino."

<sup>143</sup> *Ibidem*. Latin text: "...non potest hominis ad Deum esse iustitia secundum absolutam aequalitatem, sed secundum proportionem quandam, in quantum scilicet uterque operatur secundum modum suum."

<sup>144</sup> *Ibidem*. Latin text: "Modus autem et mensura humanae virtutis homini...."

<sup>145</sup> *Ibidem*. Latin text: "Et ideo meritum hominis apud Deum esse non potest nisi secundum praesuppositionem divinae ordinationis, ita scilicet ut id homo consequatur a Deo per suam operationem quasi mercedem, ad quod Deus ei virtutem operandi deputavit."

ter of merit, which is not so in other creatures.”<sup>146</sup> This merit becomes supernatural when the good act is done by someone in the state of habitual grace, and it is accomplished with charity.

One should note, however, that the concept of merit is analogical, “because it is found, in meanings proportionately similar and subordinated, first in the merits of Christ, second, in the merits of the just, third, in the sinner’s dispositive preparations for sanctifying grace.”<sup>147</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange summarizes the ways in which we can speak of merit:

The merits of Christ, then, are founded on absolute justice, because Christ’s person is divine. The merits of the just are also founded on justice, not absolute, but *dependent on Christ’s merits*. To this merit, we give the name of “condignness,” which expresses a value, not equal to the reward, but proportioned to it. Condign merit rests on God’s ordination and promise, without which it could not give a right in the proper sense of the word.

But the just have also a second kind of merit, founded, not on justice, but on friendship, which presupposes grace and charity. To this kind of merit we give the name “merit of proper congruity.” The word “proper” is added to distinguish this merit, based on friendship, from the sinner’s dispositive merits, which are based, not on friendship with God, but on God’s liberality to His enemies. These merits too are called “merits of congruity,” but in a wider sense of the word.<sup>148</sup>

It should be clear then, that the condign merit of the just is still not based on absolute justice, but is a kind of participation in the merits of Christ. The congruous merit of the just, on the other hand, is based on a kind of fittingness, rather than justice, which belongs to friendship with God.

After proving that no one can merit the first grace for himself (including the Blessed Virgin, who did not merit the first grace of her Immaculate Conception), St. Thomas Aquinas asks whether one person can merit the first grace for another. He begins to answer this question by explaining that our works can be meritorious in one of two ways, either “by virtue of the Divine motion; and thus we merit condignly; [or] ... according as they proceed from free-will in so far as we do them

<sup>146</sup> *Ibidem*. Latin text: “...quia creatura rationalis seipsam movet ad agendum per liberum arbitrium, unde sua actio habet rationem meriti; quod non est in aliis creaturis.”

<sup>147</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*, ed. Paul A Böer, Sr., (Veritatis Splendor Publications, 2012), 347.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibidem*.

willingly, and thus they have congruous merit, since it is congruous that when a man make good use of his power, God should by His super-excellent power work still higher things.”<sup>149</sup> Aquinas continues,

It is clear that no one can merit condignly for another his first grace, save Christ alone; ... inasmuch as He is the Head of the Church, and the Author of human salvation .... But one may merit the first grace for another congruously; because a man in grace fulfills God’s will, and it is congruous and in harmony with friendship that God should fulfill man’s desire for the salvation of another.<sup>150</sup>

In accordance with this understanding of Aquinas, Garrigou-Lagrange applies the above-mentioned classes of merit: The first, and “highest kind, which was that of the Incarnate Word, is merit which is perfectly and fully worthy of reward, *perfecte de condigno*: an act of charity of the God-Man, since it is the act of a divine Person, is at least equal in value to the reward, even when evaluated in strict justice.”<sup>151</sup> As Head of the human race, Christ was also able to merit grace for *others* in strict justice.

“The second kind of merit is that of the person in the state of grace,” explains Garrigou-Lagrange. “It is a dogma of faith that every person in the state of grace and endowed with the use of reason and free will, and who is as yet a member of the Church militant, can merit an increase of charity and of eternal life with a merit commonly termed *de condigno*.”<sup>152</sup> However, these acts are only worthy of a supernatural reward in the sense that they proceed from God’s motions of grace, and not because they are actually equal in value to this reward of themselves in strict justice. In addition, as mentioned above, one cannot merit grace *de condigno* for another, but only for oneself, because this type of merit, in both Mary and the just, is incommunicable. Only Christ is able to merit grace *de condigno* for others.

However, Mary and the just can merit grace for others *de congruo proprie*, which is the third kind of merit, termed by Garrigou-Lagrange as the “merit of becoming-

<sup>149</sup> Aquinas, *STb*, I-II, q. 114, a. 6, resp. Latin text: “...ex vi motionis divinae, et sic meretur aliquis ex condign... in quantum est caput Ecclesiae et auctor salutis humanae.... secundum quod procedit ex libero arbitrio, in quantum voluntarie aliquid facimus. Et ex hac parte est meritum congrui, quia congruum est ut, dum homo bene utitur sua virtute, Deus secundum superexcellentem virtutem excellentius operetur.”

<sup>150</sup> *Ibidem*, Latin text: “Ex quo patet quod merito condigni nullus potest mereri alteri primam gratiam nisi solus Christus.... Sed merito congrui potest aliquis alteri mereri primam gratiam. Quia enim homo in gratia constitutus implet Dei voluntatem, congruum est, secundum amicitiae proportionem, ut Deus impleat hominis voluntatem in salvatione alterius....”

<sup>151</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 179.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 179-180.



ness [which] ... is founded on charity or friendship with God, rather than on justice."<sup>153</sup> In other words, Christ "satisfied for us *in strict justice* by His human acts which drew from His divine personality an infinite value capable of making reparation .... Mary satisfied for us by a satisfaction based, *not on strict justice*, but on the *rights of the infinite friendship or charity* which united her to God."<sup>154</sup> That is, the Blessed Virgin merited for us congruously, i.e., *de congruo*.

In *Ad Diem Illum*, Pope St. Pius X also notes this distinction in the kinds of merit, stating:

We are then, it will be seen, very far from attributing to the Mother of God a productive power of grace - a power which belongs to God alone. Yet, since Mary carries it over all in holiness and union with Jesus Christ, and has been associated by Jesus Christ in the work of redemption, she merits for us *de congruo*, in the language of theologians, what Jesus Christ merits for us *de condigno*, and she is the supreme Minister of the distribution of graces.<sup>155</sup>

There also remains one other difference when we speak of the merit of the Blessed Virgin at Calvary versus the merit of others. As Most explains,

The term *merit* has a different sense when we speak of the merits of Christ and Mary on Calvary from what it has when any one of us merits. The merit of Calvary filled up a great reservoir of grace once and for all. Nothing is ever added to that treasury. When anyone merits now, he does not earn that a new grace be added to the treasury, but that something be withdrawn from the treasury and distributed.<sup>156</sup>

Nevertheless, the question remains: can we rightly say that Our Lady is the distributor of *all graces*, or only of some?

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<sup>153</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour*, 180.

<sup>154</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, 165. Italics added.

<sup>155</sup> Pope St. Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (February 2, 1904), 14. Latin text taken from *ASS* 36:454: "Patet itaque abesse profecto plurimum ut nos Deiparae supernaturalis gratiae efficiendae vim tribuamus, quae Dei unius est. Ea tamen, quoniam universis sanctitate praestat coniunctioneque cum Christo, atque a Christo ascita in humanae salutis opus, *de congruo*, ut aiunt, promeretur nobis quae Christus *de condigno* promeruit, estque princeps largiendarum gratiarum ministra."

<sup>156</sup> Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 39 n.1.

## VII. Mediatrix of All Graces

Garrigou-Lagrange points out what we have noted above, namely, that “there is nothing to prevent there being mediators below Christ, subordinate to Him as secondary mediators, such as were the prophets and priests of the Old Law for the chosen people.”<sup>157</sup> He then adds, “It must thus be asked whether Mary is the universal mediatrix for all men and for the distribution of all graces in general and in particular.”<sup>158</sup>

In his encyclical, Pope St. Pius X reminds us of a famous quotation regarding the function of Our Lady as mediatrix of all graces. He declares, “Yes, says St. Bernardine of Sienna, ‘she is the neck of Our Head, by which He communicates to His mystical body all spiritual gifts’ (Quadrag. de Evangel. aetern. *Serm.* x., a. 3, c. iii.).”<sup>159</sup> St. Bernardine also declares in his Sermon on the Nativity, “This is the process of divine graces: from God they flow to Christ, from Christ to his Mother, and from her to the Church .... I do not hesitate to say that she has received a certain jurisdiction over all graces .... They are administered through her hands.”<sup>160</sup>

As noted above, Pope Leo XIII declares in *Octobri Mense* that every grace acquired by Our Lord is bestowed on us by Mary, and that absolutely no grace is given but by her: “It is right to say that *nothing at all* of the immense treasury of every grace which the Lord accumulated—for ‘grace and truth come from Jesus Christ’ (Jn 1:17)—*nothing* is imparted to us except through Mary.”<sup>161</sup> In *Superiore Anno*, the same Holy Father also speaks of the Blessed Mother as “her whom He [God] has chosen to be the dispenser of *all* heavenly graces.”<sup>162</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas concurs in this understanding of the Blessed Virgin’s role in obtaining grace for her children, declaring, “The plenitude of grace in Mary was

<sup>157</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, 162.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>159</sup> Pope St. Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (February 2, 1904), 13-14. Latin text from *ASS* 36:454: “Maria vero, ut apte Bernardus notat, ... Nam ipsa est collum Capitis nostri, per quod omnia spiritualia dona corpori eius mystico communicantur.”

<sup>160</sup> St. Bernardine of Siena (d. 1440), *Sermon V de nativitate B.M.V.*, cap. 8; op. omn., v. 4 (Lugduni, 1650), 96, as cited in Miravalle, “Mary, Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Foundational Presence in Divine Revelation,” in *Mary, Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 284.

<sup>161</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Octobri Mense*, 4, as found translated from the Latin in Miravalle, “Mary, Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Foundational Presence in Divine Revelation,” in *Mary, Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 287. “Ex quo non minus vere propri- eque affirmare licet, *nihil* prorsus de permagno illo omnis gratiae thesauro, quem attulit Dominus, siquidem gratia et veritas per Iesum Christum facta est (Ioan. 1, 17), *nihil* nobis, nisi per Mariam, Deo sic volente, impertiri....” Italics added.

<sup>162</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Superiore Anno*, (August 30, 1884), 1. Text taken from [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Italics added. Latin text: “...quam ipse caelestium, gratiarum voluit esse administram.”

such that its effects overflow upon all men. It is a great thing in a Saint when he has grace to bring about the salvation of many, but it is exceedingly wonderful when grace is of such abundance as to be *sufficient for the salvation of all men in the world*, and this is true of Christ and of the Blessed Virgin.”<sup>163</sup> In fact, Our Lady was greeted by the Angel Gabriel as, literally, “one having been graced” (Lk 1:28).<sup>164</sup> Neubert points out, “Just as Christ possesses the plenitude of grace both for Himself and for all creatures together, so that ‘of his fullness we have all received’ [Jn 1:16], so also, with due proportion, she whom the angel greeted as ‘full of grace’ has received from God such a superabundance of grace that she possesses it for herself and for all men, so that of that fullness we all may receive.”<sup>165</sup>

Garrigou-Lagrange also notes, in speaking of Our Lady’s “descending mediation”: “All kinds of grace are distributed by her, even, in a sense, those of the sacraments; for she merited them for us in union with Christ on Calvary. In addition, she disposes us, by her prayer, to approach the sacraments and to receive them well.”<sup>166</sup> He continues by pointing out that not only every kind of grace in general, but even each particular grace we receive, comes to us through the hands of Mary.

Is this not what the faith of the Church says in the words of the Hail Mary, ‘Holy, Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.’? This ‘now’ is said every moment in the Church by thousands of Christians who thus ask for the grace of the present moment. This grace is the most individual of graces; it varies with each of us, and for each one of us at every moment.<sup>167</sup>

According to Most, the doctrine that Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces “is implicitly contained in the New Eve concept [mentioned above], for the first Eve, according to God’s original plan, was to have been, with Adam, the means of the transmission of sanctifying grace to all their descendents.”<sup>168</sup> Now Mary, as the

<sup>163</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio salutationis angelicae*, (transl by Joseph B. Collins, New York, 1939, ed Joseph Kenny, as found online at dhspriority.org, a. 1. Italics added. Latin text: “quantum ad refusionem in omnes homines. Magnum enim est in quolibet sancto, quando habet tantum de gratia quod sufficit ad salutem multorum; sed quando haberet tantum quod sufficeret ad salutem omnium hominum de mundo, hoc esset maximum: et hoc est in Christo, et in beata virgine.”

<sup>164</sup> The Greek word is *κεχαριτωμένη* which is a feminine vocative perfect passive participle. The *Complete New Testament Greek* notes that “the perfect always expresses a state....” (*Complete New Testament Greek*, by Gavin Betts, (The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2003), 16.1/4.

<sup>165</sup> Neubert, *Mary in Doctrine*, 111.

<sup>166</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, 171.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>168</sup> Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 34.

New Eve, having joined in the offering of the New Adam on Calvary, has merited, together with her Son (although in a *de congruo* fashion, and always in subordination to Him), the graces of our redemption, and the right to dispense these graces to her spiritual children.

Miravalle asks the question of whether, since Mary was a historical figure, she could really be the Mediatrix of *all graces of all times*. First, as we noted above, Our Lady “did not mediate to herself her own Immaculate Conception.”<sup>169</sup> Rather, she mediates all other graces of the Redemption merited by Christ *for us*. Finally, there are varying modalities in her distribution of grace. Miravalle explains,

When the popes teach that all graces are distributed through the mediation of Mary, one can distinguish the different modes of this distribution in terms of historical time. Our Lady’s distribution of graces to humanity after her Assumption into heaven obviously possesses the greatest degree of *willed* or “moral” mediation. Before her Assumption into heaven, one can speak of Mary’s mediation of all grace at least in terms of her participation in the obtaining of all graces through her coredemptive cooperation ... which reaches its climax at Calvary.<sup>170</sup>

This is because Mary’s mediation is “merely a unique, objective, and historic participation”<sup>171</sup> in the universal mediation of Christ. “To deny thereby the universal character of Maternal Mediation is to misunderstand her unique participation in the universal mediation of the Savior, upon which the universality of Mary’s mediation of graces ... is dependent and sustained.”<sup>172</sup>

In addition, as I shall discuss further, the Blessed Virgin is the spouse and instrument of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, “since *all the graces* of redemption come through the Holy Spirit, and the *Holy Spirit acts only through the Mediatrix*, then Mary is again rightly seen as the *mediatrix of all the graces of redemption* given to the human family.”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Mark Miravalle, “The *Whole Truth about Mary*, Ecumenism and the Year 2000,” in *Mary Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations II, Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical*, 31.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>171</sup> Miravalle, “The *Whole Truth about Mary*, 35.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>173</sup> Miravalle, “Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Foundational Presence in Divine Revelation,” in *Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 301.

### VIII. The Causality of Mary

There are three main theories, however, as to what kind of causality Mary has with regard to the distribution of graces. Royo Marin notes, “All theologians admit that she enjoys the power of intercession.”<sup>174</sup> However, the real issue regards whether or not Mary’s causality goes beyond that of mere intercession. In other words, is she *merely* a moral cause, *merely* an intentional-dispositive cause, or is she also a physical-instrumental cause?<sup>175</sup> If it were *only* through her intercession that Our Lady obtained grace for us, she would be *merely* a moral cause of our sanctification. (In other words, if she, knowing our needs, were to efficaciously plead for us, offering to God her merits on our behalf, and no more.) If she simply produced in us a type of disposition that would call for grace, she would be *merely* an intentional-dispositive cause, i.e., one that capacitated specific persons to receive specific graces. But if Mary literally serves as a channel of grace for us, i.e., if she has a certain efficiency of her own, she would also be a physical-instrumental cause, similar to the causality of Christ’s humanity in relation to His divinity. Royo Marin notes, “To distribute something presupposes possession, dominion, which, certainly, is not included in the concept of intercession .... [In] the theory of physical-instrumental causality, ... Mary serves as an independent *physical instrument*, through which the graces literally flow to us.”<sup>176</sup> Of course, she remains always subordinate to the principal agent, who is God.

Although it does not seem possible to know for certain, it does appear that the strong words of both Popes and Saints cited above correspond better with the idea of Mary as a physical-instrumental cause. As Most points out, referring to a passage from Pope Leo XIII’s *Jucunda Semper*, “The text has a more natural and full meaning if we suppose that grace after originating in the Divine Nature, and passing through the Sacred Humanity of Christ, next passes physically through Mary’s instrumentality.”<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Royo Marin, *La Virgen Maria*, 199. “Todos los teólogos admiten que goza del poder de intercesión.” Translation mine.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 40, 14.

<sup>176</sup> Royo Marin, *La Virgen Maria*, 200. He probably means “independent,” in contrast to a “conjoined” instrument. “Distribuir algo presupone posesión, dominio, lo cual, ciertamente, no va incluido en el concepto de intercesión.... [En] la teoría de la causalidad física instrumental,... María sirve de *instrumento físico* independiente, a través del cual las gracias fluyen literalmente hasta nosotros.” Translation mine.

<sup>177</sup> Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 38. The text referred to here is Pope Leo XIII’s quotation in *Jucunda Semper*, (September 8, 1894), 5, of St. Bernardine of Siena, saying, “Every grace...has a threefold course. For, in accord with excellent order, it is dispensed from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, and from the Virgin to us.” St. Bernardine of Siena, *Serm. In Nativit. B.V.M.*, 6, as cited in Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 37.

Taking the sacraments with regard to Mary as an example, we can first say that the application of the grace dispensed through the sacraments “has been obtained through Mary’s power of intercession,”<sup>178</sup> i.e., through her prayers. Thus far we have Mary as a moral cause. However, we can take this a step further and add that “Mary also leads us to frequent the sacraments, and obtains for us the disposition to profit from them [intentional-dispositive cause].”<sup>179</sup> And finally, if we wish to go still further, we can trace the course of grace from the Divine Nature, through Christ’s Humanity, Mary, the Church, and the sacraments to us, in which case, we could state that Mary is also a physical-instrumental cause.

The meaning of this will be more clear if we understand the distinction and relationship between instrumental causality and the causality of the principal agent, as explained by St. Thomas Aquinas. He states,

an efficient cause is twofold, principal and instrumental. The principal cause works by the power of its form, to which form the effect is likened; just as fire by its own heat makes something hot. In this way none but God can cause grace: since grace is nothing else than a participated likeness of the Divine Nature .... But the instrumental cause works not by the power of its form, but only by the motion whereby it is moved by the principal agent: so that the effect is not likened to the instrument but to the principal agent.<sup>180</sup>

Aquinas points out, however, that “an instrument has a twofold action; one is instrumental, in respect of which it works not by its own power but by the power of the principal agent: the other is its proper action, which belongs to it in respect of its proper form.”<sup>181</sup> In other words, an axe in the hand of a carpenter cuts “by reason of its sharpness,”<sup>182</sup> which belongs to its own form, yet the fact that it can make a piece of furniture is not due to itself, but due to the craftsman who wields it.

<sup>178</sup> Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 38.

<sup>179</sup> Most, *Mary in Our Life*, 38.

<sup>180</sup> Aquinas, *STh*, III, q. 62, a. 1, resp. Latin text: “...duplex est causa agens, principalis et instrumentalis. Principalis quidem operatur per virtutem suae formae, cui assimilatur effectus, sicut ignis suo calore calefacit. Et hoc modo non potest causare gratiam nisi Deus, quia gratia nihil est aliud quam quaedam participata similitudo divinae naturae.... Causa vero instrumentalis non agit per virtutem suae formae, sed solum per motum quo movetur a principali agente. Unde effectus non assimilatur instrumento, sed principali agenti....”

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, ad 2. Latin text, “...instrumentum habet duas actiones, unam instrumentalem, secundum quam operatur non in virtute propria, sed in virtute principalis agentis; aliam autem habet actionem propriam, quae competit sibi secundum propriam formam....”

<sup>182</sup> *Ibidem*. Latin text, “...ratione suae acuitatis....”

Aquinas uses this same line of reasoning when he explains how the humanity of Christ is an instrument of His divinity. He explains,

for what is moved by another has a twofold action—one which it has from its own form—the other, which it has inasmuch as it is moved by another .... Hence, wheresoever the mover and the moved have different forms or operative faculties, there must the operation of the mover and the proper operation of the moved be distinct; although the moved shares in the operation of the mover, and the mover makes use of the operation of the moved, and, consequently, each acts in communion with the other.

Therefore in Christ the human nature has its proper form and power whereby it acts; and so has the Divine. Hence the human nature has its proper operation distinct from the Divine, and conversely. Nevertheless, the Divine Nature makes use of the operation of the human nature, as of the operation of its instrument; and in the same way the human nature shares in the operation of the Divine Nature, as an instrument shares in the operation of the principal agent.<sup>183</sup>

We can understand Christ's mediation to be our primary analogate with regard to the mediation of the Blessed Virgin. Just as the divine power works through Christ's humanity as an instrument, so also, God causes grace through the mediation of Mary. Garrigou-Lagrange notes that "since physical instrumental causality was not an impossibility for the Sacred Humanity nor for the sacraments ... neither is it an impossibility for Mary. St. Thomas even admits that a miracle-worker is sometimes instrumental cause of a miracle, for example, when it is worked through a blessing. Not only can he obtain the miracle by his prayer, he may even perform it as God's instrument."<sup>184</sup> Here he cites Aquinas who teaches that "just as the

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<sup>183</sup> Aquinas, *STh*, III, q. 19, a. 1, resp. "Quia actio eius quod movetur ab altero, est duplex, una quidem quam habet secundum propriam formam; alia autem quam habet secundum quod movetur ab alio.... Et ideo, ubicumque movens et motum habent diversas formas seu virtutes operativas, ibi oportet quod sit alia propria operatio moventis, et alia propria operatio moti, licet motum participet operationem moventis, et movens utatur operatione moti, et sic utrumque agit cum communiione alterius.

Sic igitur in Christo humana natura habet propriam formam et virtutem per quam operatur et similiter divina. Unde et humana natura habet propriam operationem distinctam ab operatione divina, et e converso. Et tamen divina natura utitur operatione naturae humanae sicut operatione sui instrumenti, et similiter humana natura participat operationem divinae naturae, sicut instrumentum participat operationem principalis agentis."

<sup>184</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 205.

prophet's mind is moved by divine inspiration to know something supernaturally, so too is it possible for the mind of the miracle worker to be moved to do something resulting in the miraculous effect which God causes by His power."<sup>185</sup>

Garrigou-Lagrange also points out a second argument in favor of a parallel existing between the physical-instrumental causality of Christ's humanity as an instrument of His divinity and the causality of the Blessed Virgin:

Besides the arguments from Scripture and Tradition for the physical instrumental causality of the Sacred Humanity there is a theological argument: to act physically as well as morally is more perfect than to act only morally. But we must attribute what is more perfect to the Humanity of Christ, provided it is not incompatible with the redemptive Incarnation. Hence we must attribute to the Humanity of Christ the physical instrumental causality of grace. This same argument is valid, within all due limits, if applied to Mary, and establishes our thesis [i.e., of the physical instrumental causality of Mary] as probable.<sup>186</sup>

As we have noted, Mary's mediation began as *Mother*. Miravalle explains, "Mary's *moral and physical* mediation of Christ as *Mother* brought into the world the Uncreated Grace from which flows every grace received in his Body, which constitutes the People of God."<sup>187</sup> He later adds, in speaking of the mystery of the Visitation,

As soon as the *physical* presence of Mary, the *God-bearer*, was made known by her greeting to Elizabeth, 'the babe leapt in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit' (Lk 1:41). We see that Mary's physical presence, the living Tabernacle of the preborn Saviour, is a mediating cause of special events of graces .... For the Church sees in this scriptural reference to the joyful leap of the unborn John a more profound revelation of a *sanctifying action* through the presence of Mary, who physically mediates the presence of the unborn Christ.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Aquinas, *STh*, II-II, q. 178, a. 1, ad 1. "sicut mens prophetae movetur ex inspiratione divina ad aliquid supernaturaliter cognoscendum, ita etiam mens miracula facientis moveatur ad faciendum aliquid ad quod sequitur effectus miraculi, quod Deus sua virtute facit."

<sup>186</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 205 n.13.

<sup>187</sup> Miravalle, "Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Foundational Presence in Divine Revelation," in *Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 276.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.



In other words, it was the grace of the Holy Spirit, mediated by the Blessed Virgin, which sanctified St. John the Baptist in the womb. Here one can see her as a true physical-instrumental cause of grace, containing within her womb God Himself, and able to confer this grace on others. Is there any reason to think that Mary would be less an instrument of God now in glory than she was when she walked this earth?

Pope St. John Paul II notes the “close link between *the sending of the Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit*.”<sup>189</sup> He adds that “there is also established a close link *between the mission of the Holy Spirit and that of the Son* in the Redemption. The mission of the Son, in a certain sense, finds its ‘fulfillment’ in the Redemption. The mission of the Holy Spirit ‘draws from’ the Redemption.”<sup>190</sup> Aquinas, who also understood this linking of the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit, explains that “the Holy Ghost is possessed by man, and dwells within him, in the very gift itself of sanctifying grace. Hence the Holy Ghost Himself is given and sent.”<sup>191</sup> That is, the Holy Spirit is the Gift of Sanctification: “But the Holy Spirit,” Miravalle explains

has chosen to perform his divine act of sanctification, which flows from the cross of Christ, *only through the mediation of his human but glorified spouse, Mary*, through whom the Author of all graces was first mediated to the world by the power of the same Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:35; Mt 1:18, 20). The Holy Spirit, as a divine person, and Mary, as an exalted human person, were given *one unified mission from the Father* after Calvary: both were *sent* to take the ineffable graces from the sacrifice of the Redeemer and to sanctify and transform the face of the earth by generously dispensing the gifts of eternal life to the human family.<sup>192</sup>

In other words, just as Mary initially mediated the gift of her Son to the world through her “fiat,” so she also, in some way, mediates the graces of her Son’s Redemption to the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The theologian, Matthias Joseph Scheeben, declares, “Mary is the organ of the Holy Spirit, who works in her

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<sup>189</sup> Pope St. John Paul II, *On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World* (Latin title is *Dominum et Vivificantem*), (Boston, MA: St. Paul Books and Media, 1986), 24 (37). Latin text: “...vinculum inter missionem Filii ac Spiritus Sancti missionem statuitur,” as found online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>190</sup> *Ibidem*, “Nexus pariter proximus constituitur inter missionem Spiritus Sancti ac Filii missionem in ipsa Redemptione. Certo quodam patto Filii missio in Redemptione « completur ». Missio autem Spiritus Sancti. « haurit » ex Redemptione....”

<sup>191</sup> Aquinas, *STb*, I, q. 43, a. 3, resp. “...in ipso dono gratiae gratum facientis, spiritus sanctus habetur, et inhabitat hominem. Unde ipsemet spiritus sanctus datur et mittitur.”

<sup>192</sup> Miravalle, “Mary, Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Foundational Presence in Divine Revelation,” in *Mary, Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 298.

in the same way that Christ's humanity is the instrument of the *Logos*. And this in a more complete and distinctive sense than can be the case of other created beings."<sup>193</sup> Miravalle adds to this,

The sanctifying activity of the Mediatrix must rightly be traced to her mission as the *human instrument of the Holy Spirit* in their one, unified mission of sanctification given by the Father. This understanding and model of Mary as the human instrument of the Holy Spirit in the distribution of graces, comparable to the humanity of Christ as human instrument of the Word, is a monumental breakthrough in understanding the mysterious distribution of graces by the Spirit and Mediatrix.<sup>194</sup>

This "breakthrough" is seen particularly in a letter by St. Maximilian Kolbe, which explains the deep union between the Holy Spirit and Our Blessed Mother. He declares,

The Holy Spirit is in Mary after the fashion, one might say, in which the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word, is in his humanity. There is, of course, this difference: in Jesus there are two natures, divine and human, but one single person who is God. Mary's nature and person are totally distinct from the nature and person of the Holy Spirit. Still, their union is inexpressible, and so perfect that the *Holy Spirit acts only by the Immaculata, his spouse*.<sup>195</sup>

That is, the Holy Spirit imparts grace only by the mediation of Mary. Edouard Hugon notes, "The exterior fecundity of the Divine Paraclete is the production of grace, not in the order of moral causality—for the Holy Ghost is not a meritorious or impetratory cause—but in the order of physical causality . . . . From this it follows that the Holy Ghost produces grace physically in souls by Mary: she is the *secondary physical instrument* of the Holy Ghost."<sup>196</sup> Of course, Mary remains always an instrument; she is not, nor can she be, the Author of Grace, which is a prerogative belonging to God alone.

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<sup>193</sup> Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Mariology*, tr. T. Geukers (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1947), v. II, 185.

<sup>194</sup> Miravalle, *Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 299.

<sup>195</sup> St. Maximilian Kolbe, *Letter to Fr. Salezy Mikolajczyk*, (July 28, 1935), as found in H. M. Manteau-Bonamy, *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit: The Marian Teachings of St. Maximilian Kolbe*, (Libertyville, IL: Franciscan Marytown Press, 1977), 41. Italics added.

<sup>196</sup> Edouard Hugon, *La causalité instrumentale en théologie*, (Paris: Tequi Pierre, 1907), 203, as found in Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 210-211. Italics added.

If it appears that on this point, theologians have overstepped proper boundaries, allow me to cite a pastoral letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary put out by the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The letter invites us to “explore together as Christians ... the bond between Mary and the Holy Spirit,”<sup>197</sup> explaining, “Any correct understanding of Mary’s role must be seen in connection with the predominant role of the Holy Spirit. The Bible provides us with a starting point: St. Luke presents Mary as the humble woman overshadowed by the Holy Spirit in order that Christ be formed.”<sup>198</sup>

## IX. A Fifth Marian Dogma?

The question of whether or not Mary’s mediation of all graces should be declared a fifth Marian dogma has often arisen in recent centuries. The four Marian dogmas taught *de fide* so far are the dogma of Mary as Mother of God or *Theotokos* (431); her perpetual virginity (649 and 1555); her Immaculate Conception (1854); and her Assumption (1950). Therefore, the question arises: Should Mary as Mediatrix of All Graces be declared a fifth Marian dogma of the Catholic Church?

We have clearly seen that Mary’s mediation of all graces is already a part of the teaching of the ordinary Magisterium of the Church, as evidenced in numerous papal documents. It has also been preached widely by the Church Fathers, as well as by more modern-day saints. In addition, as Miravalle notes, “Benedict XV further granted to the ordinaries of the world who petitioned for it, along with Belgium, permission to celebrate the Liturgical Office and Mass of Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces.”<sup>199</sup> Miravalle then adds in a footnote, “Based on the Mass and Office of Mediatrix of all Graces of 1921, the Congregation for Divine Worship approved a Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Mediatrix of Grace in 1971, cf., *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, v. 1, Sacramentary .... The new liturgy refers to Mary as the ‘treasure-house of all graces.’”<sup>200</sup>

But is that reason enough to publicly proclaim Our Lady’s mediation a dogma? First of all, let us look a little closer at what is meant by the development of dogma. Journet explains succinctly,

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<sup>197</sup> *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith*, Pastoral Letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary, by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, (Washington, D.C.: Publications Office, United States Catholic Conference, 1973), 112 (41).

<sup>198</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>199</sup> Miravalle, “Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Foundational Presence in Divine Revelation,” in *Mary, Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 289, citing *La Vie Diocesaine*, v. 10, 1921, 96-106, *Rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Rites*, January 12, 1921.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

On the one hand that which was contained in the original deposit [of faith] explicitly is ever kept in mind by the living authority of the Church, while, on the other hand, that which was contained in the original deposit implicitly, still in a preconceptual, unformulated way, obscure, yet forceful and unavoidable, is explained and put forward in a conceptual and formulated way by the living authority of the Church.<sup>201</sup>

He goes on to explain that this “passage from implicit to explicit gives birth to dogma.”<sup>202</sup> Therefore, “new” dogmas

are new, not by their substance or content, but by the way in which they express and manifest this substance or content. The early Church did not of course know them expressly, but it knew their source, the articles of faith from which they have been derived. Far from disavowing them as they now are, it would rather realize that it had always held and confessed them in their root and principle.<sup>203</sup>

Yet, not all articles of faith are officially declared dogma. As Journet notes, “Down the ages, it has been to safeguard the transcendence of the truths of faith, as first formulated in the Gospel, against conscious or unconscious rationalizations that dogmas have been defined.”<sup>204</sup> What truths of the faith are safeguarded by declaring Mary as Mediatrix of All Graces? Although I do not have the space here to examine all the advantages (or possible disadvantages) to proclaiming Our Lady’s mediation to be a dogma of faith, I will mention a few now.

First of all, one could anticipate the following advantages, or benefits: 1) an increased devotion to Mary as the Mother of God and our Mother and Mediatrix before God, resulting also in a renewal of the practice of spiritual motherhood (i.e., a mediation for others by way of intercession) in all baptized persons; 2) a more theologically-correct understanding of Our Lady’s role in the plan of salvation, bringing about a greater sense of gratitude in the Church toward her; and 3) as a result of the above, a deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ and of His Church.

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<sup>201</sup> Charles Journet, “What is Dogma?,” in *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Section I: Knowledge and Faith, vol. 4, ed. Henri Daniel-Rops, (New York, NY: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1964), 54.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibidem.*

With regard to the first, Miravalle explains that “The definition would help each baptized person to better understand that Mary is, in a unique way, the Mother by whom each baptized person exercises his/her own spiritual motherhood, mainly through the apostolate of prayer.”<sup>205</sup> That is, we practice spiritual motherhood in mediating for others by way of intercession.

As for the second point, “The definition would express the gratitude of the Church toward the very Holy Virgin for her unique and privileged collaboration in the mystery of her Redemption by Christ . . . , and of her sorrowful compassion, at the foot of the Cross.”<sup>206</sup> Here we see one of the key principles from which flows Mary’s mediation, which is her coredeemption. Of course, this coredeemption really began with her “Fiat,” in agreeing to become the Mother of the Redeemer.

Finally, with respect to the third advantage to proclaiming the dogma of Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces, one should note that Pope Bl. Paul VI stated in his discourse at the conclusion of the third session of the Second Vatican Council, “Knowledge of the true Catholic doctrine concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary will always be an efficacious aid to correctly understanding the mystery of Christ and of the Church.”<sup>207</sup> That is, by growing in our understanding of Mary’s role as Mediatrix, we also see more clearly how the Church is to relate to Christ, her Spouse, and in particular, how the Church is called to participate in His mediation and in His reconciliation of the world to the Father.

I will now list some disadvantages, or objections to declaring Mary’s mediation a dogma and possible responses to these. Bertrand de Margerie poses and replies to three objections with regard to another possible future dogma concerning Mary’s spiritual maternity, but which are equally applicable with regard to her mediation: The first objection he poses is “*a definition seems useless, since precisely, this truth is already recognized as a truth of faith [by the ordinary magisterium].*”<sup>208</sup> In reply, de Margerie answers that

a dogmatic definition, as it is evident in the great trinitarian [*sic*] and christological [*sic*] councils, perfects the ecclesiastical knowledge of the truth, for it may not be easy for certain mem-

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<sup>205</sup> Miravalle, *Mary, Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 210.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>207</sup> Pope Bl. Paul VI, *Conclusionione della III Sessione del Concilio Vaticano II: Allocuzione del Santo Padre, Paolo VI*, 28. Latin text: “...cognitio verae doctrinae catholicae de Beata Maria Virgine semper subsidium erit efficax ad recte intellegendum mysterium Christi et Ecclesiae.” Translation mine.

<sup>208</sup> Bertrand de Margerie, “Can the Church Define Dogmatically the Spiritual Motherhood of Mary? Objections and Answers,” transl. by Salwa Hamati, (191-214) in Miravalle, *Mary, Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 199.

bers of the People of God to discern clearly the revealed truth, recognized as such by the Church with the help of its ordinary magisterium alone. A definition does not only bring out the considered truths, but more so helps to distinguish it from related truths.<sup>209</sup>

Another objection is that of “the ‘*ecumenical scandal*’ of a possible definition.”<sup>210</sup> In other words, would officially proclaiming Mary as Mediatrix of All Graces not become an obstacle to any reunification of Protestant communities or Orthodox Churches with the Catholic Church? While it is true that the proclamation of this dogma would likely result in objections coming from Protestants, Orthodox, and even some Catholics, de Margerie notes it is *not* that the definition “would constitute *in itself* an obstacle,” since this truth is already held by the Church.<sup>211</sup> In fact, he points out that there were similar fears regarding the definition of the Assumption by Pope Pius XII, but nevertheless, “this definition did not impede the promulgation, fifteen years later, ... of the Decree on Ecumenism by Vatican Council II. Neither, consequently, was the great development of the ecumenical bond that resulted interrupted.”<sup>212</sup>

Indeed, promulgating Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces as a dogma might actually facilitate Christian reunification. Pope Leo XIII clearly states the role of Our Lady in uniting Christians in his encyclical, *Adjutricem Populi*:

Mary will be the happy bond to draw together, with strong and yet gentle constraint, all those who love Christ, wherever they may be, to form a nation of brothers, yielding obedience to the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff, their common Father .... For Mary has not brought forth—nor could she—those who are of Christ except in the one same faith and in the one same love.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>213</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Adjutricem Populi*, (September 5, 1895), 17 and 27, as found online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). Latin text from *ASS* 28:129-136, ed. Victorii Piazzesi, (Romae: S. Congr. de Propaganda Fide, 1895-1896; reprinted in New York, NY: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), 135: “*Mariam nimirum felix vinculum fore, cuius firma lenique vi, eorum omnium, quotquot ubique sunt, qui diligunt Christum, unus fratrum populus fiat, Vicario eius in terris, Pontifici romano, tamquam communi Patri obsequentium.... Nam qui Christi sunt, eo Maria non peperit nec parere poterat, nisi in una fide unoque amore....*”

Finally, de Margerie lists the objection concerning whether this truth “has already reached the degree of maturity necessary for its definition? Are there not still numerous discussions and disagreements among Catholic theologians on Mary’s mediation, on the nature of her association to the redemptive work of Christ...? *How could the Church define a doctrine that does not appear to be fully developed?*”<sup>214</sup>

De Margerie responds,

A dogmatic definition would not have to enter into or take part in technical discussions among theologians; it is not the custom with the supreme magisterium of the Church to do that, or to suppress the freedom of discussion among theologians in matters that are not of faith; .... But it is obvious that the Church can define, by virtue of its extraordinary magisterium, a doctrine that it already considers as *de fide*..., without going into academic disputes, without pretending that no other subsequent study in depth be feasible any more. There will always be theological controversies about Mary, just as there are about Christ or the Trinity. After an eventual definition ..., within the unity of a deeper and more conscious faith, the freedom of research and theological discussions on many aspects of the defined mystery will persist.<sup>215</sup>

Other possible objections to the defining of Mary as Mediatrix of All Graces can be found in the work of Emil Neubert. One common objection he gives is that “Mary is not necessary to God.”<sup>216</sup> In other words, God does not “need Mary to distribute His gifts to men,”<sup>217</sup> but can distribute these graces to us directly. Neubert admits that this is certainly true, but adds, “What we wish to know is not whether God *must*, but whether He *wishes* to use Mary in the distribution of graces; not whether the distribution of all graces by Mary is intrinsically necessary, but whether it is necessary because of a free decree of God.”<sup>218</sup>

A second objection listed by Neubert is the fact that other saints also intercede on our behalf. Can God not distribute grace to us directly through them? Certainly He could. Yet, as noted above, He *wills* that even the graces obtained for us by the saints should come to us through His Mother. The reason for this, explains Neu-

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<sup>214</sup> De Margerie, “Can the Church Define Dogmatically the Spiritual Motherhood of Mary? Objections and Answers,” in Miravalle, *Mary, Coredeptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, 207-208. Italics original.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Neubert, *Mary in Doctrine*, 108.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>218</sup> *Ibidem.*

bert, “is not the sanctity of Mary but her co-operation in the Redemption. If some saint had co-operated, as Mary did, in the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption, that is to say, in the acquisition of grace, we could rightly conclude that he would be able to distribute grace as Mary does.”<sup>219</sup>

Neubert also points out a papal decision which makes it clear that even the graces that come to us from the saints first pass through Mary’s hands. Citing the canonization of St. Joan of Arc, Neubert notes that one of the two miracles accepted in proof of her sanctity was a “a cure resulting from prayers addressed both to her [St. Joan of Arc] and to Our Lady of Lourdes.”<sup>220</sup> When some wanted to exclude this miracle from the process of canonization (since a miracle attributed to two saints is automatically disregarded), Pope Benedict XV chose to admit it, explaining,

if in all miracles, it is fitting to recognize Mary’s mediation, by which according to the Divine Will all graces and all benefits come to us, we could not deny that in one of the miracles indicated above this mediation of the Most Holy Virgin was manifested in a very special manner. We believe Our Lord has so disposed things in order to remind the faithful that they should never forget Mary, not even when it seems that a miracle should be attributed to the intercession of a Blessed or of a Saint.<sup>221</sup>

Finally, Neubert inquires whether sacramental grace can truly be subject to the Blessed Virgin’s intercession, asking, “Does not the sacrament have its effect by its own power, *ex opere operato* ...? Is Mary’s intercession necessary?”<sup>222</sup>

However, as Neubert points out, this objection lacks real merit, because “it must include a sophism since it could be used against the universal intercession of Christ as well as against that of His Mother.”<sup>223</sup> In addition, he says, “in the granting of sacramental graces Mary intervenes just as she does in the ... [other cases], for it is she who obtains for the soul the grace to receive the sacrament together with the grace it confers.”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 109. Neubert adds a footnote here (n. 54) with regard to St. Joseph, who did cooperate “in these mysteries in a certain way, and that is why he, too, enjoys a certain universal power of intercession. But since his co-operation in the Redemption was only mediate and inferior to that of Mary, his power of intercession is also mediate—being exercised through Mary—and inferior to that of his Spouse.”

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, citing *La Documentation Catholique*, Vol. 1, Apr. 19, 1919.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.



So, then, ought the mystery of Mary as Mediatrix of All Graces be proclaimed a dogma of the Catholic Church? In the judgment of Garrigou-Lagrange,

There is therefore no serious difficulty against defining Mary's universal mediation as a dogma of faith, provided it is understood as we have indicated: as a mediation subordinate to that of Jesus and depending on His merits; as a mediation which is not considered to add any necessary complement to Jesus' merits, the value of which is infinite and superabundant, but which shows forth the influence and fruitfulness of those same merits in a soul fully conformed to Him . . . . Mary's universal mediation seems to be even more certain, if we consider the principles which underlie it: the divine maternity, the motherhood of men, and the venerable tradition which contrasts Mary and Eve [i.e., Mary's coredeemption]. Since this is so, and since the ordinary *magisterium* of the Church makes Mary's universal mediation to be theologically certain, we can only hope and pray that it be one day defined so as to increase devotion to her who is the watchful and loving Mother of all men.<sup>225</sup>

## X. Conclusion

In this essay, I have discussed what it means to be a mediator and have shown that, although Christ is truly the "one mediator between God and man," we are all called to share, in some subordinate way, in this mediation, by interceding for souls and seeking to lead them to God. Just as we participate in God's perfections both on a natural and supernatural level, so we are also called to participate in Christ and in His mediation.

Mary, by reason of her divine maternity, in particular, and also because of her cooperation with her Son in the redemption of souls and her spiritual motherhood of all mankind, participates in Christ's mediation in a special manner. Like her Son, hers is a universal mediation, although one which always remains subordinate to His. She is the New Eve, exercising at least a moral and dispositive causality, and seemingly also a physical-instrumental causality, analogous to that of the humanity of Christ, in conferring grace upon all men. She is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, who worked through her in the Incarnation, and continues to work through her in her spiritual motherhood. Popes and saints throughout Church history have, con-

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<sup>225</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 221-222. Words in brackets added.

sequently, honored her with the title of “mediatrix.” We have also seen that Mary is the Mediatrix of *All* Graces, both particular and general.

In addition, I have discussed specific differences between Christ’s mediation and that of Mary (e.g., His mediation is principal, whereas hers is secondary to His), as well as differences in merit, i.e., although she was not able to merit the first grace of her Immaculate Conception, she did merit, at least *congruously*, the graces of redemption for others, together with Her Son, through her participation in His sufferings, whereas He merited for us *de condigno*.

Finally, we have seen that to proclaim Mary’s mediation of all graces as the fifth Marian dogma certainly appears to be well-founded and beneficial for members of the Catholic Church and for all who seek to follow Our Lord. It would not only result in an increased devotion to Our Lady as Mediatrix and Mother, with a resulting promotion of spiritual motherhood among her children (i.e., a mediation for others by way of intercession), but it would also make Mary’s role in salvation history more clear and thus, also, clarify the role of the Church and the Church’s relationship to Christ.

No one on this earth can have had a closer relationship to Jesus Christ than His Mother. In coming to understand better the special role Divine Providence gave her as Mediatrix of All Graces, we thereby come to know more intimately Her Son, since, as a true Mother, she always points us toward Him.

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