

the Advocate for the People of God, that is, a mother pleading on behalf of her children.

Thus, Mary not only mediates the graces of God to humanity as Mediatrix, but she also mediates the petitions of the human family back to God as our Advocate.

Church Teaching

In his apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (The Coming Third Millennium), Pope John Paul II tells us that **“Mary in fact constantly points to her Divine Son and she is proposed to all believers as the model of faith which is put into practice”** (no. 43, original emphasis). The role of Mary as Co-redemptrix offers us the rich ecclesial model of our becoming coworkers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9) or co-redeemers in Christ. Since she is the preeminent model of the Church, every revealed truth about Mary provides the church inspiration and wisdom in her quest to “conquer sin and increase in holiness” (LG 65).

The Marian model of Co-redemptrix offers a particular richness to the Church regarding the Christian call to be co-redeemers in Christ, based on Saint Paul’s exhortation to every Christian to “make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, for the sake of the body, which is the Church” (Col. 1:24). The preeminent example of this scriptural call of cooperation in the work of redemption is most certainly Mary Co-redemptrix. “Co-redeemers in Christ” as a description of the Family of God echoes the compelling Vatican II theme that calls every Christian to bring Christ to the world and to collaborate with the Redeemer in bringing the graces of salvation to all peoples today.

Mary’s co-redemptive example is a constant reminder to the faithful that we must all work

alongside the Redeemer in bringing the saving Gospel of Christ into the world: to offer our meritorious sufferings for the glory of God and the salvation of souls in the order of the priesthood of the laity, as well as in the ministerial priesthood;; to participate through acts of charity and Christian works of mercy in the application of the graces of Calvary to the world today, a world that remains in such grave need of the Redeemer’s spiritual and social liberation; to realize the sublime ecclesial dignity of freely and personally cooperating with grace for our own salvation and the salvation of all humanity; and to be incarnate witnesses after the model of Mary Co-redemptrix to the fundamental truth that human suffering can be redemptive.

Mary is the “dawn” before Christ the “Day,” for the Father willed that the mother precedes the incarnate Son in the history of salvation. And, as the announcement of the motherhood of Mary by the angel Gabriel preceded and prepared for the Incarnation, so one can see the profound significance of deepening our understanding of Mary’s maternal mediation as we celebrate the third millennium of Christ’s Incarnation.

May the Holy Spirit guide the Church in her reflection on Mary’s role in our salvation, and enable the People of God to listen attentively to what the Spirit is “saying to the Churches” (cf. Rev. 2:7) today about our common mother (*Redemptoris Mater*, 30). May we do our part in fulfilling the great Marian prophecy inspired by the same Spirit that “all generations will call [Mary] blessed” (Lk. 1:48).

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Mary’s Role in Our Salvation

What is Mary’s role in our salvation? Isn’t Jesus Christ the one Mediator between God and Man?

Mary’s role can be summarized in the terms Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate (cf. Catechism, no. 969). Mary’s maternal role in our salvation, as summarized by these titles, is part of the constant teaching of the Church.

Saint Paul teaches us that “there is one mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:5). Mary’s participation in salvation history as Mother of Christ and Mother of Christians does not diminish the unique mediation of Christ; rather, it points to Christ’s unique mediation and reveals its power (Lumen Gentium [LG] 60.).

Just as human fathers participate in the one Fatherhood of God, and priests participate in the one priesthood of Christ, so also God has chosen to associate Mary in a unique way with Christ’s one mediation.

Mary’s pivotal role in salvation history did not end with her giving birth to the Son of God, but

rather continues to the present time. If we acknowledge that we can pray for each other as members of the Body of Christ (e.g., 1 Thess. 5:25, 2 Thess. 1:11), then surely, we would want the prayers of the woman whom all generations call blessed (Lk. 1:48). After all, not even death can separate the members of God's family (Rom. 8:38-39).

Co-redemptrix

The title "Co-redemptrix" is a term that **refers** to Mary's unique and intimate cooperation with her divine Son in redeeming the human family. The title is rooted in Gen. 3:15, where Mary is "prophetically foreshadowed in the promise of victory over the serpent" (LG 55). This passage foreshadows the divine work of redemption brought about by Jesus as the Savior of the world, with the Mother of the Redeemer's intimate cooperation.

Jesus as true God and true man redeems the human family, and Mary as "Co-redemptrix" participates with the divine Redeemer in a completely subordinate and dependent way. Mary's human participation remains a uniquely privileged and exalted one, one that was entirely contingent upon her free and meritorious "yes" in her words, "[L]et it be to me according to Your word" (Lk. 1:38).

As explained by Pope John Paul II: Crucified spiritually with her crucified Son (cf. Gal. 2:20), she contemplated with heroic love the death of her God, she "lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth" (LG 58) ... as she was in a special way close to the Cross of her Son, she also had to have a privileged experience of His Resurrection. In fact, Mary's role as co-redemptrix did not cease with the glorification of her Son.

Through faith and Baptism, we become God's children by adoption and participate in the divine life. As new creations in Christ, we cooperate in His redemptive work. While this is true of all Christians, it is most perfectly true of Mary, who was never wounded or enslaved by sin and therefore was perfectly free to give herself completely to Christ.

Mediatrix of All Graces

Mary is called "Mediatrix" (Catechism, no. 969) because all grace comes from Christ, and Christ comes only through Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mary is also known as the "Mother of all Christians." This title refers to Our Lord's words from the Cross to Mary and John (Jn. 19:26-27). At the time of His death, Jesus gave Mary to John and John to Mary. "From that hour [John] took her to his own home" (Jn. 19:27). John represented the Church at the foot of the Cross. Therefore, all of us are invited to welcome Mary into our homes as our mother.

The Holy Spirit makes this point again through Saint John in Rev. 12:17, when "the woman," the mother of the Redeemer, is also described as the mother of all who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. God chose to save us by becoming man and allowing the Blessed Virgin to be His mother. Our salvation comes by being grafted into the Family of God by faith and Baptism. In a family, the mother is necessary, and so Mary in this sense, is necessary for salvation.

In the Old and New Testaments, God used angels to mediate His messages and His grace. Vatican II teaches that after Mary was taken up into heaven, "she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation" (LG 62).

Mary participates in the mediation of Christ in a way unlike any other creature. In Jn. 2, her mediation at the wedding of Cana led to the first public miracle and the beginning of Jesus public ministry. In Lk. 1:41, her physical mediation brings the unborn Jesus to His unborn cousin, John the Baptist, who is sanctified in Elizabeth's womb. So, through Mary's mediation, and her active participation with God's grace, Christ is brought to others.

The very first verse of the New Testament introduces Jesus to the world as "Son of Abraham, Son of David" (Mt. 1:1). As Son of David, Jesus is the King of Israel. All the kings in Jerusalem had a queen, but she was not their wife. Rather, the queen was their mother. Scripture tells us that King Solomon, for example, had 700 wives and 300 concubines. The queen was shown devotion by all – even the king (1 Kings 2:19) – and sat in the king's presence to make intercession for the people. Since Mary is alive in Christ, she lives to intercede for her children.

Mary, Our Advocate

This leads to the third title of Mary, that of "Advocate for the People of God." The early Church manifested her heartfelt belief in the intercessory power of Mary, to whom she called for help and protection in the midst of dangers and trials. The Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen), composed in the eleventh century, includes this venerable title. Vatican II continues this ancient practice of invoking Mary under the title that conveys her role as intercessory helper for the People of God in times of peril: "Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the [title] of Advocate[.]..." (LG 62).

This mediating role of Mary in God's plan of salvation includes the providential task of being