

Co-redemptrix? Mary points us to Christ, the one Redeemer

Earlier this week, the day before the great solemnity of the Annunciation, Pope Francis devoted his Wednesday general audience to prayer in communion with Mary. [During his audience](#), the pope reminded us that Christian prayer is raised to God “through Christ, with Christ and in Christ.” Referring to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, he notes that “Christ is the Mediator; Christ is the bridge that we cross to turn to the Father” (cf. No. 2674). He then states that Christ “is the only redeemer; there are no co-redeemers with Christ.”

When Pope Francis says there are no co-redeemers with Christ, he is speaking in terms of Christ’s unique status as the God-man, the one mediator between God and the human race (cf. 1 Tm 2:5). This is made clear by his citation of Acts 4:12: “there is no other name by which we can be saved.” He is not denying the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that “the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source” (*Lumen Gentium*, No. 62). It is in this latter sense that Pope St. John Paul II, when speaking to the sick at the Fatebenefratelli Hospital on April 5, 1981, reminded them that they could unite their sufferings to the passion of Christ as “co-redeemers of humanity” (*corredentori dell’umanità*). In the same way, Pope Benedict XVI, when blessing the sick at Fatima on May 13, 2010, told them that their sufferings, when united to Christ, can “become – according to his design – a means of redemption for the whole world.” In this way, he said, “You will be redeemers with the Redeemer, just as you are sons in the Son.”

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When Pope Francis tells us in his recent general audience that the Madonna comes to us “as a Mother, not as a goddess, not as a co-redeemer,” he is emphasizing Mary’s maternal role, which is that of the *Odigitria*, “the one who ‘shows the way’ ... to her Son and in connection with Him” (cf. CCC, No. 2674). Mary’s role as Mother is never separated from her divine Son and never takes anything away from him. St. Louis de Montfort exclaims, “Lord, you are always with Mary, and Mary is always with you.” St. Louis also teaches that “Jesus, our Savior, true God and true man, must be the ultimate end” of all devotions; and if our devotion to Mary “distracted us from Our Lord, we would have to reject it as an illusion of the devil.”

The title “co-redemptrix” has been used by many saints and spiritual writers. The title only received papal approval, however, during the 20th century. During the pontificate of Pope Pius X, the Holy See three times gave approval to prayers invoking Mary as co-redemptrix. Pope John Paul II publicly used the title “co-redemptrix” at least six times. Moreover, in a homily in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on Jan. 31, 1985, John Paul II spoke of the “co-redemptive role of Mary” (*el papel corredentor de María*), which can be translated as “the role of Mary as co-redemptrix.”

The Second Vatican Council chose not to use the title, but it did affirm Mary’s unique collaboration in the work of redemption, especially in *Lumen Gentium*, where, citing St. Irenaeus, we are told that Mary “being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race” (No. 56). Pope Francis has also spoken of Mary’s unique role in the work of salvation. In his homily of Jan. 1, 2020, he stated: “Mary will forever be the Mother of God. She is both woman and mother: this is what is essential. From her, a woman, salvation came forth and thus there is no salvation without a woman.”

In Wednesday’s general audience, Pope Francis wants to highlight Mary as our Mother who always points us to her

divine Son. He wishes to remind us that Mary is a disciple of her Son – not a goddess or co-redeemer who takes away anything from Christ, the God-man, the redeemer of the human race.

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