

***Mater Populi Fidelis* – Doctrinal Note on Some Marian Titles Regarding Mary's Cooperation in the Work of Salvation**

The document *Mater Populi Fidelis* clarifies the proper relationship between Christ's unique mediation and Mary's cooperation in the work of salvation, preserving the balance that Christian doctrine requires (n. 3). It encourages focusing on titles rooted in scripture and tradition, such as "Mother of God" and "Mother of all the faithful."

Why this New Document from DDF?

1. To Prevent Confusion among the Faithful

This doctrinal note directly addresses widespread confusion, especially spread by social media and new Marian devotions using titles like *Co-Redemptrix* and *Mediatrix of All Graces*.

Many Catholics, including those in prayer groups, Retreats, and online forums, use these terms without clear understanding, risking doctrinal errors and undermining Catholic identity.

2. Fidelity to Authentic Catholic Teaching

The Church has reaffirmed: Christ alone is the Redeemer and Mediator. Any Marian title must respect Mary's unique but subordinate role.

The official clarification helps Catholics avoid unintentionally attributing to Mary a role that belongs exclusively to Christ. This is to avoid "the risk of eclipsing the exclusive role of Jesus Christ – the Son of God made man for our salvation, who was the only one capable of offering the Father a sacrifice of infinite value..." (n. 22).

3. Promote Ecumenical Sensitivity

Clear Catholic teaching on Mary's role aids dialogue with other Christian communities, who misunderstand Catholic devotion as attributing divine status or redemptive power to Mary.

Key Points in the Document

1. Christ the Redeemer

Jesus alone saves us from sin and death by his life, death, and resurrection. Only his divine Person and his sacrifice on the Cross actually accomplish our redemption (Eph. 1-11; Colo. 1:19-20).

Christ is the redeemer of Mary. Mary's preservation from original sin (the Immaculate Conception) is understood as a gift of Christ's redemptive work applied to her in advance. It shows her dependence on Christ's one Redemption. The dogma (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 1854) teaches that from the first instant of her conception Mary was preserved immune from original sin by a singular grace of God. In theological terms, Mary was redeemed by Christ, but "preventively" or "anticipatively."

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception highlights the primacy and unicity of Christ in the work of Redemption, for it teaches that Mary – the first to be redeemed – was herself redeemed by Christ and transformed by the Spirit, prior to any possible action of her own. From this special condition of being the first redeemed by Christ and the first transformed by the Holy Spirit, Mary is able to cooperate more intensely and profoundly with Christ and the Spirit, becoming the prototype, model and exemplar of what God wants to accomplish in every person who is redeemed." (*Mater Populi Fidelis*, n. 14).

What Mary's "Fiat" means (her cooperation)

Mary freely said "Let it be done to me" to God (her "yes") at the Annunciation. By saying yes, she welcomed Jesus into the world. "Mary's response opened the gates of the Redemption that all humanity had awaited..." (*Mater Populi Fidelis*, n. 25). Her cooperation is real and essential in God's plan, but it does not add to or complete Christ's saving work. It allows the Savior to come to us. Her "yes" is genuine cooperation in God's plan, but it is always dependent on and ordered to Christ's unique saving work. She does not create or add to the efficacy of his Redemption.

The cooperation of the Mother with her Son in the work of Salvation has been taught by the Second Vatican Council: "rightly, therefore, the holy Fathers see Mary not merely as a passive instrument in the hands of God, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience" (LG 56, 60). This cooperation is present not only in Jesus' earthly life (at his conception, birth, death, and Resurrection) but also throughout the life of the Church (*Mater Populi Fidelis*, n. 13).

Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI): "The formula 'Co-redemptrix' departs to too great an extent from the language of Scripture and of the Fathers and therefore gives rise to misunderstandings... Everything comes from Him [Christ], as the Letter to the Ephesians and the Letter to the Colossians, in particular, tell us; Mary, too, is everything that she is through Him. The word 'Co-redemptrix' would obscure this origin." [*God and the World: Believing and Living in Our Time: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, trans. H. Taylor, San Francisco 2002, 306].

Pope Francis: Christ "is the only Redeemer; there are no co-redeemers with Christ." [General Audience (24 March 2021): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24 March 2021, 8.]

Mater Populi Fidelis, n. 22: "Given the necessity of explaining Mary's subordinate role to Christ in the work of Redemption, it would not be appropriate to use the title "Co-redemptrix" to define Mary's cooperation. This title risks obscuring Christ's unique salvific mediation and can therefore create confusion and an imbalance in the harmony of the truths of the Christian faith, for "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12)."

In short, Christ acts as the source and cause of salvation. Mary cooperates as a faithful disciple and mother; her role is subordinate, dependent, and entirely rooted in Christ's work.

2. Christ the Mediator

Why Christ's mediation is unique?

Mater Populi Fidelis, n. 24: Christ is true God and true man in one Person. Because he unites God and humanity in himself, he alone bridges the gap caused by sin. This is the true meaning of the expression "Mediator." His once-for-all sacrifice and resurrection are the one, sufficient "bridge" between God and us. There is "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5).

Christ's Unique Mediation

Christ prays for us before the Father in his capacity as High Priest of the New Covenant. In John 17, the Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays not only for the apostles but for all who will believe through their word, asking the Father to sanctify them, keep them, and bring them to eternal glory. The Letter to the Hebrews emphasizes that Christ, having offered himself once as the perfect and

definitive sacrifice, “always lives to make intercession for us” Heb 7:25. Christ, in his glorified humanity, continues to intercede for us in heaven. The heavenly mediation of Christ is the source and model of all other intercession in the Church. Mary and the saints participate in this intercessory mystery, but always as those who pray within Christ’s priestly work. Mary’s maternal intercession is entirely subordinate to and dependent on Christ’s unique mediation. Mary, as the pre-eminent member of the body of Christ and most closely united to her Son, participates most fully in this intercessory role as our mother (Jn. 19:26-27; cf. LG 60-62).

Mater Populi Fidelis, n. 28: The unicity of Christ’s mediation is “inclusive.” He enables various forms of participation in his salvific plan because, in communion with him, we can all become, in some way, cooperators with God and “mediators” for one another (cf. 1 Cor 3:9). Precisely because of Christ’s infinitely supreme power, he can elevate his brothers and sisters to make them capable of a genuine cooperation in the accomplishment of his plans.

Mary’s intercession

Mater Populi Fidelis, n. 25: In common language, “mediation” means interceding or helping others, and Mary’s role fits this subordinate sense of intercession – not to be confused with Christ’s unique role as the one Mediator (n. 25).

Mother Mary prays for us, like a mother bringing our needs to Jesus (cf. Jn. 2:3), and instructs us to do whatever Jesus says (cf. Jn. 2:5). It is participatory and secondary – she does not stand between us and God as another necessary bridge; she prays within Christ’s one mediation. Any grace she helps us receive still comes from Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

Mater Populi Fidelis, n. 33: The expression “participated mediation” can express a precise and valuable sense of Mary’s role, but if misunderstood, it could easily obscure or even contradict it.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (as the Prefect of CDF in 1996): The title “Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces” was not clearly grounded in Revelation.

Mater Populi Fidelis, n. 53: “No human person – not even the Apostles or the Blessed Virgin – can act as a universal dispenser of grace. Only God can bestow grace, and he does so through the humanity of Christ...”

Mater Populi Fidelis, n. 67: “Some titles, such as ‘Mediatrix of All Graces,’ have limits that do not favor a correct understanding of Mary’s unique place. In fact, she, the first redeemed, could not have been the mediatrix of the grace that she herself received.”

In short, Christ alone redeems and mediates; his work is complete and sufficient. Christ’s mediation is unique, sole, necessary, and saving by his divine Person and sacrifice; while Mary’s intercession is derivative, maternal, helpful, and entirely dependent on Christ’s mediation. Mary’s “yes” made room for the Redeemer and her prayers support us as disciples.

Devotion to Mary should always lead to and highlight Christ’s unique saving work.

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