



S S P X

## *Interview with the Superior General of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X*

### **On the publication of *Mater Populi fidelis***

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*“To deny the title of Co-Redemptrix is tantamount to dethroning the Most Blessed Virgin. Such a thing wounds the Catholic soul in what is dearest to it.”*

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**FSSPX.News:** *Reverend Superior General, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (hereinafter “DDF”) issued a document entitled Mater Populi Fidelis, which restricts the use of certain titles traditionally attributed to the Most Blessed Virgin. What was your first reaction to it?*

**Don Davide Pagliarani:** I must confess that it had a profound impact on me. Although Pope Leo XIV had already expressed his desire for continuity with his predecessor, I did not expect a document issued by a Roman dicastery aimed at restricting the use of those titles—so rich in meaning—which the Church has traditionally attributed to the Virgin. My first reaction was to celebrate a Mass in reparation for this new attack against Tradition and, still more, against the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

Indeed, not only is the use of the titles Co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces being called into question, but their traditional meaning is being denaturalised. This is graver still, for the denial of these truths is tantamount to dethroning the Most Blessed Virgin, and that wounds the Catholic soul in what is dearest to it. In truth, together with the Most Holy Eucharist, the Most Blessed Virgin represents the most precious gift that Our Lord has bequeathed to us.

*What struck you the most?*

First of all, the very fact of considering the use of the term Co-Redemptrix as “always inappropriate,” which, in practice, amounts to forbidding it. The reason given is as follows: “When



an expression requires many, repeated explanations to prevent it from straying from a correct meaning, it does not serve the faith of the People of God and becomes unhelpful.<sup>1</sup>

Now then, this is not an exotic term suggested by a visionary after a doubtful apparition, but an expression which the Church has employed for centuries and whose precise meaning has been clearly established by theologians. Moreover, several Popes have used this expression. The paradox is that John Paul II himself employed this title on several occasions. In his Magisterium, Saint Pius X defines very clearly both the foundation and the scope of Our Lady's co-redemption, although he does not use this exact term, but rather that of "Reparatrix of the lost world."

### *What does he say exactly?*

In his Marian encyclical *Ad diem illum* (2 February 1904), Saint Pius X addresses, in a very direct and lucid manner, both the co-redemption and even the universal mediation of Mary. Let us allow him to explain it in his own words:

"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<sup>2</sup>.

And from this community of will and suffering between Christ and Mary 'she merited to become most worthily the Reparatrix of the lost world<sup>3</sup>' and Dispensatrix of all the gifts that Our Saviour purchased for us by His Death and by His Blood. 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 the 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>4</sup>.

The source, then, is Jesus Christ 'of whose fullness we have all received<sup>5</sup>', 'from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in charity<sup>6</sup>'. But Mary, as St. Bernard justly remarks, is the 'channel<sup>7</sup>'; or, if you will, the connecting portion the function of which is to join the body to the head and to transmit to the body the influences and volitions of the head - We mean the neck. Yes, says St. Bernardine of Sienna, 'she is the neck of Our Head, by which He communicates to His mystical body all spiritual gifts<sup>8</sup>.

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

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<sup>1</sup> *Mater Populi fidelis*, n. 22.

<sup>2</sup> S. Bonav. 1. Sent d. 48, ad Litt. dub. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Eadmeri Mon. De Excellentia Virg. Mariae, c. 9

<sup>4</sup> Pius IX, *Ineffabilis*.

<sup>5</sup> John i., 16.

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians iv., 16.

<sup>7</sup> Serm. de temp on the Nativ. B. V. *De Aquaeductu* n. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Quadrag. de Evangelio æterno, Serm. X, a. III, c. 3.*



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. Jesus ‘sitteth on the right hand of the majesty on high’<sup>9</sup>; Mary sitteth at the right hand of her Son—‘a refuge so secure and a help so trusty against all dangers that we have nothing to fear or to despair of under her guidance, her patronage, her protection’<sup>10, 11</sup>”

This quotation is certainly lengthy, yet it contains the very answers to the conclusions set forth in the doctrinal note of the DDF. Moreover, it is worth noting that this encyclical of Saint Pius X is mentioned only in a footnote at the end of the text, but never actually cited. The reason is easy to grasp: it is not compatible with the new theological orientation.

*But what do you believe is the real reason why the DDF now considers the concept of co-redemption to be “always inappropriate”?*

The reason is, first of all, ecumenical. It must be understood that the notion of co-redemption, like that of universal mediation, is absolutely incompatible with Protestant theology and spirit. These notions had already been set aside at the time of the Council, after a heated debate in which a number of the Council Fathers called for the universal mediation to be defined as a dogma of faith.

This exclusion, inspired by ecumenism, has had the disastrous effect of diminishing the faith. If the traditional teaching on the Most Blessed Virgin is not regularly recalled, it is ultimately lost. In other words, those who drafted this document are truly convinced that these are dangerous terms for the faith. This is catastrophic.

The text, in its entirety, constantly repeats that the Most Blessed Virgin must in no way offend against the uniqueness and centrality of the mediation of Our Lord and His unique role as Redeemer. This concern seems almost pathological—a kind of spiritual paranoia, inexplicable in a Catholic. Indeed, no faithful soul, instructed in the truths of the faith, who turns to the Most Blessed Virgin and allows himself to be guided by her, can possibly run the risk of venerating her excessively to the detriment of Our Lord. Marian devotion, enlightened by faith, has only one purpose: to allow us to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of Our Lord and of Redemption. This was well understood—and practised—until the Council. Here we are faced with a vicious circle bordering on the absurd: we are warned against a supposedly excessive means of attaining an end, when that very means has been given to us precisely for that end.

*Do you believe that the ecumenical concern is the only reason behind this initiative of the Vatican?*

I believe another reason must be taken into account. The expressions censured in the Roman document are directly related to the mystery of Redemption and to the grace that flows from it. Yet, tragically, the very concept of Redemption is no longer the same today. The ideas of “expiatory sacrifice for our sins” and “sacrifice satisfying divine justice” are being increasingly abandoned. The notion of a sacrifice offered to God to appease His justice is no longer accepted. In the modern perspective, Our Lord does not really need to merit, nor to make satisfaction for our sins, nor to offer an expiatory sacrifice, for the mercy of God is not altered by the reality of man’s sin: it is unconditional. God always forgives, out of sheer generosity.

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<sup>9</sup> Hebrews i. b.

<sup>10</sup> Pius IX, *Ineffabilis*.

<sup>11</sup> Pius X, *Ad diem illum*.



Consequently, Our Lord is Redeemer in a completely new sense: His death is nothing more than the ultimate and supreme manifestation of this merciful love of the Father<sup>12</sup>. It should not, therefore, surprise us that from this distortion of the concept of Redemption there inevitably arises a fundamental incapacity to understand how and why the Virgin could have been associated with it through her suffering.

In this regard, the text of the DDF contains a revealing warning: “Therefore, one must avoid titles and expressions that present Mary as a kind of ‘lightning rod’ before the Lord’s justice, as if she were a necessary alternative before the insufficiency of God’s mercy.<sup>13</sup>”

### *Going back to the concept of “co-redemption,” why do you consider it so important?*

First of all, it is the expression of a homogeneous development of Catholic dogma, regarded as a common theological conclusion, and even, for some, as a truth definable as a dogma of faith. It has its origin in the Gospel itself and expresses the precise extent of the association with the work of Redemption that Our Lord willed for His Mother.

It is neither a parallel Redemption nor something added to the work of Our Lord, as certain caricatures would have us mistakenly believe. It is simply an incorporation—absolutely unique—into the work of Christ, without possible equivalent, which acknowledges Our Lady’s proper place and draws the necessary consequences therefrom.

### *What authoritative arguments does the DDF text rely upon?*

This theological note cites the unfavourable opinion of Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, who held that the concept of co-redemption was not sufficiently rooted in Sacred Scripture. However, we must not forget that Cardinal Ratzinger himself upheld theories on the subject of Redemption which were not traditional<sup>14</sup>.

But the note relies above all on the authority of Pope Francis. Let us read his words as they are quoted in the text: “...Mary ‘never wished to appropriate anything of her Son for herself. She never presented herself as a co-Saviour. No, a disciple.’ Christ’s redemptive work was perfect and needs no addition; therefore, ‘Our Lady did not want to take away any title from Jesus... She did not ask for herself to be a quasi-redeemer or a co-redeemer: no. There is only one Redeemer, and this title cannot be duplicated.’ Christ ‘is the only Redeemer; there are no co-redeemers with Christ’<sup>15</sup>.”

These words are painful to read. They are a caricature of the true reasons on which co-redemption is founded. It suffices to say that the question is not what Our Lady might have wished to be—that would be ridiculous—but rather to acknowledge what Divine Wisdom granted and required her to be: in the one work of Redemption, she was allowed to offer on our behalf a fitting act of satisfaction, whereas Jesus Christ satisfied for us in strict justice. Through her perfect charity and unique union with God, she was granted to merit for us what Our Lord merited in strict justice.

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<sup>12</sup> This is the new doctrine of the Paschal Mystery, which in particular forms the basis of the post-conciliar liturgical reform.

<sup>13</sup> *Mater Populi fidelis*, n. 37, b.

<sup>14</sup> Particularly, in his work *Introduction to Christianity* (1968), reissued in 2000 with a preface by the author.

<sup>15</sup> *Mater Populi fidelis*, n. 21.



### *Is there a link between co-redemption and the mediation of all graces?*

It is evident that there is a connection between these two concepts: for this reason, the title “Mediatrice of all graces” has likewise been called into question, since its use is now considered dangerous and therefore strongly discouraged, as we shall see in greater detail.

Because of Our Lady’s association with the work of Redemption, and because she too has merited for us—though in a different manner—all that Our Lord merited for us, she was appointed by Our Lord Himself as the dispenser of all the graces thus obtained. This is what emerges from the findings of traditional theology, as well as from the magisterium of Saint Pius X, which we have just recalled.

Of course, the present doctrinal note does not deny the possibility that the saints and the Blessed Virgin may merit. However, it implicitly calls into question the universal and necessary mediation of Mary in the distribution of graces<sup>16</sup>: “In the perfect immediacy between a human being and God in the communication of grace, not even Mary can intervene. Neither friendship with Jesus Christ nor the Trinitarian indwelling can be conceived of as something that comes to us through Mary or the saints. In any case, what we can say is that Mary desires this good for us and she asks for it, together with us.<sup>17</sup> [...] The fact is that only God, the Triune God, justifies. Only God raises us to overcome the infinite disproportion that separates us from divine life; only he acts in us with his Trinitarian indwelling; only he enters into us and transforms us, making us sharers in his divine life. It does not honor Mary to attribute to her any mediation in the accomplishment of this work that belongs exclusively to God.<sup>18</sup>”

In reality, for the reasons already given, the Most Blessed Virgin has merited for us not merely certain graces, but all and each one of them; and she has merited not only their application but also their acquisition at the foot of the cross: since she was united with Christ the Redeemer in the very act of Redemption here below, before interceding for us in Heaven.

*Why, then, is there a warning against the use of the title “Mediatrice of all graces”, and why is this term considered incapable of ensuring a correct understanding of the role of the Virgin?*

On this point, we may respond that the authors of the text are influenced by a certain prejudice: they do not accept that God may have willed—and that Tradition may have explained—something different from the preconceived idea they have formed for themselves.

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<sup>16</sup> The great error of the text lies in its failure to make the classic distinction between *physical mediation* and *moral mediation*.

*Physical mediation* means that Mary transmits grace as a true instrument, for example, a harp which, when played by the artist, produces harmonious sounds. Some renowned theologians (Lépicier, Hugon, Bernard) attribute such influence to the Virgin, subordinate to the humanity of Christ, insisting that, according to Tradition, Mary is truly, in the Mystical Body, like the neck which, by uniting the head with the members, transmits vital influx to them.

By Mary’s solely *moral mediation* on grace, it is understood that, at least through her satisfaction, her past merits and her ever-present intercession, Mary transmits to souls, universally, all the graces that flow from the Cross of her Son. This thesis is accepted by all traditional theologians.

In both cases, Mary’s mediation is freely willed by God as universal and necessary.

By denying Mary’s *physical and instrumental mediation*, and by omitting the classic distinction with regard to at least *moral mediation*, the text improperly concludes with a general denial of any universal and necessary mediation of Mary in the dispensation of graces.

In other words, one can discuss the modality of the Virgin’s mediation, but not its universality or its factual necessity.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* n. 54.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* n. 55.



It is true that Our Lord is the only Mediator and that there is only one Redemption, His, in superabundance. Yet, just as Our Lord freely chooses the means to accomplish Redemption—dying on the Cross in particular, when He could have chosen another way—He also freely chose to associate His Mother with His work in the manner He willed. No one, not even the Prefect of the DDF, can take from Our Lord the power to act according to His divine wisdom and to make His Mother the Co-Redemptrix and universal Mediatrix of all graces. Our Lord is fully aware that in acting thus He diminishes nothing of His dignity as Redeemer. But the consequence of this choice by Our Lord is clear: just as it is necessary to turn to Him for salvation, so too is it necessary to turn to His Mother, though in a different manner. To fail to acknowledge this necessity is to reject the decrees of Our Lord, the Tradition of the Church, and the means given to Christians to attain salvation.

This preconceived idea, which even seems like obstinacy, appears frequently in the text. Let us limit ourselves to a few passages: “If one considers the fact that the Trinitarian indwelling (uncreated grace) and our participation in the divine life (created grace) are inseparable, we cannot think that this mystery depends on a ‘passage’ through Mary’s hands.<sup>19</sup>”; “No human person—not even the Apostles or the Blessed Virgin—can act as a universal dispenser of grace<sup>20</sup>”; “...the title ‘Mediatrix of All Graces’ risks presenting Mary as the one who distributes spiritual goods or energies apart from our personal relationship with Jesus Christ<sup>21</sup>”.

*From a pastoral point of view, how do you assess the impact of these decisions by the DDF?*

I believe I can say that the negative repercussions will be multiple and catastrophic.

First of all, we must not forget that Mary is the perfect model of the Christian life. By minimising Our Lady’s association with the work of Redemption, the text diminishes the call made to each soul to enter through the Cross into the work of Redemption, of reparation, and of personal sanctification. This corresponds exactly to a Protestant view of the Christian life, in which there is no longer room for cooperation in the work of Christ that sanctifies and saves us. For this reason, Luther destroyed the religious life and regarded every good work, including the Holy Mass, as an offence to the greatness of Christ’s work, which, being perfect, requires no addition. Any addition would amount to a denial of its perfection. As Catholics, we profess precisely the opposite: it is precisely because Christ’s work is sovereignly perfect that it is able to encompass the cooperation of creatures without losing anything of its own perfection.

Moreover, these decisions of the DDF seem catastrophic to me in the current context, especially for the faith and spiritual life of the simplest and most needy souls. I think of the social and moral peripheries, to use a term in vogue during the previous pontificate. For the most abandoned, the Blessed Virgin often remains the only refuge in the current desert. I have witnessed with my own eyes how a simple and sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin is capable of securing the salvation of souls who do not have the possibility of seeing a priest regularly. For this reason, a DDF text intended to caution souls against traditional Marian notions seems to me both indefensible and pastorally irresponsible.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* n. 45.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* n. 53.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* n. 68.



Finally, never before has the Church needed as much as today to rediscover the greatness of the Blessed Virgin: in the face of worldly pressure, which increasingly plunges souls into apostasy and impurity, her greatness offers the sovereign means to resist this pressure and remain faithful.

*Do you have any pastoral advice to offer to the authors of the text?*

The idea of recalling that Our Lord is the only mediator between God and mankind, and that there is only one true Redemption, His, is in itself praiseworthy and, especially today, must be remembered.

The problem is that it is not Catholics who need to be reminded of this, with the pernicious aim of warning them against the supposed interference or competition of the Blessed Virgin. Rather, this truth ought to be preached and made known to Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, and all those who do not know Our Lord, whether non-Christian believers or atheists.

Now then, on 28 October the Vatican celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, that is, the conciliar document which forms the basis for dialogue with non-Christian religions. This is, at the very least, paradoxical, since this dialogue—which over the past sixty years has given rise to some of the most regrettable interreligious meetings—is a clear and explicit denial of the fact that Our Lord is the only mediator between God and mankind, and of the fact that the Catholic Church was instituted to preach this truth to the world.

*In your view, is there any other traditional Marian notion that deserves to be better known?*

In the Divine Office of the Blessed Virgin, the liturgy describes her as “she who has crushed all heresies.” I believe this notion deserves to be explored more deeply by theological research. It is most interesting to observe how the Church regards Our Lady as the guardian of the Catholic truth. This is directly connected to her role as Mother. She could not bring forth Our Lord in each of us without imparting the truth and a love for the truth, for Our Lord is the Truth itself, incarnate and revealed to mankind. It is through faith, and in the purity of faith, that souls are regenerated and have the possibility of growing in the image of Our Lord.

I believe we do not sufficiently understand this necessary link between the purity of faith and the authenticity of the Christian life. Our Lady, who destroys all errors, is the key to understanding this truth.

*To conclude this interview, which prayer in honour of Our Lady would you choose?*

Without hesitation, I would choose the following prayer, which is also found in the liturgy:

*“Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata. Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.  
Allow me to praise thee, O sacred Virgin. Against thy enemies give me strength.”*

Interview conducted in Menzingen on 9 November 2025,  
on the feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of the Holy Saviour