

# ***Vox Populi* Continues in Full Submission to the Holy Father: An Interview with Dr. Mark Miravalle, S.T.D.<sup>1</sup>**

- 1. You had a meeting of *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* leaders at your third annual international leaders conference in Rome. Tell us about that.**

The meeting was attended by over 70 bishops representing 25 countries, and over 100 international Marian leaders. We were privileged to attend Pentecost Mass with the Holy Father and the other thousands of pilgrims present in Rome. Many bishops and leaders of *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* sensed a new “strengthening” of the Holy Spirit for greater commitment, enthusiasm, and perseverance in returning to our countries to pray and work for this dogmatic crown for our common Mother, Mary.

In sum, the conference and the graces of the Pentecost weekend have served as a true revitalization of *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* efforts. At the same time, we continue to submit all prayers and efforts to the judgment of our Holy Father. *Vox Populi* is a movement of prayer and ecclesial efforts, not a democratically organized pressure

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group. We follow the precedence of theology, episcopal endorsements, and petitions which led to the last two papal definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. But we do all this in full submission to the Holy Father.

**2. What is the present status of the *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* movement seeking the papal definition of Mary as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all Graces and Advocate?**

The movement continues to grow both in size and dedication. Petitions continue to come in by the tens of thousands. Eucharistic and Marian prayer groups worldwide have initiated and participated in Rosary novenas for the solemn papal definition. And during the last several months we have received over thirty new episcopal endorsements from bishops worldwide. Three new volumes entitled “*Maria Corredentrice*” (Mary Co-redemptrix), which consist of the highest theological research and examination of the theology of Marian coredeemption, edited by Scripture and Mariology scholar, Fr. Stefano Manelli, FFI, have just been published in Italian in strong support of both Marian coredeemption and its solemn definition. And so on all ecclesial levels the movement continues to thrive.

**3. There was some speculation about a definition coming on May 31 of this year, the feast of Pentecost. That obviously did not take place. What are your thoughts on this?**

In one theological article published in 1996 I made reference to the theologically and liturgically appropriate date of May 31 for the solemn definition in light of the rich Mariological teaching of St. Maximilian Kolbe. St. Maximilian tells us that the Holy Spirit acts only through the Immaculata his beloved spouse in the mediation of graces, and therefore the date of May 31 this year, which celebrated both Pentecost and the traditional feast of Mediatrix of all Graces, was an appropriate theological and liturgical date for the definition. But this date was never an official position, prediction, or even a goal of the *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* movement.

We continue to go forward, strengthened by the Spirit, in our teaching, preaching, praying and sacrificing for this rich ecclesial fruit of a papal definition, particularly in light of preparation for the celebration of the Great Jubilee. The question remains: How can we appropriately celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the Incarnation of our Lord without properly honoring the Woman and Mother who made it possible?

**4. How long will *Vox Populi* continue its efforts for the papal definition of Our Lady Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all Graces, and Advocate?**

In the history of papal definitions the *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrix* movement is still relatively young. The movement for the papal definition for the Assumption of Our Lady spanned over 95 years, from 1846 to the eventual definition in 1950. It is interesting to note that during that time there was a petition for the solemn definition of the Assumption at Vatican Council I. This petition was denied and it was not until after the Council that the proclamation came by Pius XII in 1950.

In similar fashion, *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrix* continues in prayer, theological development, and the gathering of petitions for this papal definition in the true spirit of the Second Vatican Council (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 54), while remembering that the true founders of the movement for this definition were the great Cardinal Mercier of Belgium in the 1920s accompanied by the zealous preaching and teaching of St. Maximilian Kolbe.

Our vision is simple: To continue to pray and work for the “whole truth about Mary” to be solemnly defined which I believe will be a great grace and a great clarification, both within the Church and ecumenically, about what the Church already believes and practices on the level of the ordinary magisterium regarding the Woman who is the Mother of us all in the order of grace. And again, I reiterate, that *Vox Populi* continues its prayer and work in full submission to the judgment of our *Totus Tuus* Holy Father.

**5. In light of the controversy surrounding the term “Co-redemptrix,” is there any effort to perhaps use a less controversial term?**

The term “Co-redemptrix” means “the woman with the Redeemer.” It does not in any sense place Our Lady on a level of equality with Jesus Christ. The prefix “co” comes from the Latin word *cum*, which means “with” and not “equal.” This is why St. Paul can call us to be “co-workers” (1 Cor 3:6), and our Holy Father, as he has done on several occasions, can call us to our responsibilities as “co-redeemers.”

John Paul II has used the term “Co-redemptrix” on at least six occasions during his pontificate because it is a traditional Catholic expression uniquely expressing Our Lady’s salvific work with and

under Jesus in the work of Redemption. In analogous ways, the term “Co-redemptrix” is much like the term “transubstantiation” in our Eucharistic theology. The term “transubstantiation” is neither explicitly scriptural nor patristic. At the same time, it is a word necessarily chosen to express the process of the change of substance of the bread and wine into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist. In similar manner, the term “Co-redemptrix,” while being neither explicitly scriptural nor patristic, at the same time uniquely expresses Our Lady’s subordinate work in the Redemption, which is contained in Scripture and in the Early Church’s theological model of the “New Eve.”

His Eminence, Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, Secretary General of the Universal Catechism, has been particularly helpful not only in his support for the dogmatic definition of Our Lady Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate, but also in the explanation of the term “Co-redemptrix.” He finds the strongest support of Marian coredemption in the writings of the Little Flower, St. Therese of Lisieux, who profoundly understood the universal Christian call to “complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Col 1:24).

Father Jean Galot, S.J, a Vatican theologian and writer for *L’Osservatore Romano*, also notes in a recent article how there is no other single term that better expresses Our Lady’s unique participation in the Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ than the term “Co-redemptrix.” Rather than dismissing terms like “transubstantiation” and “Co-redemptrix,” our task is to better educate and promulgate the rich teachings of our holy faith regarding these Eucharistic and Marian truths.

- 6. In Fall of 1997, Vatican Spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls came out with a statement which stated that there are no present studies regarding the Dogma by any Vatican Congregation. This was published in confusing terms by Catholic News Service as inferring a prohibition of an eventual Dogma, (although the original receipt of the communication, *Newsweek’s* Ken Woodward, saw the Navarro-Valls statement as being open to a definition as early as “next Tuesday”). What is your comment on the Navarro-Valls statement?**

Many conflicting reports from the media surfaced in response to the August 18 statement of Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls regarding the potential papal definition of Mary as Co-redemptrix,

Mediatrice, and Advocate. The interest of the media was due to the August 25 *Newsweek* cover story on the subject. Although no written statement has been produced from the Vatican office, the oral statement received from the office of Joaquin Navarro-Valls was as follows: “This [the dogma] is not presently under study by any Vatican congregation or commission.”

This statement *in no way precludes a papal definition by the Holy Father* in the exercise of papal infallibility. Various news reports have gone to such excesses as to say that the Pope will not or will never proclaim this dogma. Those reports are neither part of nor representative of the official position of the Vatican.

*Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* continues its work at the service of the Church in conformity with canon 212 of the Code of Canon Law:

“The Christian faithful are free to make known their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires to the pastors of the Church”; “In accord with the knowledge, competence and preeminence which they possess, they have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church, and they have a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful, with due regard for the integrity of faith and morals and reverence toward their pastors, and with consideration for the common good and the dignity of persons.”

As you mention, the original recipient of the Navarro-Valls statement (which was a response to the questioning fax of *Newsweek*), was *Newsweek's* reporter Ken Woodward. Woodward's written commentary was that the wording of the statement was purposely “loose enough” as to allow a dogma definition at any future time, and in no sense is properly interpreted as a prohibition of the Dogma.