



The Holy See

POPE JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

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Mary's mediation derives from Christ's

1. Among the titles attributed to Mary in the Church's devotion, chapter eight of *Lumen gentium* recalls that of "Mediatrix". Although some Council Fathers did not fully agree with this choice of title (cf. *Acta Synodalia* III, 8, 163-164), it was nevertheless inserted into the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church as confirmation of the value of the truth it expresses. Care was therefore taken not to associate it with any particular theology of mediation, but merely to list it among Mary's other recognized titles.

Moreover the conciliar text had already described the meaning of the title "Mediatrix" when it said that Mary "by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 62).

As I recalled in my Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*: "Mary's mediation is intimately linked with her motherhood. It possesses a specifically maternal character, which distinguishes it from the mediation of the other creatures" (n. 38).

From this point of view it is unique in its kind and singularly effective.

2. With regard to the objections made by some of the Council Fathers concerning the term "Mediatrix", the Council itself provided an answer by saying that Mary is "a mother to us in the order of grace" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 61). We recall that Mary's mediation is essentially defined by her divine motherhood. Recognition of her role as mediatrix is moreover implicit in the expression "our Mother", which presents the doctrine of Marian mediation by putting the accent on her

motherhood. Lastly, the title "Mother in the order of grace" explains that the Blessed Virgin cooperates with Christ in humanity's spiritual rebirth.

3. Mary's maternal mediation does not obscure the unique and perfect mediation of Christ. Indeed, after calling Mary "Mediatrice", the Council is careful to explain that this "neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 62). And on this subject it quotes the famous text from the First Letter to Timothy: "For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (2:5-6).

In addition, the Council states that "Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 60).

Therefore, far from being an obstacle to the exercise of Christ's unique mediation, Mary instead highlights its fruitfulness and efficacy. "The Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 60).

4. The value of Mary's mediation derives from Christ and thus the salutary influence of the Blessed Virgin "does not hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but on the contrary fosters it" (ibid.).

The intrinsic orientation to Christ of the "Mediatrice's" work spurred the Council to recommend that the faithful turn to Mary "so that, encouraged by this maternal help they may the more closely adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 62).

In proclaiming Christ the one mediator (cf. 1 Tm 2:5-6), the text of St Paul's Letter to Timothy excludes any other parallel mediation, but not subordinate mediation. In fact, before emphasizing the one exclusive mediation of Christ, the author urges "that supplications prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men" (2:1). Are not prayers a form of mediation? Indeed, according to St Paul, the unique mediation of Christ is meant to encourage other dependent, ministerial forms of mediation. By proclaiming the uniqueness of Christ's mediation, the Apostle intends only to exclude any autonomous or rival mediation, and not other forms compatible with the infinite value of the Saviour's work.

5. It is possible to participate in Christ's mediation in various areas of the work of salvation. After stressing that "no creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer" (n. 62), *Lumen gentium* describes how it is possible for creatures to exercise certain forms of mediation which are dependent on Christ. In fact, "just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in

different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold co-operation which is but a sharing in this one source" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 62).

This desire to bring about various participations in the one mediation of Christ reveals the gratuitous love of God who wants to share what he possesses.

6. In truth, what is Mary's maternal mediation if not the Father's gift to humanity? This is why the Council concludes: "The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary, which it constantly experiences and recommends to the heartfelt attention of the faithful" (*ibid.*).

Mary carries out her maternal role in constant dependence on the mediation of Christ and from him receives all that his heart wishes to give mankind.

On her earthly pilgrimage the Church "continuously" experiences the effective action of her "Mother in the order of grace".

To the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors the Holy Father said:

I am pleased to greet the new students of the Pontifical Beda College: I invoke upon you God's gifts of wisdom and discernment. To the students of the Pontifical North American College present with their families and friends on the eve of their ordination to the diaconate, I also extend prayerful greetings: may God's grace sustain you in charity and humility in your service of his People. Upon those participating in the Fifth European Radiocommunications Office Council Meeting, and upon all the English-speaking pilgrims, especially those from England, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Indonesia, Japan, Canada and the United States, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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