

Mother of the Faithful People of God

As we begin Our Lady's month of May, we start looking at the recent document from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mater Populi Fidelis*, 'The Mother of the Faithful People of God'. [MPF] Subtitled 'Doctrinal Note on Some Marian Titles Regarding Mary's Cooperation in the Work of Salvation', it was promulgated with the approval of Pope Leo XIV on 4 November 2025. This is the most substantial magisterial document on Our Lady in some time, so in these coming months we will reflect on it in depth.

It opens with these words: 'The Mother of the Faithful People of God is viewed with affection and admiration by Christians because, since grace makes us like Christ, Mary is the most perfect expression of Christ's action that transforms our humanity. She is the feminine manifestation of all that Christ's grace can accomplish in a human being. In the face of such beauty and moved by love, many members of the faithful throughout history have sought to refer to the Mother using the most beautiful words to exalt the special place she holds at Christ's side.' (MPF 1)

As Catholics and legionaries, we delight to honour our Mother. Our enthusiasm can be expressed in the maxim attributed to St Bernard: *De Maria numquam satis* – 'Of Mary, one can never say enough'. And yet, our Catholic enthusiasm is always under the moderation of an even more fundamental Catholic principle – trust in the Magisterium, guided by the Holy Spirit. Our emotions and our love carry us onwards, but doctrinal precision is always in operation.

As you may be aware, this new document was met with some controversy. However, it is important that we do not approach it primarily as a matter of controversy, and especially, not ready to judge or even oppose, as some have. Rather, we come with a readiness to listen to and be taught by this document approved by Pope Leo under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We accept it in a spirit of faith, remembering the words of Our Lord to his disciples, 'He who hears you, hears me; he who rejects you rejects me'; (Lk 10:16; cf. *Catechism* n. 87) always applied by the Church likewise to the Successors of the Apostles. And of course we remember the words of Our Lady, 'Do whatever he tells you'. (Jn 2:5) We would not be faithful children of Mary if we approached a document of the Magisterium with an attitude of criticism instead of a readiness to learn. We humbly accept what Our Lord teaches us in this document, as he shows us through his chosen shepherds the path of genuine devotion to his Blessed Mother.

The main focus of the document is to discuss two titles given to Our Lady in devotional tradition, and occasionally in documents of the past Magisterium – the titles 'Co-redemptrix' and 'Mediatrice' (more specifically, Mediatrice 'of All Graces'). The conclusion of the document is that these titles, although orthodox when rightly understood and explained, are nonetheless easily misunderstood.

So concerning the title 'Co-redemptrix', *Mater Populi Fidelis* states: 'Given the necessity of explaining Mary's subordinate role to Christ in the work of Redemption, it is always inappropriate 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). 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.' (MPF 22)

It is good to realise that this is not an outright condemnation of the title (which would be confusing, given its past use by the Magisterium here and there). Cardinal Fernandez, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, responding to a journalist's questions a few weeks after the document's publication; and specifically regarding the title 'Co-redemptrix', clarified that the title was not being condemned as false, in particular its past magisterial uses.

He said, 'In the substance behind that word, there are elements that can be accepted and continue to be upheld' – in particular, 'Mary's unique cooperation in the Redemption.' 'If you, together with your group of friends, believe you understand well the true meaning of this expression, have read the document, and see that its positive aspects are also affirmed there, and you wish to express precisely that within your prayer group or among friends, you may use the title – but it will not be used officially, that is, either in liturgical texts or in official documents.' (Responses to Diane Montagna, published 26/11/2025)

So this is a prudential judgement that the Magisterium is now making, moving forward – that all things considered, the expression, because it is easily misunderstood, hinders rather than helps the communication of the true doctrine. We ourselves might have no difficulty understanding it; but we must remember that even among Catholics, legionaries are far from typical – generally having a deeper doctrinal understanding, and therefore presumably not being easily misled by the title. But in discussions of the title that one reads over recent decades, even Catholics are often to be found instinctively interpreting the title as placing Mary on an equal level with Christ the Redeemer and being scandalised thereby; that would be even more the case when non-Catholics hear the expression.

We might say, 'Well, we can take the opportunity to give a correct explanation of the title.' But two problems remain. First, most people who come across the title will not get to hear or read our explanation – or anyone's explanation. And second, we have only created the need for an explanation by using the title in the first place. With some doctrines, such as the Trinity, there is plenty of difficulty inherent in the doctrine itself, and we will need in-depth explanation no matter what. We have not created the difficulty simply by our own choice of terminology. But if we can avoid a communication problem simply by changing our language, it seems sensible to do so, as the Holy See affirms in this instance.

Regarding the title, 'Mediatrice', *Mater Populi Fidelis* states that its use does require 'special prudence'; (MPF 24) and the title 'Mediatrice of All Graces' in particular has 'limits' and 'risks' (MPF 67, 68) – especially in view of the scriptural affirmation of Christ as the 'one Mediator'. (1 Tim 2:5) Again, this is a point of prudence and correct interpretation, rather than condemnation; there is plenty of explanation in Catholic writings, but again, many will never read these.

Fr Paul Churchill, Spiritual Director of Concilium, has himself written an Allocutio specifically on *Mater Populi Fidelis*, focusing in particular on the question of this title, 'Mediatrice of All Graces', given that it appears in the Tesserà and the *Handbook*. He writes: 'Can we in the Legion of Mary still use the term...? The Note does not rule out the use of the term. My advice then is this: We can use it subject to any future clarification from the Supreme authority of the Church or a decision of Concilium to replace it by a less awkward expression. If we do continue to use it as an invocation it would have to be on the understanding that the term *Mediatrice* means cooperator, assistant, intercessor.' (December Allocutio 2025: *Mary Mediatrice*)

We will continue our reflections next month, but in the meantime, we obediently accept this document as faithful children of Mary, confident that we are being guided ever deeper into true devotion to her.