

**Some Comments on the Statement
Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America of May 7, 2020
By Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades
and Five Other Ordinaries**

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, and five other ordinaries of Dioceses issued a statement on May 7th, 2020 on the alleged apparitions “Our Lady of America”. The other five bishops were ordinaries of the dioceses where Sister Mary Ephrem (baptized Mildred) Neuzil (1914-2000) had lived and hence these bishops have the right and obligation to make a judgment about the alleged apparitions and locutions that took place in their jurisdictions. Here is an explanatory part of their statement.

“In November 2017, His Eminence, Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, then USCCB President, received instructions from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that the competent ecclesiastical authority for conducting the investigation should be the local bishop of the diocese where the alleged apparitions and private revelations occurred, or another bishop who demonstrates such competence. The lead bishop who conducts the investigation was to arrive at a first conclusion. In doing so, he was instructed to call upon whatever assistance was deemed necessary, although the enlistment of one or two experts in Mariology, along with experts in the field of spiritual theology, was highly encouraged, so the authenticity of the presumed mystical phenomena could be established.

“Given the supra-diocesan nature of this case, moreover, the Congregation observed that the bishop designated to lead the examination could involve the bishops of the other dioceses in whose territories the apparitions and private revelations have allegedly occurred.

“In accord with these instructions, the other five diocesan bishops where the apparitions and private revelations were said to have occurred requested that Bishop Kevin Rhoades of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend serve as the lead bishop, since the purported apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary allegedly began on September 25, 1956 at Rome City, Indiana, in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, where people still gather and pray for the Blessed Mother’s intercession under the title, “Our Lady of America.” Bishop Rhoades agreed to the request of the other five bishops to conduct the investigation and formed a commission of theological and canonical experts to assist in evaluating the evidence, including personal interviews with witnesses who knew Sister Neuzil personally.”

In their first two numbered statements they declare that there is no reason to doubt the integrity of the person or honesty of Sister Neuzil and that there is some evidence of good spiritual fruits that came from these revelations although they “cannot conclude that any of these events are conclusive enough to warrant certification as miracles.”

1. In their third numbered statement the Bishops pass over in complete silence all the messages given by the Lord, Our Lady and Saint Joseph, Saints Michael and Gabriel in their call for the conversion of America, for the reign of holy purity, which the Holy Family represent in their persons, for the adoration of the indwelling Trinity and all the other elements of these revelations. Without any theological analysis they simply declare: “Regarding the alleged revelations themselves, much of what is expressed does not contain any doctrinal error.” I find this amazingly patronizing and dismissive. They refuse to take seriously what is being asked of the Bishops and the faithful of the United States.

2. They then go on to state: “However, there is a claim regarding Saint Joseph which has never been expressed as Catholic doctrine and must be seen as an error, namely, that he was a ‘co-redeemer’ with Christ for the salvation of the world.” On this matter, however, I submit that their collective Excellencies and their experts have made a statement in crass ignorance. First let us cite the statement that they call an error:

In early October, 1956, about a week after Our Lady’s first appearance, St. Joseph, though I did not see him at this time, spoke to me the following words:

“It is true my daughter, that immediately after my conception, I was, through the future merits of Jesus and because of my exceptional role of future Virgin-Father, cleansed from the stain of original sin.

“I was from that moment confirmed in grace and never had the slightest stain on my soul. This is my unique privilege among men.

“My pure heart also was from the first moment of existence inflamed with love for God. Immediately, at the moment when my soul was cleansed from original sin, grace was infused into it in such abundance that, excluding my holy spouse, I surpassed the holiness of the highest angel in the angelic choir.

“My heart suffered with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Mine was a silent suffering, for it was my special vocation to hide and shield as long as God willed, the Virgin Mother and Son from the malice and hatred of men.

“The most painful of my sorrows was that I knew beforehand of their passion, yet would not be there to console them.

“Their future suffering was ever present to me and became my daily cross. I became, in union with my holy spouse, co-redemptor of the human race. Through compassion for the sufferings of Jesus and Mary I co-operated, as no other, in the salvation of the world.”

1. The Principle of Collaboration in the Work of Redemption in Mary and in Us

Let me cite again what the bishops state: the “claim regarding Saint Joseph ... namely, that he was a ‘co-redeemer’ with Christ for the salvation of the world ... has never been expressed as Catholic doctrine and must be seen as an error.” I contend that this is simply not so.

I begin my defense with a citation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5). But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, “the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery” is offered to all men (*Gaudium et Spes* 22 #5; cf. #2). He calls his disciples to “take up [their] cross and follow (him)” (Mt. 16:24), for “Christ also suffered for (us), leaving (us) an example so that (we) should follow in his steps (I Pt. 2:21).” In fact, Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries (Cf. Mk. 10:39; Jn. 21:18-19; Col. 1:24). This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering (Cf. Lk. 2:35). Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven.¹

Now let us take note that all Christians are called to be associated with Jesus’ redeeming sacrifice and that this call was especially accepted by “his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering.” This is what is witnessed to by describing Mary as Coredemptrix. This is not in any way to deny that Jesus is the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5); he is our only Redeemer. As Pope Saint John Paul II put it in #24 of *Salvifici Doloris*, his Apostolic Letter on the Christian Meaning of Suffering of 11 February 1984:

The sufferings of Christ created the good of the world’s redemption. This good in itself is inexhaustible and infinite. No man can add anything to it.

¹ CCC #618.

But at the same time, in the mystery of the Church as his Body, Christ has in a sense opened his own redemptive suffering to all human suffering. In so far as man becomes a sharer in Christ's sufferings – in any part of the world and at any time in history – to that extent he in his own way completes the suffering through which Christ accomplished the Redemption of the world (Cf. Col. 1:24).²

What Jesus did on the cross, then, was all-sufficient for our salvation, but as the *Catechism* teaches us he: “desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries (Cf. Mk. 10:39; Jn. 21:18-19; Col. 1:24). In commenting on 1 Tim. 2:5, Pope Leo XIII put it this way in his Encyclical Letter *Fidentem Piumque*:

And yet, as the Angelic Doctor teaches: “There is no reason why certain others should not be called, in a certain way, mediators between God and man, that is to say in so far as they cooperate by predisposing and ministering in the union of man with God” (*ST* III, q. 26, a. 1). Such are the angels and saints, the prophets and priests of both Testaments, *but especially has the Blessed Virgin a claim to the glory of this title. For no single individual can even be imagined who has ever contributed or ever will contribute so much toward reconciling man with God.* To mankind heading for eternal ruin, she offered a Savior when she received the announcement of the mystery brought to this earth by the Angel, and in giving her consent gave it “in the name of the whole human race” (*ST* III, q. 30, a. 1). She is from whom Jesus is born; she is therefore truly His Mother and for this reason a worthy and acceptable “Mediatrice to the Mediator”.³

Although the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council were prohibited for ecumenical motives from using the word “Coredemptrix” in what eventually became chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*, the prohibition acknowledged that the word Coredemptrix and similar terms were absolutely true in themselves (*verissime in se*).⁴ The fact is the doctrine that Mary collaborated “in a wholly singular way” in the work

² *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis* [= *AAS*] 76 (1984) 233 [Boston: St. Paul Editions, 37-38].

³ *Acta Sanctæ Sedis* [= *AAS*] 29 (1896-1897) 206 [*Our Lady: Papal Teachings* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1961) [= *OL*] #194]. Italics my own.

⁴ Cf. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, Vol. I, Pt. VI (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1971) 99; Giuseppe Besutti, O.S.M., *Lo schema mariano al Concilio Vaticano II* (Rome: Edizione Marianum-Desclée, 1966) 41; Ermanno M. Toniolo, O.S.M., *La Beata Vergine Maria nel Concilio Vaticano II* (Rome: Centro di Cultura Mariana «Madre della Chiesa», 2004) 98-99. Cf. Arthur B. Calkins, “Mariology at and after the Second Vatican Council” in Chris Maunder (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Mary* (Oxford University Press, 2019) 519-520.

of our salvation is clearly and amply taught in *Lumen Gentium* #56-58 and #60-62 with the important understanding that

Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But 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. It does not hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but on the contrary fosters it.⁵

The ordinary magisterium of Pope Saint John Paul II developed the understanding of Marian Coredemption very notably.⁶

In his Marian Catechesis of 9 April 1997 Pope Saint John Paul II made this statement about Mary's collaboration in our salvation "in a wholly singular way":

Down the centuries the Church has reflected on Mary's cooperation in the work of salvation, deepening the analysis of her association with Christ's redemptive sacrifice. St. Augustine already gave the Blessed Virgin the title "cooperator" in the Redemption (cf. *De Sancta Virginitate*, 6; *PL* 40, 399), a title which emphasizes Mary's joint but subordinate action with Christ the Redeemer.

Reflection has developed along these lines, particularly since the 15th century. Some feared there might be a desire to put Mary on the same level

⁵ *Lumen Gentium* #60. English translation from Austin Flannery, OP, General Editor, *Vatican Council II*, Volume 1: *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, NY: The Costello Publishing Company, 2004) 418.

⁶ Cf. Arthur B. Calkins, "The Heart of Mary as Coredemptrix in the Magisterium of Pope John Paul II" in *S. Tommaso Teologo: Ricerche in occasione dei due centenari accademici* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana "Studi Tomistici" #59, 1995) 320-335; "Pope John Paul II's Teaching on Marian Coredemption" in Mark I. Miravalle, S.T.D., (ed.), *Mary Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate, Theological Foundations II: Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical* (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, 1997) 113-147; "Pope John Paul II's Ordinary Magisterium on Marian Coredemption: Consistent Teaching and More Recent Perspectives" in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross – II: Acts of the Second International Symposium on Marian Coredemption* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2002) 1-36; also published in *Divinitas XLV «Nova Series»* (2002) 153-185; "Marian Coredemption and the Contemporary Papal Magisterium: The Truth of Marian Coredemption, the Papal Magisterium and the Present Situation" in *Maria "Unica Cooperatrice alla Redenzione". Atti del Simposio sul Mistero della Corredenzione Mariana, Fatima, Portogallo 3-7 Maggio 2005* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2005) 128-133, 147-158.

as Christ. Actually, *the Church's teaching makes a clear distinction between the Mother and the Son in the work of salvation, explaining the Blessed Virgin's subordination, as cooperator, to the one Redeemer.*

Moreover, when the Apostle Paul says: "For we are God's fellow workers" (1 Cor. 3:9), he maintains the real possibility for man to cooperate with God. The collaboration of believers, which obviously excludes any equality with him, is expressed in the proclamation of the Gospel and in their personal contribution to its taking root in human hearts.

#2. However, applied to Mary, the term "cooperator" acquires a specific meaning. The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to spread by prayer and sacrifice. Mary, instead, cooperated during the event itself and in the role of mother; thus, her cooperation embraces the whole of Christ's saving work. She alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of all mankind. In union with Christ and in submission to him, she collaborated in obtaining the grace of salvation for all humanity.⁷

In these few sentences John Paul II clarified that Mary's collaboration in the work of our salvation is totally subordinate to that of Christ, but also totally unique in that she "cooperated during the event itself and in the role of mother". Our cooperation, on the other hand "is expressed in the proclamation of the Gospel and in [our] personal contribution to its taking root in human hearts." Our "collaboration ... in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits [we] endeavor to spread by prayer and sacrifice." The Catholic Church teaches that all of her children must cooperate in the work of our redemption by our prayer and sacrifice, by living according to the Gospel. Mary's cooperation, however, took place as the New Eve at the side of Christ, the New Adam.

Turning once again to *Salvifici Doloris*, in which John Paul II comments at length on Saint Paul's statement in Col. 1:24 "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church," he says

It is especially consoling to note – and also accurate in accordance with the Gospel and history – that at the side of Christ, in the first and most exalted place, there is always His Mother through the exemplary testimony that she

⁷ *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II XX/1* (1997) 621-622 [Pope John Paul II, *Theotókos – Woman, Mother, Disciple: A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2000) 185-186. Italics my own.

bears by her whole life to this particular Gospel of suffering. *In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that they were not only a proof of her unshakable faith but also a contribution to the Redemption of all. ...*

And again, after the events of her Son's hidden and public life, events which she must have shared with acute sensitivity, *it was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but which was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world. Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the cross together with the beloved disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son.* And the words which she heard from His lips were a kind of solemn handing-over of this Gospel of suffering so that it could be proclaimed to the whole community of believers.

As a witness to her Son's passion by her *presence*, and as a sharer in it by her *compassion*, Mary offered a unique contribution to the Gospel of suffering, by embodying in anticipation the expression of St. Paul which was quoted at the beginning. She truly has a special title to be able to claim that she "completes in her flesh" – as already in her heart – "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

In the light of the unmatched example of Christ, reflected with singular clarity in the life of His Mother, the Gospel of suffering, through the experience and words of the Apostles, becomes *an inexhaustible source for the ever new generations* that succeed one another in the history of the Church. The Gospel of suffering signifies not only the presence of suffering in the Gospel, as one of the themes of the Good News, but also the revelation *of the salvific power and salvific significance* of suffering in Christ's messianic mission and, subsequently, in the mission and vocation of the Church.⁸

We note here the pope's insistence that Mary's sufferings were "a contribution to the Redemption of all" [*verum etiam ad redemptionem omnium conferrent*]; "mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world" [*arcana fuit et supernaturali ratione fecunda pro universali redemptione*]. This is completely consistent with the teaching of previous pontiffs.⁹

⁸ *AAS* 76 (1984) 235-236 [Boston: St. Paul Editions, 40-41]. Italics my own except for "by her whole life" in the first paragraph, "presence" and "compassion" in the third paragraph, "an inexhaustible source for the ever new generations" and "of the salvific power and salvific significance" and "of the salvific power and salvific significance" in the fourth paragraph.

⁹ Cf. "Marian Coredemption and the Contemporary Papal Magisterium" 133-139. of

2. The Claim for Saint Joseph's Collaboration in the Work of Redemption

Now let us recall once again the claim of the bishops in their statement: “[T]here is a claim regarding Saint Joseph [in the alleged apparitions] which has never been expressed as Catholic doctrine and must be seen as an error, namely, that he [Saint Joseph] was a ‘co-redeemer’ with Christ for the salvation of the world.”

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had proposed that the Bishops might consider engaging a Mariologist in their study of the apparitions of Our Lady of America. It is a pity that they did not also engage a Josephologist as well or at least a Mariologist knowledgeable of Josephology, which is a relatively modern theological science. Devotion to Saint Joseph has developed notably over the past five centuries and doctrine even more recently in the papal magisterium. Just as the development of doctrine in Mariology in the Church, so also can the development of doctrine in Josephology. On this matter Pope Saint John Paul II contributed to that development in a particular way in his Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* of 15 August 1989, which was written to commemorate the centenary of Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical Epistle on Saint Joseph entitled *Quamquam Pluries*. In that Apostolic Exhortation John Paul II carefully alludes to the ongoing development of doctrine on St. Joseph in this way:

17. One must come to understand this truth [that Joseph was a “just man” (Mt. 1:19)], for it contains *one of the most important testimonies concerning man and his vocation. Through many generations the Church has read this testimony with ever greater attention and with deeper understanding, drawing, as it were, “what is new and what is old” (Mt. 13:52) from the storehouse of the noble figure of Joseph. [Eandem oportet quis sciat recte legere veritatem quoniam in ea residet una quaedam ex praestantissimis de viro ipso eiusque munere testificationibus. Volventibus porro aetatibus attentior usque ac magis conscia Ecclesia hoc perlegit testimonium, tamquam si ex thesauro huius singularis figura e « nova et vetera » (Mt 13, 52) proferat.]*¹⁰

Continuing the line of papal teaching on Saint Joseph developed by Blessed Pope Pius IX, who declared Saint Joseph Patron of the Universal Church in 1870,¹¹ and of Pope Leo XIII,¹² Pope Pius XI made this striking statement about Saint Joseph on his

¹⁰ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* [subsequently *AAS*] 82 (1990) 22. In each instance the preceding number indicates the number of the section of the document. (Italics and bold are my own except for *one of the most important testimonies concerning man and his vocation*.)

¹¹ Cf. Francis L. Filas, S.J., *Joseph: The Man Closest to Jesus – The Complete Life, Theology and Devotional History of St. Joseph* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, second printing, 1962) 577-581.

¹² Cf. Filas 583-600.

feastday in 1928, after having spoken on the mission of Saint John the Baptist and that of Saint Peter:

Between these two missions there appears that of St. Joseph, one of recollection and silence, one almost unnoticed and destined to be lit up only many centuries afterwards, a silence which would become a resounding hymn of glory, but only after many years. But where the mystery is deepest it is there precisely that the mission is highest and that a more brilliant cortège of virtues is required with their corresponding echo of merits. It was a unique and sublime mission, that of guarding that the Son of God, the King of the world, that of protecting the virginity of Mary, *that of entering into participation in the mystery hidden from the eyes of ages and so to cooperate in the Incarnation and the Redemption.* [*E tra queste due missioni appare quella di San Giuseppe che passa invece raccolta, tacita, quasi inavvertita, sconosciuta, nell'umiltà, nel silenzio, un silenzio che non doveva illuminarsi se non dopo qualche secolo, un silenzio a cui ben doveva succedere e veramente alto, il grido, la voce della gloria dopo secoli. Eppure dove più profondo è il mistero, dove più fitta la più notte che lo copre, dove più profondo il silenzio, è proprio lì che più alta è la missione, più ricco è il corredo delle virtù che per essa si richiedono e del merito che doveva per felice necessità corrisponderle.*

*Questa missione unica, grandiosa, la missione di custodire il Figlio di Dio, il Re del mondo, la missione di custodire la verginità, la santità di Maria, la missione di cooperare, unico chiamato a partecipare alla consapevolezza del grande mistero nascosto ai secoli, alla Incarnazione divina ed alla salvezza del genere umano.]*¹³

This is a very noteworthy statement: that the mission of Saint Joseph was to participate in the knowledge of the great mystery hidden from the ages, to participate in the Incarnation and the salvation of the human race.

Now, let us consider some of John Paul II's very important statements about Saint Joseph's collaboration in the work of Redemption:

1. This is precisely the mystery in which Joseph of Nazareth "shared" like no other human being except Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word. *He shared in it with her; he was involved in the same salvific event; he was*

¹³ Domenico Bertetto, S.D.B., (ed.), *Discorsi di Pio XI: Volume Primo (1922-1922)* (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1960) 780. The English summary of the complete Italian text comes from Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life* trans. Bernard J. Kelley, C.S.Sp. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957) 286. Italics and bold my own.

the guardian of the same love, through the power of which the eternal Father “destined us to be his sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:5). [*Velut alius omnino nemo homo, Verbi Incarnati excepta Matre Maria, hoc plane arcanum « communicavit » Iosephus Nazarethanus. Is sane ipse particeps ibidem cum illa simul fuit, in veritatem eiusdem insertus salvifici eventus atque eiusdem etiam custos amoris, cuius virtute Pater aeternus « praedestinavit nos in adoptionem filiorum per Iesum Christum » (Eph 1, 5)*].¹⁴

8. St. Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly *through the exercise of his fatherhood*. It is precisely in this way that, as the Church’s Liturgy teaches, he “*cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation*” and is truly a “*minister of salvation.*” His fatherhood is expressed concretely “*in his having made his life a service, a sacrifice to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission connected with it.*” [*A Deo est Sanctus Iosephus arcessitus ut Iesu recta via munerique eius per suae paternitatis executionem famularetur: eo ipso prorsus modo ille in temporis plenitudine magno redemptionis mysterio adiutricem praestitit operam reque vera « salutis minister » existit. Concreta autem ratione paternitas illius inde declarata est « quod. sua ex vita ministerium effecit ac sacrificium ipsi incarnationis mysterio necnon redimendi officio ei inhaerenti.*]¹⁵

14. Just as Israel had followed the path of the exodus “from the condition of slavery” in order to begin the Old Covenant, so Joseph, *guardian and cooperator in the providential mystery of God*, even in exile watched over the one who brings about the New Covenant. [*Quem ad modum Israel exodi sive egressionis viam « de domo servitutis » arripuit ut Foedus Vetus iniret, ita plane Iosephus, sequester ac providentiae Dei mysterii adiutor, in exilio eum aequabiliter tuetur qui Novum Foedus in actum deducit.*]¹⁶

20. “It is certain that the dignity of the Mother of God is so exalted that nothing could be more sublime; yet because Mary was united to Joseph by the bond of marriage, *there can be no doubt but that Joseph approached as no other person ever could that eminent dignity whereby the Mother of God towers above all creatures.* Since marriage is the

¹⁴ AAS 6. (Italics and bold my own.)

¹⁵ AAS 82 (1990) 14-15. (Italics and bold my own except for *through the exercise of his fatherhood.*)

¹⁶ AAS 82 (1990) 20. (Italics and bold in original.)

highest degree of association and friendship involving by its very nature a communion of goods, it follows that *God, by giving Joseph to the Virgin, did not give him to her only as a companion for life, a witness of her virginity and protector of her honor: he also gave Joseph to Mary in order that he might share, through the marriage pact, in her own sublime greatness.* [*« Certe matris Dei tam in Excelso dignitas est, ut nihil fieri maius queat. Sed tamen quia intercessit Iosepho cum Virgine beatissima maritale vinculum, ad illam praestantissimam dignitatem, qua naturis creatis omnibus longissime Deipara antecellit, non est dubium quin accesserit ipse, ut nemo magis. Est enim coniugium societas necessitudoque omnium maxima, quae natura sua adiunctam habet bonorum unius cum altero communicationem. Quocirca si sponsum Virgini Deus Iosephum dedit, dedit profecto non modo vitae socium, virginitatis testem, tutorem honestatis, sed etiam excelsae dignitatis eius ipso coniugali foedere participem ».*]¹⁷

While it is true that John Paul II did not explicitly teach that Saint Joseph was a co-redeemer, he certainly laid the groundwork for such an understanding. Even more, of all the popes, he was the first to make the most definite declarations in this regard by stating that Joseph was involved with Mary in the same salvific event; indeed, the Latin can even be translated that he was “inserted” into this event. Thus, by virtue of his being the head of the Holy Family Joseph was inserted into the hypostatic order. About this relation to the hypostatic order, let us quote from the famous canonist Prosper Lambertini [the future Benedict XIV (1675-1758)]:

There are other ministries which refer to the order of the hypostatic union, which is itself the most perfect, as we have said on speaking of the dignity of the Mother of God; *and in this order I believe that St. Joseph’s ministry holds the lowest place.* But being included in the highest order, it exceeds all other ministries of other orders. The office of the holy Patriarch does not belong to either the Old or the New Testament, but to the Author of both and the Cornerstone which made them one.¹⁸

In fact, Prosper Lambertini’s recognition of Joseph as belonging to the order of the hypostatic union was first enunciated, insofar as far as we know, by the great Jesuit philosopher and theologian Francisco Suarez (1548-1617) from whom Lambertini

¹⁷ AAS 82 (1990) 25. This is a direct quote from Pope Leo XIII’s *Quamquam Pluries*. (*Joseph approached as no other person ever could and he might share* italicized in original. Other italics and bold my own.)

¹⁸ Cited in Boniface Llamera, O.P., *Saint Joseph* trans. Sister Mary Elizabeth, O.P. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1962) 99.

borrowed. Here is a summary of the position of Suarez by the late Opus Dei theologian Joaquín Ferrer Arellano (1931-2017) whom I had the happiness of knowing:

There are certain ministries which pertain precisely to the order of sanctifying grace, and in this order, I see that the apostles occupy the place of highest dignity, and that in such a place, gifts of grace are necessary (above all of wisdom and of grace: *gratis data*) superior to the gifts of others. There are, however, other ministries found within the order of the hypostatic union (an order of itself more perfect, as we have said elsewhere, treating of the dignity of the Mother of God) and, in my opinion, it is within this order that the ministry of St. Joseph must be situated, even if it occupies the lowest place there; and for this reason, his is a dignity superior to the highest in other orders because he is in a higher order.¹⁹

Calling Joseph a “minister of salvation” in paragraph 8 is a very strong statement and so is “*his having made his life a service, a sacrifice to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission connected with it.*” Further, Joseph is called a *cooperator in the providential mystery of God*. Finally, Leo XIII and John Paul II both assert that Joseph shares *through the marriage pact, in [Mary’s] own sublime greatness*. *Lumen Gentium*, clearly teaches that Mary genuinely collaborated in the work of Redemption in a way that is totally secondary, subordinate and dependent on Jesus.²⁰ Since this is

¹⁹ Joaquín Ferrer Arellano, “The Virginal Marriage of Mary and Joseph according to Bl. John Duns Scotus,” in *Blessed John Duns Scotus and His Mariology – Commemoration of the Seventh Centenary of His Death* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2009), p. 383, note 33. Cf. The Latin text of Francisco Suarez, *De mysteriis vitae Christi in tertiam partem divi Thomae, tomus secundus*, disp. VIII, Sec. 1 in *Opera Omnia*, Vol. 19 (Paris: Vivès, 1866) 125. It was Suarez who first developed the concept of the order of the hypostatic union. This position of Saint Joseph’s belonging to the order of the hypostatic union has been embraced by the following authors: Giuseppe Sinibaldi, *La Grandezza di San Giuseppe* (Rome: Messaggero del Cuore di Maria, 1927) 36-42; Francis L. Filas, S.J., *The Man Nearest to Christ: Nature and Historic Development of the Devotion to St. Joseph* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1944) 88-89; C.M. [Mariani], *Primauté de Saint Joseph d’après L’Épiscopat Catholique et la Théologie* (Montreal: Fides, 1945) 155-222; Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life* trans. Bernard J. Kelley, C.S.Sp. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957) 280-282; Llamera 90-115; James J. Davis, O.P., *A Thomistic Josephology* (Montreal: University of Montreal; Center of Research: St. Joseph’s Oratory, 1967) 187-260; Alexis M. Lépicier, O.S.M., *Tractatus de Sancto Ioseph Sponso Beatissimae Mariae Virginis* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1908) [subsequently LJ1] 13-29; *Ibid.*, *Saint Joseph, Époux de la Très Sainte Vierge: Traité Théologique* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1932) [subsequently LJ2] 3-25.

²⁰ *Lumen Gentium* #56-58, 61. Cf. also Arthur B. Calkins, “Marian Coredemption and the Contemporary Papal Magisterium: The Truth of Marian Coredemption, the Papal Magisterium and the Present Situation” in *Maria “Unica Cooperatrice alla Redenzione”*. *Atti del Simposio sul Mistero*

so, is it not reasonable that Joseph collaborated in our Redemption, in a way that is secondary and subordinate to Mary's collaboration, even as Mary's collaboration is secondary, subordinate and totally dependent on Jesus as the Redeemer? These statements of Leo XIII, Pius XI and John Paul II clearly speak of Saint Joseph's participation in the Redemption of the human race, even if they do not employ the term "Co-redeemer".

4. It is a commonplace that devotion and sound theology precede the magisterium, which by its very nature must be conservative and cautious. That was and is surely the case with the devotion to and doctrine about Saint Joseph. By the time Blessed Pope Pius IX declared Saint Joseph Patron of the Universal Church through the Decree *Quemadmodum Deus* issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on 8 December 1870, the piety of saints, mystics and the faithful had already prepared the way along with significant theological treatises. This, in turn, spurred on further theological research and treatises on Josephology.²¹

5. Almost all modern authors on Saint Joseph treat of his sorrows and joys. It should be noted in particular that the first three of the seven sorrows traditionally ascribed to Our Lady – the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple, the flight into Egypt and the finding in the temple – are also sorrows of Joseph.²² In the account of the third sorrow Mary asks Jesus "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow" (Lk. 2:48). As the husband of Mary and the virginal father of Jesus, Joseph obviously shared intimately in her joys and sorrows. Saints and mystics often give us profound insights into the sufferings of these holy spouses, assuming, not without good reason, that Joseph, like Mary had profound intuitions and knowledge²³ about the suffering and death of Jesus, at least from the time of the prophecy of Simeon (Lk. 2:34-35). In his meditations for the *Month of Saint Joseph* Saint Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868) wrote about this:

From the day the aged Simeon had predicted Christ's Passion, never a moment elapsed when that Passion was not present to the mind of Saint Joseph.

della Corredenzione Mariana, Fatima, Portogallo 3-7 Maggio 2005 (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2005) 113-169.

²¹ Cf. Francis L. Filas, S.J., *Joseph: The Man Closest to Jesus – The Complete Life, Theology and Devotional History of St. Joseph* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, second printing, 1962), the most detailed source book on Saint Joseph in English.

²² Cf. LJ1 203-212; LJ2 129-137; Sinibaldi 300-320; Donald H. Calloway, MIC, *Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2020) 157-167.

²³ In LJ1 Cardinal Lépicier treats of Joseph's acquired and infused knowledge 174-177 and he does the same many years later in LJ2 169-171.

The Scriptures showed it to him in figure, while Jesus spoke to him of it continually. For Jesus loved His father too much to deprive him of the grace of suffering the Passion with Him and of sharing beforehand in its merits. ...

To draw Saint Joseph into intimate union with Himself and grant him the merit of the whole Passion, our Lord had to show it to him in all its details and with all its bitterness ...

Further, Saint Joseph foresaw Mary's tears and misery. He would have desired to stay by her side, and he must have begged Jesus to be allowed to remain on earth that he might climb Calvary and sustain Mary. Poor Saint Joseph! He had to submit to death and leave behind him Jesus and Mary: Jesus to be crucified and abandoned by His people; Mary to suffer alone, unassisted. How his love for them was crucified!

All this is very true. It was only right that Saint Joseph should not be deprived of suffering, a grace granted to all the saints. He was to have a fuller chalice of pain than all the rest because our Lord loved him more than all of them except Mary. Our Lord owed it to the love He bore Saint Joseph.²⁴

This beautiful text of Saint Peter Julian Eymard assumes that Joseph was aware of the Passion of Jesus in advance, as we also find in the works of many authors and theologians throughout the centuries. Thus, the sorrows of Saint Joseph, the living of Mary's sorrows in union with her and the desire to be united with Jesus in his Passion would have constituted the basis for which Saint Joseph could be considered a Co-redeemer with Christ, but to a lesser extent than Mary who participated directly in the Passion of Christ.

6. In fact, the Servite Cardinal Alexis Henry Lépiciér, O.S.M. (1863-1936) argued at length in his two major works on Josephology, the Latin treatise of 1907 and the more popularized French volume in 1932, that Saint Joseph can rightly be described as a co-redeemer with Christ.²⁵ As far as I have been able to determine, he was the first theologian of note to do so. Not only was he a notable theologian, but he also served in important posts for the Holy See, in his own order and in the Roman Curia.²⁶ He was

²⁴ Saint Peter Julian Eymard, *Month of St. Joseph* (NY: Eymard League, 1948) 82-85.

²⁵ It should also be noted that he argued that Saint Joseph may rightly be called *Coredemptor* in his Latin volume of 1908, which was dedicated to Pope Saint Pius X, then gloriously reigning. Cf. *LJ1*:208-209.

²⁶ Angelo M. Tentori, O.S.M., "Mary Coredemptrix in the Writings of Cardinal Alexis Henry Mary Lépiciér, O.S.M." in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross – II: Acts of the Second International Symposium on Marian Coredemption* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2002) 361-379.

ordained in 1885 and already in 1894 “he was appointed to the Chair of Mariology [at the Pontifical Academy Propaganda Fide], the first erected in the Catholic world.”²⁷

In 1901 he began the series of his theological, scriptural, philosophical, ascetical, Marian and literary publications. He started with the treatise *De Beatissima Maria Matre Dei*, which was rightfully deemed the most beautiful theological work put out on Our Lady up to that time and which has had many editions.²⁸

Let us consider now some of Lépiciér’s interconnected arguments. He begins by speaking of the sorrows of Saint Joseph:

It is by these immense sorrows, so patiently borne, that the holy Patriarch merited for himself the glorious title of Co-redeemer, in the sense in which we call Mary herself Coredemptrix, even though in a lesser degree.

In order to understand this point well, one must keep before one’s eyes not only the greatness of these sufferings of Saint Joseph, but above all their reason, or as one says in theological language their formal object or ultimate cause.

The greatness of the sorrows of Saint Joseph can be measured by two causes: the material cause and the efficient cause. The material cause was the very soul of the holy Patriarch, which, by reason of the perfection that it possessed, a perfection enhanced by the absence of all actual sin,²⁹ functioned like the soul of his holy Spouse, which was of such an exceptional sensibility that suffering and sadness, like other movements of the sensible appetite, called “animal” passions, were imprinted very easily and very profoundly in her.

But above all it is the final cause or reason for which Joseph suffered, which confers on his sufferings their nobility and efficacy. As in the case of his holy Spouse, Saint Joseph did not suffer for himself, never having committed any sin; his sufferings were entirely for the salvation of the world; and it is precisely this consideration that confers on him the beautiful title of Co-redeemer, which we claim for him. ...

²⁷ Tentori 361.

²⁸ Tentori 362. The fifth edition of *De Beatissimae Mariae* published in 1926 indicates that it is *notabiliter aucta*.

²⁹ Lépiciér held that Saint Joseph was freed from original sin at the time of his circumcision to which he responded with all the ardor of which he was then capable and was subsequently confirmed in impeccability LJ1 140-161, LJ2 146-160. Garrigou-Lagrange speaks of Joseph being confirmed in grace by the time of his marriage to Our Lady because of his mission 280.

[After giving the examples of the sorrows of Saint Joseph he continues] Saint Joseph never ceased cooperating in the most efficacious way, in union with his Spouse, in the salvation of the human race: in these circumstances he well merited to be called our Co-redeemer.

Moreover, a Catholic would never mistake the sense in which this title should be understood. He knows perfectly well that we have only one Redeemer, who has paid the total price of our salvation and has paid it with superabundant merits. But because our divine Savior did not disdain to associate with himself rational creatures according to the words of Saint Paul: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Col. 1:24), one can justly give the name of co-redeemer to those especially who have cooperated under Christ and with Christ for the salvation of the human race.

Moreover, in the order of ideas the very first place belongs to Mary Immaculate, who offered the divine Victim of Calvary in a more fully and perfect way than any other creature, suffered for Jesus and with Jesus, without thinking in any way of benefitting herself, for the forgiveness of the sins committed by the human race. After Mary it is to Saint Joseph that belongs that glorious title for having nourished and watched over the same Victim in view of the sacrifice of the Cross by having offered Him, in anticipation in the Temple, as one who rightly belonged to him, and for having endured these sorrows of which the satisfactory merit has gone entirely to the profit of the human race purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ.³⁰

Cardinal Lépicier’s position on Saint Joseph’s active collaboration in the work of Redemption, namely his role as Co-redeemer, was subsequently upheld by other authors.³¹ The most sustained and carefully argued treatment of this topic was done by the late Opus Dei numerary, Don Joaquín Ferrer Arellano in his book *San José Nuestro Padre y Señor: La Trinidad de la Tierra – Teología y Espiritualidad Josefina*³² and in his lengthy essay, “St. Joseph and Soteriology: The Singular Participation of the Virgin Father, St. Joseph, with the Immaculate Coredeematrix in the Work of Our

³⁰ *LJ2* 209-211 (my trans.); Cf. also *LJ1* 207-209.

³¹ Cf. Llamera 126-143; Davis 260-267.

³² (Madrid: Arca de la Alianza, 2007). Chapter five is entitled “Cooperación de San José a la Redención Objetiva, Desde Los Primeros Misterios de la Salvación hasta el Sacrificio del Calvario” 131-180.

Redemption”.³³ In these works he follows the indications of Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer (1902-1975), the founder of Opus Dei, who was a friend of Joaquín Ferrer Arellano and who always invoked Saint Joseph as “Father and Lord” [*Padre y Señor*]. It would require much more space to analyze his work, but it should be noted that both the Spanish work and the English essay received the *Imprimatur*.

I wish to make a further comment here. There has been much controversy in the Catholic theological world about Marian Coredemption and much bias against it even though many excellent studies have been produced in the course of the past twenty-five years. I have been a part of the effort to promote a positive understanding of Our Lady’s role as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate. It is obvious that there is opposition at very high levels in the Church and it would seem obvious that the claim that Saint Joseph, too, is a Co-redeemer on a level below Mary could be considered a “slam dunk”. I would simply point out here that Cardinal Lépicier began writing about Saint Joseph as a Co-redeemer a good fifty years before Sister Neuzil reported this statement and that she had no higher education in theology. **The Bishops’ statement that “Saint Joseph was a Co-redeemer with Christ must be seen as an error” is erroneous itself and betrays a profound ignorance of Josephology in the papal magisterium and in theology as it has developed in the course of the last 150 years.**

7. In their fourth numbered statement the Bishops declare “Looking at the nature and quality of the experiences themselves, we find that they are more to be described as subjective inner religious experiences rather than objective external visions and revelations.” In their fifth numbered statement they state again

we find that her experiences were of a type where her own imagination and intellect were involved in the formation of the events. It seems that these were authentically graced moments, even perhaps of a spiritual quality beyond what most people experience, but subjective ones in which her own imagination and intellect were constitutively engaged, putting form to inner spiritual movements. However, we do not find evidence that these were objective visions and revelations of the type seen at Guadalupe, Fatima, and Lourdes.

The Bishops do not tell us the criteria on which they have based their judgment. I find what they state here very vague. In the case of any vision *quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*; whatever is received is necessarily received according to the capacity of the receiver. It is difficult for me to grasp how the imagination and intellect

³³ In *Mary at the Foot of the Cross – VII: Coredemptrix, Therefore Mediatrix of All Graces. Acts of the Seventh International Symposium on Marian Coredemption* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2008) 167-249.

of a visionary could not be constitutively engaged in a vision and the classical theology of the spiritual life seems to support this. It describes three kinds of visions, which have been distinguished by theologians of the spiritual life since St. Augustine: (1) *corporeal visions* in which the bodily eyes perceive an object normally invisible; (2) *imaginative visions* in which the representation of an image is supernaturally produced on the imagination and (3) *intellectual visions* which are a simple intuitive knowledge supernaturally effected without the aid of any sensible image or impressed species in the internal or external senses.³⁴ How do these Bishops and their “experts” know that Sister Neuzil’s visions were not “objective external visions”? Are those required in order for a revelation to be recognized as valid?

My evaluation is that at least some of the visions described by Sister Neuzil were corporeal. She went into detail, describing colors, form, etc. This feature does not disqualify them. The statement of the Bishops that “we do not find evidence that these were objective visions and revelations of the type seen at Guadalupe, Fatima, and Lourdes” simply begs the question. They offer no supporting evidence for why they make such a gratuitous and unsubstantiated statement.

I regret to submit my conclusion that the Bishops’ statement of 7 May 2020 is a profoundly flawed document and ought to be withdrawn.

Monsignor Arthur Burton Calkins, S.T.D.
21 December 2020

³⁴ Cf. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation according to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross* trans. Sister M. Timothea Doyle, O.P. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1937, Reprinted, 1958) 438-443; *Ibid.*, *The of the Three Ages of the Interior Life: Volume 2* trans. Sister M. Timothea Doyle, O.P. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1948, Fifth Printing, 1964) 586-588; Adolphe Tanquary, S.S., *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology* trans. Herman Branderis, S.S. (Tournai: Desclée, 1930, Second and Revised edition) 701-702; Antonio Royo, O.P. and Jordan Aumann, O.P., *The Theology of Christian Perfection* (Dubuque, IA: The Priory Press, 1962) 655-658; Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology* (Huntington, IN: 1980) 425-427.