

# **Inclusive Mediation**

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

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The Catholics and Protestants split in the 16th century over numerous issues, but one of the major ongoing issues these past 500 years was about Mary. Catholics claimed that Mary was necessary for our salvation because she was the mother of Jesus and Protestants said only Jesus Christ was needed and he didn't need her to save us. This division went on until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) where the Catholic Church agreed to back off a little on our claims about Mary and many Protestants agreed that Mary was important to the life of the Church and our faith. Because of this dialogue that started decades ago, we are now in a much better place today as Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant, when it comes to understanding the role of Mary in the work of salvation.

Today, we celebrate the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception, which is a Roman Catholic feast through and through. It was established during the height of the divide between Catholics and Protestants. While we made a lot of progress in our dialogues, a remaining concern among some Catholics is whether we can call Mary the co-mediatrix, meaning that she was a co-worker with Jesus Christ in Mediating God to us (even though

scripture says that there is only one mediator between God and humans) or the co-redemptrix, meaning she was a co-worker with Jesus Christ in redeeming the world (even though we usually only refer to Christ as the Redeemer). This is so current that the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith wrote about these very titles for Mary this past Summer.

In the document, *Mater Populi Fidelis*, we are advised against using the terms co-mediatrix or co-redemptrix for Mary in order to keep the priority unmistakably on Jesus Christ. At the same time, the document did take a step forward that may help Catholics and Protestants. It beautifully states, "we need to remember that...Christ's mediation is 'inclusive.'" In other words, yes, it is Christ alone who is mediator and redeemer, and also, yes, Christ wants Mary and each one of us to share in that work. The document concludes, "Mary's participation in Christ's work becomes evident when one begins from the conviction that the risen Lord promotes, transforms, and enables believers to collaborate with him in his work. What must be emphasized in this case is that when Christ allows us to accompany him and — under the impulse of his grace — to give our very best, it is ultimately his power and his mercy that are glorified." (29) On these issues, as long as we are clear that it is all the work of God and for the greater glory of God, every person is invited to participate in Christ's inclusive mediation and redemption, like Mary.

*The Feast of the Immaculate Conception teaches us that we have an inclusive role to play in the work of salvation.*

How can we help non-Roman Catholics better understand our appreciation for Mary? How can we work for a both/and approach that sees the work of Christ as inclusive, meaning he alone is mediator and redeemer and he also wants everyone to participate with him?

As we continue with this mass, let us turn to Mary as the example of being so near to Jesus that we can't help but be involved in his work, so much so that she was immaculately conceived. We may not be at the level of co-mediators or co-redeemers, but we are certainly co-workers with Christ and one another in the vineyard of the Lord.