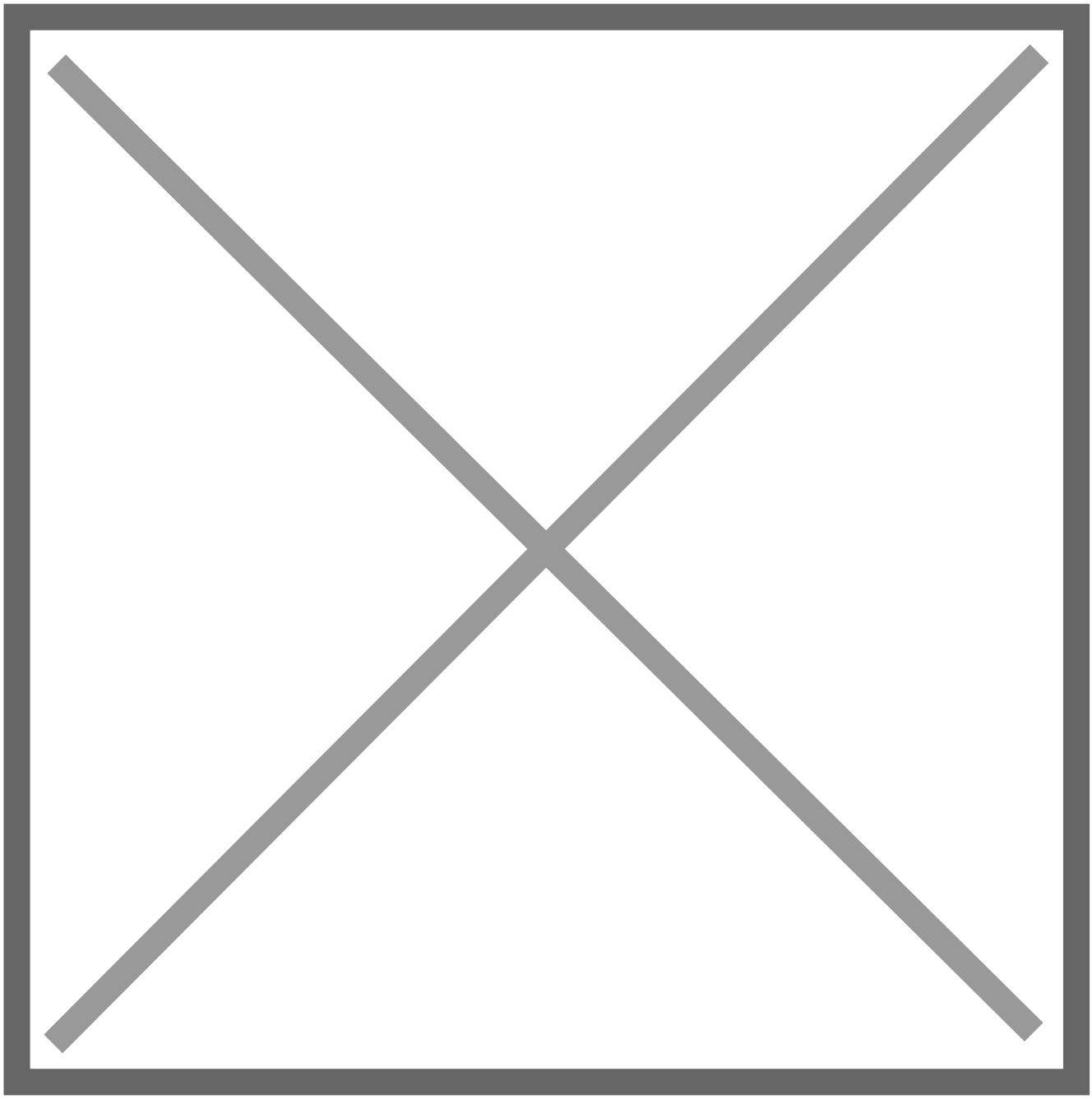
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Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, presents the doctrinal note "Mater Populi Fidelis" ("Mother of the Faithful People of God") on Mary’s cooperation in the work of salvation, at the Jesuit headquarters in Rome Nov. 4, 2025. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

by Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

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While praising devotion to Mary, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith firmly rejected moves to formally proclaim Mary as "co-redemptrix" or "co-mediatrix."

In a lengthy doctrinal note titled "Mater Populi Fidelis" ("Mother of the Faithful People of God"), the dicastery said the title co-redemptrix or co-redeemer "carries the risk of eclipsing the exclusive role of Jesus Christ" in salvation.

And, regarding the title co-mediatrix or co-mediator, it said that Mary, "the first redeemed, could not have been the mediatrix of the grace that she herself received."

However, it said, the title may be used when it does not cast doubt on "the unique mediation of Jesus Christ, true God and true man."

Pope Leo XIV approved the text Oct. 7 and ordered its publication, said the note, which was released Nov. 4.

Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the doctrinal dicastery, presented the document during a conference at the Jesuit headquarters in Rome and said its teaching becomes part of the church's "ordinary magisterium" and must be considered authoritative.

> "Everything comes from Him — Christ — as the Letter to the Ephesians and the Letter to the Colossians, in particular, tell us; Mary, too, is everything that she is through Him. The word 'Co-redemptrix' would obscure this origin," Benedict XVI said.
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For more than 30 years, some Catholics, including some bishops, have asked for formal dogmatic declarations of Mary as co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix, the document's introduction said. But Msgr. Armando Matteo, secretary of the dicastery's doctrinal section, told the conference that the Vatican's first study of the doctrinal implications of the titles goes all the way back to 1926.

Fernández said that one time, when St. Peter's Basilica was closed, he spent a long time in front of Michelangelo's Pietà. The sorrow on Mary's face because of the death of her son and, at the same time, her obvious strength, he said, "was so beautiful it was understandable why people would want to say everything and more about Mary."

The new document said that titles used for Mary should speak of her motherly care for all people and her place as the first and perfect disciple of Jesus but must not create any doubt that Catholics believe Jesus is the redeemer of the world and the bestower of grace.

"Any gaze directed at her that distracts us from Christ or that places her on the same level as the Son of God would fall outside the dynamic proper to an authentically Marian faith," it said, because Mary always points to her son.

The titles co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix have been used in reference to Mary by theologians and even popes in the past millennium, the doctrinal dicastery said, but without elaborating on the precise meaning and the extent to which those titles could describe Mary's role in salvation history.

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St. John Paul II "referred to Mary as 'Co-redemptrix' on at least seven occasions," the note said, but after consultation with the then-Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and its prefect, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in 1996, he did not issue a dogmatic declaration and stopped using the title.

Citing Scripture and tradition, the future Pope Benedict XVI said, "The precise meaning of these titles (co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix) is not clear, and the doctrine contained in them is not mature."

"Everything comes from Him — Christ — as the Letter to the Ephesians and the Letter to the Colossians, in particular, tell us; Mary, too, is everything that she is through Him. The word 'Co-redemptrix' would obscure this origin," Benedict said.

Pope Francis, at a general audience in 2021, said that Jesus entrusted Mary to humanity as a mother, "not as a goddess, not as co-redemptrix," adding that love motivated some people to call her co-redemptrix, but love often leads people to "exaggerate."

"Given the necessity of explaining Mary's subordinate role to Christ in the work of Redemption, it would not be appropriate to use the title 'Co-redemptrix' to define Mary's cooperation," the doctrinal note said.

The title, it said, "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.'"

"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," the dicastery concluded.

The use of the title "co-mediatrix" is more complicated, the doctrinal note said, because the word "mediation" often is "understood simply as cooperation, assistance or intercession" and easily could apply to Mary without calling into question "the unique mediation of Jesus Christ, true God and true man."

Mary's role in salvation history is unique, the document said. She willingly accepted to become the mother of Jesus the savior, she raised him, traveled with him and stood at the foot of his cross.

While Christ, fully human and fully divine, is the one mediator between God and humanity, it said, "he enables various forms of participation in his salvific plan because, in communion with him, we can all become, in some way, cooperators with God and 'mediators' for one another."

"If this holds true for every believer — whose cooperation with Christ becomes increasingly fruitful to the extent that one allows oneself to be transformed by grace — how much more must it be affirmed of Mary in a unique and supreme way," the

doctrinal note said.

The church believes that those in heaven can pray and intercede for people still on earth and, "among those chosen and glorified with Christ, first and foremost is his Mother," the note said. "Therefore, we can affirm that Mary has a unique collaboration in the saving work that Christ carries out in his Church. With this intercession, Mary can become for us a motherly sign of the Lord's mercy."