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5th Marian Dogma Nothing New  
Interview With Puerto Rico's Cardinal Aponte

**SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, MARCH 18, 2008 (Zenit.org).- By declaring Mary the Spiritual Mother of All Humanity, Benedict XVI wouldn't be saying anything new about her, only clarifying her role in salvation, says Cardinal Luis Aponte Martínez.**

The retired archbishop of San Juan is one of the five cardinal co-sponsors of the 2005 International Symposium on Marian Co-redemption, held in Fatima, that are asking Benedict XVI to declare a fifth Marian dogma.

The petition urges the Pope to proclaim Mary "the Spiritual Mother of All Humanity, the co-redemptrix with Jesus the redeemer, mediatrix of all graces with Jesus the one mediator, and advocate with Jesus Christ on behalf of the human race."

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In this interview with ZENIT, Cardinal Aponte discusses his views in favor of the proposed dogma.

**Q: Your Eminence, what has led you to take a leadership role in the present petition to Benedict XVI for this new Marian dogma?**

Cardinal Aponte: Our Lady has always been a source of particular strength and the object of particular love for me. These roles of the Blessed Virgin as our spiritual mother have always been part of our Catholic tradition. For Latin American Catholics, it is all contained in her manifestation as Our Lady of Guadalupe who shows herself as a merciful mother, ready to intercede for us in our gravest needs, and to use her maternal intercession to bring us closer to Jesus.

I first spoke of the importance of this dogma to my brother cardinals in the presence of Pope John Paul II in Rome in 2002. There I related this Marian proclamation to the Church's new evangelization. As the first great evangelization of Latin America was led by Our Lady of Guadalupe, so should the Mother of Christ be invoked to lead this new evangelization of the third millennium.

The solemn definition of her motherly roles as co-redemptrix, mediatrix, and advocate will simply release Our Lady all the more to perform these motherly functions of intercession for our age for the maximum effectiveness in leading a new evangelization.

There are new times for the world and the Church. Just imagine how much Our Lady can help us in the new evangelization and with other elements of difficulty and crisis in our present age if we solemnly acknowledge her in these God-given roles of intercession for humanity.

**Q: How would you respond to the objection that the Church doesn't need a new teaching on Mary at this time?**

Cardinal Aponte: There is nothing new in this teaching. It is actually very ancient. It is important to keep in mind that this truth is already an official doctrine of the Church regarding Mary as taught at the Second Vatican Council -- "Lumen Gentium," Nos. 57, 58, 61, 62 -- and has been the consistent teaching of the papal magisterium for centuries.

John Paul II called Mary the "co-redemptrix" six times during his pontificate. The role is always understood in complete dependency to Jesus and as a human participant with the redeemer in the work of salvation.

When Blessed Pope Pius IX proclaimed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as a dogma in 1854, he explained that a dogmatic statement would add greater light and appreciation of the doctrine, leading to its "perfection." That's what this definition would do for Our Lady's spiritual motherhood -- add nothing new, but provide greater appreciation, understanding, and clarity of the existing truth.

**Q: Do you think that these functions of co-redemptrix, mediatrix, and advocate within her general role as our spiritual mother may be too difficult for the common person to comprehend?**

Cardinal Aponte: On the contrary, I think, for example, that the faithful in Latin America both comprehend this Marian doctrine in their hearts and already experience these maternal roles of Mary in their lives. Once again, Our Lady of Guadalupe embodies these motherly roles in a dynamic way, as a mother who suffered with Jesus for us, a mother who comes to nourish us with the graces of Jesus, and a mother who intercedes for us in our needs. That's co-redemptrix, mediatrix, advocate.

John Paul II, in his brilliance, always spoke of Our Lady's mediation in terms of her motherhood, using the expression "maternal mediation." What is more common and understandable than a mother who suffers, nourishes, and pleads for her people? That's what Our Lady does for us as a spiritual mother. It is really quite simple and already part of the daily experience of the Catholic faithful. What may be challenging to some of the learned has already been revealed to the little ones and accepted within the Church.

**Q: The principal objection to this new Marian dogma seems to be ecumenism. Would this papal definition hurt the Church's critically important mission of ecumenism in your view?**

Cardinal Aponte: Mothers by their very natures and vocations are unifiers of families. So, too, with the Mother of Jesus within the family of Jesus. The Church's mission of ecumenism is extremely important, but by leaving the Mother out, we only impede our own progress toward eventual Christian unity in the one body of Christ.

John Paul II made it clear in his encyclical on ecumenism, "Ut Unum Sint," that authentic Catholic ecumenical activity could never include either compromise of Catholic doctrine or impede proper doctrinal development, and this includes the doctrine regarding Mary.

A solemn definition regarding Our Lady's spiritual maternity would actually be a giant step forward in ecumenism, as it would clearly distinguish what the Church definitively teaches -- that Mary is not a goddess, that Catholics don't place Mary on a level of equality with Jesus her divine son, and that Mary as a human participated in the historic act of redemption in a way absolutely and completely dependent on Jesus. This would clear up a myriad of misunderstandings amidst our non-Catholic Christian brothers and sisters, leading to greater dialogue and unity regarding Jesus' mother and within his body. This is true ecumenism from a Catholic perspective.

At the time preceding the definition of the Assumption in 1950, the same objections regarding ecumenism were raised to Pius XII. After the definition, the Church experienced its greatest progress to date in ecumenism leading up to the second Vatican council.

Mary is the Mother of the ecumenical movement, the Mother of unity, not its obstacle. Let us give her the opportunity to unite us in ways only a mother can by openly and proudly declaring her maternal roles of intercession for us. Just think of how powerfully she could help us in the mission of Christian unity if we solemnly invite her to intercede for this goal.