



Blessed Eustaquio: *Healing and Reconciliation*

THE ISSUE OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION WITH REGARD TO OUR FATHER EUSTAQUIO

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The figure of Father Eustaquio is beloved among members of the Congregation for the memory of a good man and a good shepherd. His life is marked by religious service to the people of Brazil, where there are still some people who knew him personally, with whom I was fortunate to meet in different places.

For us his Brothers of the Congregation, we feel a great pride that he is a member of our family and a model for what we want to do with our lives. His pastoral work is marked clearly by the following of Jesus, and seeks at all times the same as Jesus: to form human beings to love so much they are willing to give their lives for those they love.

But we have to say with sorrow and shame, that the reality in which we live is marked by the drama of the lack of understanding among humans. The pain and tears scar very much the history of different countries, each one with its own characteristics.

I had the grace to be a member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru in which we asked the painful truth during a terrorist period that left at least 70,000 dead, some 16,000 missing and about 10 million affected by violence. We were asked us to study the period 1980 to 2000, which were the most violent years lived in our country.

It was, in the first place, an investigation with two important facets: one focused on the information that was available from the government and the media; the other of the investigation coming from fieldwork in places where violence had been exercised.

Most of the victims were Quechua speakers, marginalized farmers who, in good part never knew the reasons for their death. They were accused of crimes they never committed and were turned away from paths of justice by terrorists as well as members of the Armed Forces of the country.

For me, I can say quite simply, it was a very painful time in which I begged that God would change what I was noting and give us a path of encounter between brothers and sisters. There was violence of all kinds and reparation was seen as essential; therefore, a

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process of seeking the truth cannot be without a horizon of reparation. From the perspective of our religious family, we should apologize for what happened between us and offer ourselves in reparation for the evil done.

Many nights I relived what the Good Father did in his time of adoration in the Motte d'Usseau. Evil was done in the world, to our brothers and sisters, to persons of tomorrow; the situation of poverty and injustice of the immense majority of our sisters and brothers is worse.

I had to ask myself some very fundamental questions such as was a hand given to those who fought for their ideals? Are they able to forgive those who have done so much evil? The ringleaders who led the terrible massacres - will they be able to ask for forgiveness? The answers were different. Some asked for forgiveness, others not. Of the leaders, 3 of the 7 members at the top did apologize, but very few people believed them.

A reconciliation with brothers and sisters always has to consider what we regard in the sacrament of the same name: I come to Him from whom I walked away and I am deeply glad that He welcomes me, because He loves me. We have to ask for this grace so that our world is made better every day.

But what to do with the rest of the people and the whole country that had been harmed? The pain was still alive. Things have to change. It was not possible that the leaders of both sides wanted to ask forgiveness and be forgiven. But the sense of urgency is still alive and suffering.

It occurred to us to make a number of recommendations so that what had caused the insurrection never again took place among Peruvians. We knew that this was a very difficult way and not well accepted by the factions, but it was the most effective way that we could achieve. It was a true refounding of our country, through a long process that consumed our whole lives, but we did not see the possibility of anything else when an entire people has been injured, especially the poor, the simple and those many consider to be insignificant.

The gaze of God has been our guide. He has advised and guided us by ways in which we have not yet arrived at peace, but love of our brothers and sisters feels like the real key to this path.

Reconciliation is, who knows, the hardest thing we can aim for, but this is what our feeling and intelligence shows us as a true and valid path.

It is all about being brothers and sisters in the manner of Father Eustaquio, with simplicity, closeness; with the stubbornness of love, that, thanks to the love of God, achieves the wonder of a true and miraculous reconciliation. It gives a new way of seeing to those who are painfully cornered by sin.