



## **Blessed Eustaquio: Healing and Reconciliation**

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### **THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE POPULAR DEVOTION TO BLESSED EUSTAQUIO**

*Sérgio Stein ssc\**

When I was in Rome doing a course on spiritual theology at the Gregorian University (1989-91), our esteemed Superior General, Patrick Bradley suggested: "Why don't you do the final work of the course on Father Eustaquio?" I talked with my academic advisor and accepted the suggestion. The theme was: "How Father Eustaquio fleshed out the SSCC charism in the territories of Brazil."

As I am a native of the south of Brazil, and a SSCC originally from the province of Spain, I was grateful for the suggestion because from there I had to research the life of Father Eustaquio, a still unknown to me. I am really grateful for the suggestion which brought me the grace of knowing this missionary of the Sacred Hearts. He is recognized by many as a man of God, a mediator of God's action in a privileged way, saying of him what the Lord asks of us to be: "be holy as the Lord is holy."

I returned to Brazil and participated for the first time in the Feast of Father Eustaquio in Belo Horizonte, August 30. I could confirm in many ways what I had read in the Archives of the Postulator in the General House, Rome: people coming throughout the whole day, simple people, of much faith believing in the action of God through Father Eustaquio; thousands of people praying at his graveside, renewing petitions, offering thanks... persons in need, who trusted in the blessing for health, for themselves, for their families. I was convinced that this is a man of God, what's happening is something of God.

When news of his beatification came, the reaction was extraordinary as something uniting heaven and earth in a song of praise to God. How many people look to the church of Father Eustaquio! The media is taking notice; the people are thanking God for hearing their prayers, (throughout the years at all the Masses, Sunday or weekday, there is the prayer for his canonization.) When the great ceremony of his Beatification did take place, there were a hundred thousand people in the Stadium in the State of Mineirão. The people of God celebrated, sang, renewed their faith, manifesting their great joy in the official recognition of Father Eustaquio as a Blessed.

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Some years passed and then I received an appointment to the community of Father Eustaquio. My mission would be to pastor the Parish of the Sacred Hearts – Father Eustaquio’s church- in Belo Horizonte. A year and a half later, with the Archbishop’s (Belo Horizonte) approval, something great happened. The parish would become “the Sanctuary of Health and Peace.” There was great press coverage when the news was announced on July 30, 2014. The ceremony of the installation of the new sanctuary would be on August 30, a day especially dedicated to Father Eustaquio and a date when many people are present.

There are facts, which well illustrate the greatness of this man chosen by God to be his presence. “The hand which blesses,” the heart who reconciles, the feet of the messenger of peace. The word of Jesus - “greater works than these he will do” - is now a reality, it is come to be. Many cases, many stories which I have heard, read, been present for, which touch us as humans, enrich us spiritually. They help to experience a God who is close; they renew my faith, my consecration, my desire to serve God. There are some who knew Father Eustaquio in their childhood who recount stories which even to this day enrich their faith and devotion; people who received graces many years ago dedicate themselves in gratitude to the service of the poor (Mrs Izabel), of the sick, of those more in need. Some are instruments to re-find a joy in life, others worked 50 or 60 or 70 years on the feast of Father Eustaquio to give a little of the much they received through the intercession of Father Eustaquio. Still others pray in silence in his burial mound entrusting their needs and sufferings to the hope that the Blessed one will help them. They leave notes asking for health, work, and peace. God knows what is going on in the heart of each one and hears their prayer, their cry.

There is a question, which never grows silent: from where does all this devotion come after some 71 years? His greeting “Health and Peace” is right-on for today. Our people suffer so many forms of violence, wounded in heart, hurt in body. They place total trust in Father Eustaquio that he will help them in their sorrows, to carry their crosses, endure their sufferings.

There is a great significance in the fact that he lived here and his mortal remains rest here in his memorial. Our simple people need to touch, see, talk with their patron saint. “He is here, he listens to us...he helps us.” The experience is near, familiar, intimate, and it leaves deep grooves in the relationship of the Saint with the people.

When, as SSCC, we speak of our choice of sanctuary - a tent of God among us -, of “three tents” (of reconciliation, health and peace), we want to express what comes from our SSCC charism and how that makes up foundational aspects of Father Eustaquio’s life. Likewise, as he has been and is a wonderful intercessor of the simple people, poor and needful, he can help us. He can be our intercessor also that we might be faithful disciples of Jesus in our reparative mission, through the experience of the merciful love of God through Reconciliation, a recovery of Health and a building up of Peace.