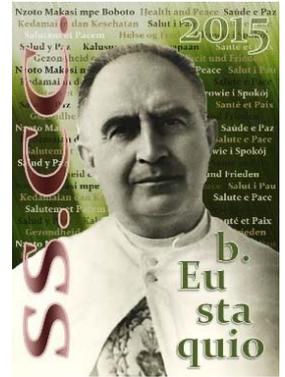


Reconcile with your brother

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Facade of the cathedral in Poitiers (France)

Pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart.

Pope Francis
Misericordiae Vultus 9

The parable known as the “**prodigal son**” (Lk 15, 11-32) remains unfinished. We do not know the ending. It tells us that the father went out to try to persuade the older brother to come and join the feast with his younger brother. But the older brother was angry and did not want to come in. We don’t know whether or not the father succeeded in convincing the older brother. The story is still waiting for an ending.

Jacob and Esau were also quarreling brothers. And with reason. Jacob deceptively robbed his brother of his birthright, provoking the ire of Esau (Gn 27, 41). In Jesus’ parable as well as in the case of the patriarchs we are faced with brothers injured by resentment, with accounts unsettled, where at least one of them has long been incubating hatred and reproaches against the other.

Yes, we know the ending of the story of Jacob and Esau. After many years of separation, after Jacob had to flee on two occasions, to bargain with his father-in-law Laban to obtain the wife he wanted and to wrestle with God himself at night next to the ford of the Jabbok, the two brothers meet, embrace and are reconciled.

“Esau ran to meet him, embraced him, and flinging himself on his neck, kissed him as he wept” (Gn 33, 4). Jesus takes up these same expressions to tell of the reception that the father bestowed on the younger son in the parable: “He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him.” (Lk 15, 20). It’s an interesting parallelism.

We already know what God wants, what our heart aspires to, what is the best fruit of mercy: that the feuding brothers forgive and embrace each other. It does not suffice for each brother to embrace the father in order to conclude the story; the true ending is decided by what happens between the brothers.

At the beginning of this year, dedicated to the themes of healing and reconciliation under the inspiration of **Blessed Eustaquio**, I asked (INFO 87, January 2, 2015) that during this year, each one of us seek out at least one brother with whom we know we need to be reconciled, and take a first step to approach him, ask for forgiveness, do everything possible to understand what it is that the other might hold against me, speak with one another and forgiven one another. I told you that, perhaps, this is the most difficult thing that we could ask.

Human reality is marked by conflicts between brothers who are incapable of forgiving each other, whose divisions (as individuals, families, groups or people) sink them into in the depths of resentment, which is the inner monster that heats up emotions while accumulating arguments and wounds that make us feel mistreated, harassed, and brushed aside. Resentment never stops whispering in our ear that the best response ought to be attacking the other, eliminating him, or, at least, pushing him out of my existence. It is exactly the opposite of communion.

The **SSCC charism and mission** seek precisely to enter into this wound and heal it with the oil of God’s love that repairs and reconciles. Christ died in order to destroy the dividing wall and reconcile those who were divided. (Eph 2, 14). Therefore, reconciliation between brothers is not purely an emotional issue or subject to the different characters of each of them. Reconciliation between brothers represents a central challenge in which the truth or falsehood of our vocation and the Gospel we believe comes into play.

We are called to write the ending to the parable of the prodigal son. What we decide in our hearts will determine whether the elder son stayed outside with his anger, or whether, happily, he heeded his father’s call and joined in the feast with his brother.

