



## Blessed Eustaquio: *Healing and Reconciliation*

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### MY EXPERICE OF GOD THROUGH FORGIVENESS

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I did not find You, Lord, on the road to Damascus, neither have I seen You on Sinai, nor heard You on Tabor. We have been always, you and I, like the ocean where I am dissolved in you like salt in seawater. You have enveloped me since my childhood and I over the years have noticed that the image of the ocean explained my feelings. For me, Lord, you have been as natural as is beauty for the rose or rich soil for the earth. I never had to shout like Camus: "Where is this God to fill my heart." Neither did I lament, as did St. Augustine, late have I found You, Lord, late have I found You. Nor did I feel your absence when my feet were covered in the mud of sin, although it is true there were never such great sins that my eyes were blinded and I could not see You. I always felt in those moments the warmth of your presence in the form of forgiveness. This could be the summary of my life.

But all is not sunshine and roses. Forgiveness has been woven through my life with many threads. As a child, I already had the experience of joy that forgiveness brings. How often my childish antics were forgiven by my parents, sowing in me trust and admiration for them who had shown their love in a forgiving smile. Nevertheless, the years pass and in time, there comes bitterness on the journey, hidden by false smiles, and drinking that does not quench thirst. Here is seen the greatness of forgiveness. I have always sought forgiveness and I have always delighted in being forgiven. I was given the grace to never tire of asking for forgiveness and in His pardon, I have known the heart of God. Rather than looking up at the stars to know God, I have met Him in the deep waters of forgiveness. I said, "Lord, I'm tired of stumbling, but you do not get tired of forgiving" and that led me to learn more about how much God wants me. I can say that forgiveness has been what helped me experience God more, and trust in Him as a child cradled to his mother's breast. If you want to know the heart of another person, look at how he or she forgives. Forgiveness is the image of greatness of heart; therefore, in feeling God's unlimited forgiveness, you drink of the greatness of God. In a blossoming meadow of forgiveness, I sat in the shade of an apple tree, to drink from the pitcher of the Love of God. When I preach the parable of the prodigal son, I always complete the parable wondering what the prodigal son was thinking, in his room when he was alone preparing to go to sleep. Surely, he did not think about himself, but about his father and would say: "How great is my

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father". That is the melody of my soul whenever God puts his forgiveness in the palm of my hands. "How great is my Father!"

However, I have also been able to see the greatness of forgiveness from another side, very mysterious but very rewarding. On this side, I saw forgiveness pouring from my hands. I felt that God has placed me, as a mirror of the church, to be forgiving in His name. I tell one held captive by his falls that God forgives his sins and my hands and my voice are His, and that his pardon is certain and that the love God has for him is best seen in the rainbow colors of forgiveness. Who can measure the amount of peace carried by this river of forgiveness, flowing through my hands and my voice, to so many who are insecure and anxious about their wretchedness? I always think I fall short in being as merciful as the heart of God.

I tremble, but it makes me smile to see the beauty of spring received by the sinner in the warm rain of forgiveness. If I have discovered that God loves me, it has been in the mystical cloud of forgiveness, forgiveness received and forgiveness given, and embracing this mystery, which costs me nothing, I can tell Him, "I love you, Lord". In this journey, I intend to continue, supported by God's forgiveness, shouting out with my expression and my voice the mercy of God reflected in forgiveness. This is the journey that leads me to feel and love God. This is the experience that allows me to walk, His hand in mine, as good friends. Let me be assured of Your friendship, cultivator of my hope.

This small and personal reflection has taken shape by looking at Father Eustaquio in his celebratory year in the Congregation. I have to admit I hardly knew Fr. Eustaquio, but this year my eyes have passed over some books of the life of our brother, one of which we read in the community, and I was intrigued by the depth of his attitude toward forgiveness. "Health and Peace" was his motto and slogan and I think that sums up very well his being a believer and religious of the Sacred Hearts. If it happens that the church recognizes his sanctity, to follow him is not the wrong path, but a good and secure road.

Father Eustaquio, in simplicity you discovered the gospel and the saving Heart of Jesus. I hope my journey is like yours and my experience of God, grounded in his forgiveness, takes me to the finish line that you celebrate like a great champion. Thank you, Father Eustaquio. As the flowering almond has long been a symbol of peace and good health, you have been able to discover the kernel within the nested almond shell, symbol of your greeting "peace and health." Health and Peace welling up from the confessional, occupied by you for many hours, pouring forth the gushing waters of forgiveness and salvation.