



Blessed Eustaquio: *Healing and Reconciliation*

THE HEALING MINISTRY

"This is the Holy Vocation that I feel within me: to heal the physical sufferings so as to awaken the fallen faith of the present time..."

(Letter to Archbishop José Gaspar d'Afonseca e Silva)

Patrick Crowley ssc *

WOUNDED HEALER

The gospels are filled with highly descriptive, even colorful, individual healings, liberation from evil spirits. So it was that crowds of people, all those who were sick and crippled, came to Jesus to be healed, to receive from him a force that would make them whole. The bleeding heart of Jesus is open to all those who are lost in anguish, in guilt, thirsty for life, for love, for acceptance. He comes to heal, to save, to free from bondage, to give rest, to empower so that each one in faith may stand up and see and hear and work for the things of love.¹

In reflecting upon the healing ministry of our Brother Blessed Eustaquio we see a man of compassion deeply moved by the pain and the suffering of a fellow human being. What a marvelous expression of our SSCC Charism! *"The world to which we are sent is the world as it is - suffering, beautiful, seeking, hoping. it is in the midst of this world that we must live, for our existence as Christians can never be used as a pretext for escape: They will be unfaithful to their most essential vow the moment that they live for themselves alone and not to work for the salvation of their brothers: (Father Coudrin)"* (Rule of Life, n. 16). The SSCC charism is like a vital seed containing an abundance of newness - it has a life-giving power, enabling each one to respond to God's call - it is a particular grace that we bring to the apostolate, enabling us to pay close attention to the particular aspects of the Gospel that our Founders emphasized, enabling us to live the Gospel vision of our Founders.²

* **Pat Crowley ssc** is presently a member of the Novitiate Team in Bhubaneswar, India. Of Irish origin, he has lived and served many years in California.

¹ Cf. Jean Vanier, *Jesus, the Gift of Love*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 1996.

² Cf. Patrick Bradley ssc, *Fr. Damien, SSCC Missionary*, on the 150th Anniversary of the birth of Fr. Damien, January 3, 1990.

*"The good Lord has clearly indicated to me the road that I must travel...God has given to me the gift of healing the illnesses and ailments that science perhaps considers incurable...But I do not glory in it...What can I say about the gift that God, in His mercy has given to me a poor sinner?...This is the holy vocation that I feel within me: to heal the physical sufferings so as to re-awaken the fallen faith of the present time."*³

*"Many people understood that this does not happen by natural means. What they experienced in their soul made them seek conversion without delay and the spiritual indifference in which they had been living for so many years was transformed into burning faith and boundless confidence. This is what I can say of the gift which God in his mercy gave to me, a poor sinner."*⁴

More than ever before, today's world cries out for a testimony, given at the very heart of human life, by religious who know and love the living God. *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Heb 12, 1-2) (Rule of Life n. 20)

Monsignor Ernesto de Paul gave the following testimony when the canonical process for his beatification began: *"From the beginning I admired the spirit of obedience and poverty because embracing all of the parish of Poa, extremely poor, Father Eustaquio seemed satisfied and disposed to accept this difficult task...With the passing of time, the pastoral team of Sao Paulo could affirm that he really was a model priest, an authentic man of God, full of zeal for souls, possessor of unlimited charity, of extraordinary meekness, and over all, of obedience without restrictions."*⁵

GIFT OF HEALING

The compassion in the heart of Jesus is not softness or weakness, divorced from light and truth. His compassion implies a real love and great strength. For Jesus compassion is also struggle, harsh struggle, against the forces of evil, lies, hypocrisy, and prejudice, which crush the weak, hurt and devalue people, preventing them from growing in love and dignity.⁶

Until the unconscious is touched, until the world of memories, shame, guilt, handicap, early life conditioning, abuse, and the emotions that follow from all of these are brought into full consciousness and offered to God, nothing external ever changes for long. As the author of Ephesians puts it, *"That which is exposed by the light is illuminated, and all that is*

³ From the letter of Blessed Eustaquio van Lieshout to the Archbishop of São Paulo (*Positio Super Virtutibus, Historical and biographical exposition of the Servant of God*, Letter to D. José Gaspar d'Afonseca, S. Paulo, June 24, 1941, Archives of the Vice-Postulation, Belo Horizonte, p. 84).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Alfredo Elfrink, *Depositions and Articles for the construction of the ordinary informative process of the Cause of the Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God, Father Eustaquio van Lieshout*, Belo Horizonte, Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, 1962, article 5.

⁶ Cf. Jean Vanier, pg. 60.

illuminated will itself turn to light" (5:13-14). That in a word is the Christian ministry of healing.⁷

When we open our hearts wide to God's caring, the deeper roots of our nature find the permanent soil of an infinite love. We find in the cellars of our souls an ocean of infinite rest that gives meaning to our seemingly endless activities. There is a place within where the sea is always calm and the boats are steady. Christian healing prayer takes our awareness to that place.⁸

LIVING THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

"Why, God must we be broken before we can be whole? Why must the darkness come before the light? Why must we face death before we enter into life? It seems so futile sometimes to go on living in the face of affliction and struggle. How ironic that the only path toward integration is disintegration. How paradoxical that the gateway to heaven is hell itself." We are forced by the traumatic events and circumstances of our life to stop and look at ourselves. We are compelled by the accidents and misfortunes that come our way to slow our pace and re-evaluate what is really important to us. Sometimes our ruptured life becomes an opportunity to learn and grow. Even illness and the immense of death can awaken us to meaningful living."⁹

Pain teaches a most counterintuitive thing - that we must go down before we even know what up is. It is first an ordinary wound before it can become a sacred wound. Suffering of some sort seems to be the only thing strong enough to destabilize our arrogance and our ignorance. All healthy religion shows us what to do with our pain. If we do not transform our pain, we will most assuredly transmit it. If we cannot find a way to make our wounds into sacred wounds, we invariably become negative or bitter - because we will be wounded.¹⁰

SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

During the past forty years - I have been very privileged to conduct healing services throughout California and overseas. This began with my involvement with the Charismatic Renewal in 1972. In June of 1975, Light of the Valley Prayer Community had its beginnings at Holy Name of Mary Parish in San Dimas, California. This was an ecumenical meeting with twelve different denominations present. It was during that time the charismatic gift of healing began to be manifested. A number of people experienced spiritual, physical and emotional healings without any imposition of hands or personal ministry. There was an intuition on my part (sometimes expressed through a "word", or "picture") that someone was being healed. In charismatic terms - we refer to this as the "Word of Knowledge". Some of these healings involved cancer cases, bone problems, healing of memories, depression, oppression, addictions of various kinds, and deliverance from evil spirits. All of these meetings had an evangelistic thrust - the preaching of the gospel with an opportunity to renew one's commitment to Christ afterwards. During the course of thirty months - the leadership of the prayer community estimated that five thousand people were profoundly

⁷ Cf. Deacon Eddie Ensley, PH.D., *Healing the Soul*, forward by Richard Rohr ofm, Twenty Third Publications, New London, Ct., 2013.

⁸ Ibid. pg. 5.

⁹ Adolfo Quesada, *Heart Peace: Embracing Life's Adversities*, Oct 1999.

¹⁰ Cf. Richard Rohr, *Yes, And...Daily Meditations*, Franciscan Media, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2013.

touched by the Holy Spirit. In sharing the above information, I am very mindful of my SSCC Brothers in the presbyterate. Theirs too, is a ministry of healing and reconciliation expressed in so many beautiful ways as the Spirit leads. True charism does not flower without fraternal communion because the author of charism, the Spirit, operates within the mutual love and communion of the faithful. Therefore, Paul, with the help of the image of the body, asserts the mutual dependence of these gifts. (cf. 1 Cor. 12: 12-13).¹¹

HEALING THROUGH THE EUCHARIST

Over the years, many of the Healing Services have been conducted in the context of the Eucharist in parishes and retreat centers throughout the country. I see in this a very important expression of our SSCC Charism. *"As the Eucharist is a little Easter we always remember the liberating dimension of the Jewish Passover in which God freed his people from oppression and slavery in Egypt. Jesus anticipates the moment of liberation of humankind from any and every kind of slavery by celebrating it with his disciples in the last supper. As well as feeding us and strengthening us in the difficult work of the transformation of the world, the Eucharist is the unique moment in which we meet the one who brings about this transformation: Jesus. It is only in Him and through Him that work, prison, beatings, hunger, and thirst suffered for the kingdom finds meaning."*¹²

What have been some of my experiences? It is interesting to observe the diversification or different expressions of God's Holy Spirit at work. In some healing services the emphasis seems to be on inner healing - (e.g., healing of memories - wounds of bitterness, alienation, unforgiveness and depression). At other times, a person with little hope for survival due to cancer will receive a complete healing. Yet, in that same meeting, there may be six other different cases of cancer and none is physically healed. This is not to say that God has been doing something special in their lives. One of the great consolations is the healing of the soul when someone requests the sacrament of reconciliation and is reconciled with the Church after twenty or forty years away.

We are a people who have largely defined ourselves outwardly. Within we feel out of control, denied, afraid, guilty, and on foreign soil. We try to compensate by self-help books and courses, by quick aphorisms, and falling back on the cultural and familial emotional responses. The result is that we are producing the greatest amount of material success along with the greatest amount of neurosis and interpersonal and spiritual failure in the very same group of people. We are educated for careers but not for the living of a full human life. Feelings are not "educated" at all in fact most people do not seem to know that it is possible.¹³

TOTAL AVAILABILITY

In reflecting upon the life and ministry of Blessed Eustaquio - I am reminded that *"At the heart of our vocation is the mystery of the Suffering Servant of God, 'come to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many'"* (Rule of Life No 77). Eustaquio did not treasure His life and hoard it. He gave it away, freely and fully. *"He was given a union in self surrender*

¹¹ Cf. Antony D'Cruz, J.O. Praem, *The Role of Charisms in the Church*, Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection Volume 78, No. 8. August 2014.

¹² Hilario França ssc, *The Lord led us by the hand*, Rome, 2004, 94.

¹³ Cf. Eddie Ensley, *Prayer That Heals Our Emotions*, forward by Richard Rohr ofm, Contemplative Books, Columbus, GA, 1986.

without self-destruction."¹⁴ This kind of commitment spoke volumes to the poor, to the broken, to the marginalized and to the alienated of his times.

Gastón Garatea makes the point that the teaching of Puebla and the lived experience of many religious in Latin-America emphasize the link between Self-emptying and a joyful newness of life - self emptying, not only in union with the sacrifice of Jesus who "*took on the condition of a slave*", but also self-emptying seen as being in solidarity with the poor - accompanying those who are really suffering.¹⁵ "*This is the holy vocation that I feel within me: to heal the physical sufferings so as to re-awaken the fallen faith of the present time.*"¹⁶

In this year of Healing and Reconciliation may Blessed Eustaquio inspire in us a desire "*to regain, recapture, renew, and restate our vocation.*" ¹⁷

¹⁴ Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*.

¹⁵ Cf. *Puebla*, 1979, 743.

¹⁶ From the letter of Blessed Eustaquio van Lieshout to the Archbishop of São Paulo (*Positio Super Virtutibus, Historical and biographical exposition of the Servant of God*, Letter to D. José Gaspar d'Afonseca, S. Paulo, June 24, 1941, Archives of the Vice-Postulation, Belo Horizonte, 84.)

¹⁷ Patrick Bradley sccc, *Letter to the Brothers*, February 17, 1983.