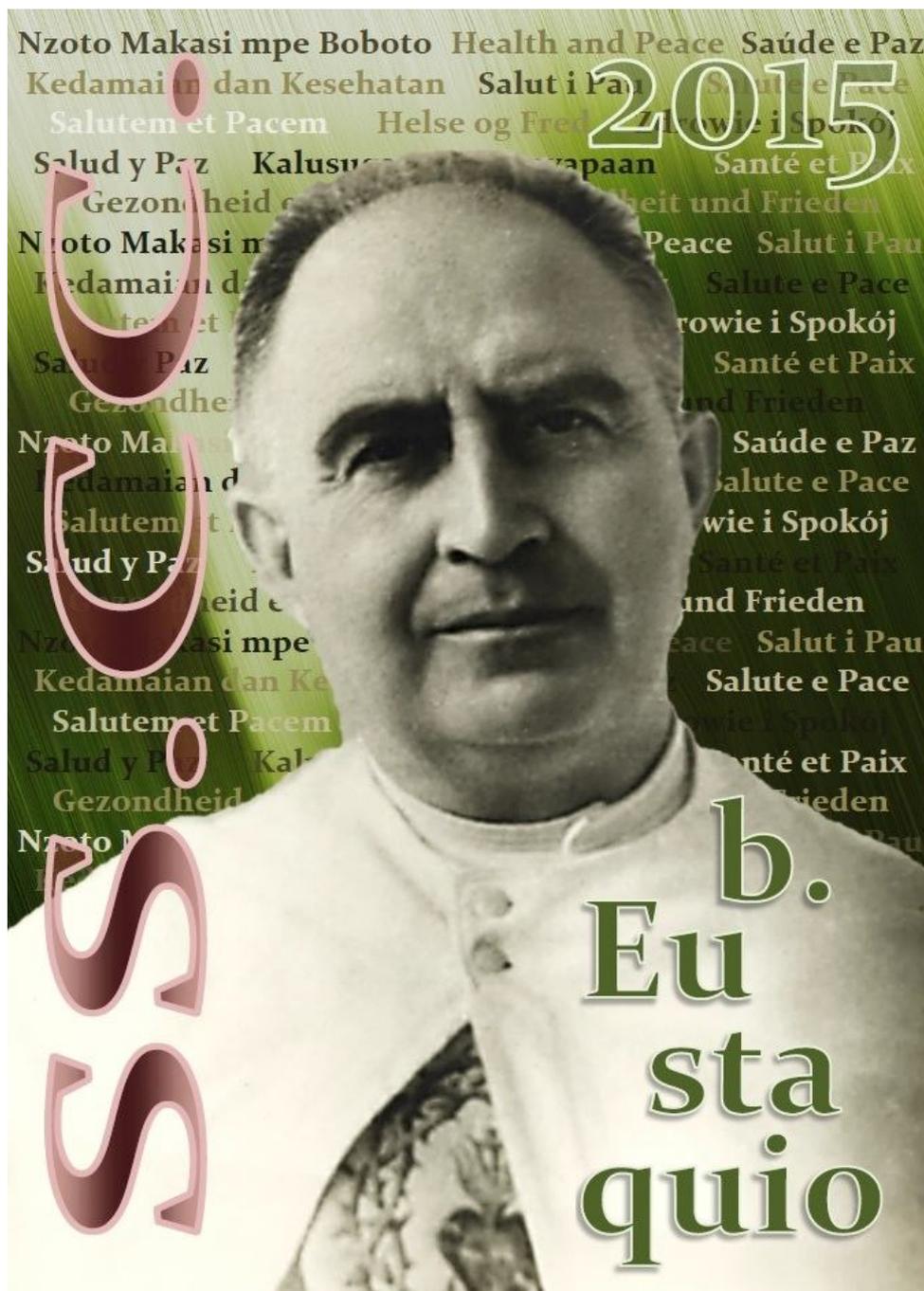


2015 - Eustaquio

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Blessed Eustaquio van Lieshout ssc



Healing and Reconciliation

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South Sudan is a young country in Africa, facing serious problems of poverty and war. Several religious congregations are working there in a coordinated effort to help raise up the Church and society. A short while ago I participated in the annual assembly of the project (called "Solidarity with South Sudan"). We began the meeting with a prayer especially written for that country. One of the paragraphs read:

We ask forgiveness for the times we failed
to live together in peace.
Heal our offenses and help us to reconcile
with one another...

To heal and to reconcile... There are many places where people are living in similar dramatic circumstances: Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Congo, Mexico, Colombia, Somalia, Ukraine and so many others. Violence, war, hunger, fear that causes people to flee and become refugees, lack of shelter and necessities. That creates wounds in peoples' bodies and hearts. Wounds that must be **healed**. Hatred and resentment that must be **reconciled**. Enormous suffering to be alleviated.

It is not only those who live in circumstances of extreme violence who need healing and reconciliation. Everywhere we meet people wounded by life, alone, sick, traumatized, exploited, displaced, abused, without work, without social support, hooked on some addiction or victims of so many kinds of physical and moral suffering.

And we ourselves... Who of us could say that we are completely healed and at peace? Who is not wounded in their body and soul? Who doesn't experience tension with brothers that needs to be reconciled? We see it in all of our communities, cold relationships, brothers that don't even speak to one another, brothers who have grown apart, resentments that last a lifetime, scathing criticism, anger within, hearts that are sick. The reconciliation that we preach has to become reality in ourselves. The healing we want to offer has to pass through our own sickness.

Our own strength is not sufficient for such a task. Our health, as much as we take care of it, escapes us; as much as we try to overcome obstacles in our heart, they get the best of us. Who will be able to heal us? From the depth of the believing heart the cry arises "Lord, save us!" (Mt. 8:25). "Save your people and bless your inheritance." (Ps. 28:9) "If you want, you can heal me." (Mt. 8:2)

The whole work of God is summed up in one word: **salvation**. It's what Jesus' very name means: God saves. (Mt. 1:21) What does "salvation" mean? We can't know exactly, but we can sense that it is a response to the deep desire for peace and happiness that we all have within us. A desire that only can be fulfilled in the measure that wounds are healed and enmity is reconciled, because there is no true joy if it is not the everyone's joy and joy with everyone. That is the work of Christ, who bears our sin and whose wounds heal us, "For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh..." (Eph. 2:14)

The love of God is a saving love (Cf. Constitutions 2). Our consecration to that love, according to the SSCC charism, leads us to "the attitude of Jesus and with His **reparative** work" (Constitutions 4), which work is "to reunite by his blood the dispersed children of God (Constitutions 4). The reparative mission to which we are called is a mission of healing and reconciliation.

As Pope Francis says, this is the mission of the whole Church, which he sees as “a field hospital.” “I see clearly,” the pope continues, “that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as **a field hospital** after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol or about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds. And you have to start from the ground up... The church’s ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like the Good Samaritan, who washes, cleans and raises up his neighbor. This is pure Gospel.” (Interview August 19, 2013)

Acting in this way, the proclamation of the Gospel, “has to concentrate on **the essentials**, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary...giving direct expression to the heart of the Gospel. In this basic core, what shines forth is *the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead.*” (Evangelii Gaudium 35 and 36)

Blessed Eustaquio van Lieshout ss.cc.

Healing of wounds, reconciliation of hearts, proclamation of saving love, ministry of reparation. In our Congregation we have a brother who lived that all in an especially intense and shining way: Blessed Eustaquio van Lieshout.

Eustaquio was born in Aarle-Rixtel, Holland, November 3, 1890. He was baptized with the name Humbert. He entered the Congregation strongly motivated by the figure of Damien De Veuster. He took the name Eustaquio when he began his novitiate in Tremeloo (Damien’s birthplace) in Belgium. He made profession in 1915. Ordained to the priesthood on August 10, 1919, he exercised the ministry for five years in his own country. He arrived in Brazil in 1925, where he worked as a missionary for eighteen years: ten in Agua Suja (1925-1935), six in Poá (1935-1941), then during the last two years of his life brief stays in several houses of the Congregation: Rio de Janeiro, Fazenda de San José de Rio Claro, Patrocinio, Ibiá and, lastly Belo Horizonte as pastor of St. Dominic’s parish where he died on August 30, 1943 at 53 years of age. He was beatified on June 15, 2006 in Belo Horizonte. The anniversary of his death is his memorial on the liturgical calendar.



“Health and peace,” was Eustaquio’s greeting, with which he summed up his vocation and his way of serving people in the name of the faith. Multitudes came to him seeking consolation, counsel and healing from their ills. Eustaquio himself explained the ideal that inspired his priestly and religious life in a letter to Bishop José Gaspar June 24, 1941 (it’s the text given for the Office of Readings in the proper liturgy for his memorial on August 30.)

"Happily I never allow myself rest when it comes to alleviating the suffering of my neighbor and eliminating from this world, as much as I am able, the evil which is an obstacle to happiness in this earthly life or in eternal life. Still at present I find myself pressed on every side to help people as a priest, who by giving blessings, is as an instrument of Divine Providence to alleviate the suffering of his neighbor. But, as is always the case, the material is only a pathway to the spiritual. The **bodily healing** that we see is but the means to obtain another much more important kind of healing: the **healing of the soul**. And not only the soul of those who receive healing but of hundreds and hundreds who were witnesses and whose souls were either in a state of complete spiritual indifference or of profound tepidity as regards the things of God and the spirit. This is the holy vocation which I feel within myself: to alleviate bodily suffering so as to be able to revive the weakened faith of our time. I believe I am especially called to this great work. I was never so aware as I am today of all I can accomplish, by God's grace, for those who suffer".

And Eustaquio concludes: "In our time, people are not sufficiently aware that the Our Lord's life continues to be present just as it was nineteen centuries ago (...) God is still living on our earth; the story of Christ is still alive."

Activities for a "Year of Eustaquio"

On January 27, 2015 we will celebrate exactly one hundred years since Eustaquio's religious profession in the Congregation (which took place January 27 in Graves, Holland).

We know that 2015 is marked by different events in the Church, principally the year of consecrated life and the preparation for the ordinary Synod on the family. However that does not prevent us from continuing our program of spiritual and missionary animation for these six years, according to which 2015 is the year dedicated to Eustaquio in the Congregation.

Eustaquio can really help us revitalize essential aspects of our mission. As the General Chapter reminds us, "he exercised his ministry of healing of body and soul among those whom he met on the way." (Mission 4), and "motivates us **to work for reconciliation, health and peace** of people and even whole communities, bringing us closer to those who suffer violence of all kinds and who are hurting in heart and body." (Mission 20)

As we have done the last two years, the General Government is proposing some activities and materials that can help us focus our attention on this theme. Each brother and community can then see what other concrete steps they can take to promote healing and reconciliation.

The General Government is proposing the following for the year 2015:

1. Get to know Eustaquio better.

Read or reread a biography of Eustaquio. Take an interest in some of the documents on Eustaquio found on our website in the sections Witnesses/Blessed Eustaquio van Lieshout and Library/Eustaquio van Lieshout. A community meeting could be given to discussing certain aspects of the life of Eustaquio that seem the most interesting to you.

2. Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the local community during Lent.

We need to be healed, forgiven, and reconciled. We are not the source of healing, forgiveness or reconciliation. God is the one who saves. The sacrament recalls these essential truths and realizes within us the call of the Apostle, "We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5:20).

So let us celebrate healing and reconciliation as we should, that is, going to their true source in the sacrament. Let us do it as a religious community. In our daily life the community is where we know joy and also conflict, brotherhood but also coldness. May the community also be a place of forgiveness.

We ask that each local community find a day during Lent 2015, preferably around March 19 (Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Principal Patron of the Congregation), to have a communal celebration of the Sacrament of Forgiveness with individual confession according to the established liturgy.

At the end of the celebration, you could leave in a specially prepared place in the chapel a bowl with oil and another with water, so that those two symbols remind us during the whole year of the healing action of the Spirit (oil) and the reconciling force of Grace (the water of baptism).

Shortly we will send each brother a simple outline for such a celebration.

3. Celebrate the Anointing of the Sick during Advent.

Where there are older or sick brothers, who could receive this sacrament, we invite the major communities, regions and delegations or local communities that are close to one another, to come together one day during Advent (December 2015) for a communal celebration of the Anointing of the Sick according to the established rite. It would be a beautiful opportunity to rally around these brothers of ours and for everyone to turn once more to the Lord who is the true source of healing. It is a sacrament of joy and hope, very much in keeping with the real spirit of Advent, which opens us to awaiting the Lord and our eschatological encounter with Him.

Later on we will also send you a short outline for this celebration. It would also be good during this year to visit our elderly brothers more often, whether they are in community or in nursing homes. In that way, the Advent celebration will not be an isolated act but one more gesture of our affection and nearness.

4. "Go first and be reconciled with your brother." (Mt 5:24)

We also suggest that, during this year, each one of us seek out a brother with whom we know we need to be reconciled. It means taking the first step, approaching him, asking forgiveness, doing everything possible to understand what it might be that the other has against me, to speak with one another, forgive one another.

If someone has no one with whom they need to be reconciled (blessed be he!), that he pray for those who may have more difficulties in this area.

Perhaps this is the most difficult thing that we could ask. Let us ask the Lord that he help us.

5. Themes for Reflection in INFO.

During 2015, most of the letters in INFO will be dedicated to themes related to healing and reconciliation, looking to Eustaquio for inspiration.

We will also be publishing articles by various brothers of the Congregation, whom we have asked to write about topics such as the ministry of confession, ministry to the sick, truth and reconciliation commissions in countries that have suffered serious conflicts, their own experience of being sick, devotion to Eustaquio in Brazil etc.

6. A Poster of Eustaquio for 2015.

In these days we are sending all the communities a poster of Eustaquio for 2015. The image can be seen on the first page of this edition of INFO.

The predominant color is olive green, alluding to the oil that symbolizes healing. The color of the words is red, referring to the reconciliation that we want to stir up in our hearts. In the background you see the greeting of Eustaquio: "*Health and peace*" in different languages.

Eustaquio is in the habit of the Congregation, indicating that the inspiration for his ministry is found in the consecration to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Eustaquio's name is preceded by a "b", which in the three common languages of the Congregation (Spanish, English and French) is the initial for "Blessed." The letters of his name are placed vertically, alluding to the form of a tree or an ear of wheat, referring to the Greek meaning of the name Eustaquio: bringer of good ears or rather, the one who gives good fruit, the one who feeds others.

From these common activities, which are mostly small and symbolic, however very sincere, may each brother and each community then do all they can to continue working for reconciliation, health and peace. Through the intercession of Eustaquio, may the Lord confirm us in our reparative mission during this year.

Happy 2015!

