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Giovanni Fidenza ...
and Why Our Children do not Love God

"**W**hy", we ask, "don't our children Love God?"

They do not love God for the same reason that they do not love Giovanni Fidenza.

"Who?"

Precisely the point.

How can your children --- or you --- possibly love Giovanni Fidenza? You have no idea who he is! How can you love someone you do not know? You cannot.

Moreover, whoever this Giovanni Fidenza is, why should we take the time to know him so that, perhaps, *knowing something about him*, we may come to *love* him?

In some way it must benefit us to know who he is; there must be something advantageous to us in our having some acquaintance with him. In some way it must redound to our good. After all, that is why we choose to know anything at all ... right? Whatever it may be, we deem our

knowing it as somehow good for us, useful to us --- in a word, we benefit from knowing it.

The problem, however, is that we do not know Giovanni Fidenza --- and not knowing him we cannot possibly see how our acquaintance with him could in any way be beneficial to us. No one has told us about him. Whoever he is, those who *know* of him must first hold him in great esteem in order to be *motivated* to tell us about him --- they may even love him --- this mysterious person of whom we know nothing.

In fact, it is one of the quirks of the human psyche that we wish others to love whom we ourselves love. We tell others about whom, or what, we love --- there is something akin to a compulsion in it. We have found something wonderful and we absolutely love it! So great a good is it, that we wish others to share in it as well --- at the very least those whom we love. Most especially your children.

If *you* love Giovanni Fidenza, it is almost certain that your children will, too. They will know who he is precisely because you love him, and after your telling them *why* you love him, they themselves will, presumably, come to love him as well.

But, perhaps you are not a great lover. Perhaps you are tepid. You know him, and love him --- *abstractly* --- but, to your credit, you nevertheless recognize that it is a great good to know Giovanni. But, really, you love little, and consequently you are not motivated much. You entrust your children to Giovanni's acquaintance through others, presuming that others will speak of him where you do not.

The problem is that your children will not listen to others as they will listen to *you* (despite your protestations to the contrary). In a sense, perhaps in a very profound sense, they will find Giovanni in you, see something of his face in you, in your great love for him. Love is like that. It communicates the beloved.

And so it is with God.

It is also why your children do not love God.

They are not to blame. They do not know Him --- you do not speak of Him --- so how can they possibly love Him Whom they do not know?

Your children will know God as you love God --- much or little.

If you want your children to love God, ***introduce them!*** They will get on splendidly.

It will make them happy.

It will make God happy.

It will even make Giovanni happy!

Oh, yes ... Giovanni ...

You know him as Saint Bonaventure, the Franciscan "Seraphic Doctor", contemporary and friend of Saint Thomas Aquinas and King Saint Louis of France. His name is actually an utterance from the lips of Saint Francis himself who, praying over the sick child Giovanni, foresaw his tremendous stature in the Church and exclaimed, "O, Buona Ventura"! --- "O, Good Fortune!"

Greater fortune still, those who behold the greatness and goodness of God --- and in knowing Him, invincibly love Him --- and introduce Him to all they know ... who have no acquaintance with Him.

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