

# Love for Pets: Metaphor of God's Love for Us

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Since my dad was an amateur zoologist we had all kinds of pets when we were children, from cats and dogs to snakes. We liked them, but we were also a little jealous of the attention that was paid to them. I still have a photographic portrait my parents made of their favorite dog, Emmy, lying in royal grandeur under the covers of their bed.

During my child-raising years, we had many dogs and cats. I loved them, but they were not mine and I was too busy to play with them. Twelve years into widowhood I rescued two kittens from probable death at animal control (Auschwitz for pets) to live with me in my apartment. I had no idea at the time how dear they would become to me in my lonely widowhood. Anyone might have predicted that having pets at my age would be a revival of my feelings for my children when they were babies. In fact, one nickname I had for my children when they were 2-3 years old was "squigglepusses."

What was unexpected was the impact the little creatures had on my spirituality. Stroking them on my bed each night I would wonder: "How can I love these cats so much when they are not persons - when they are separated by an ontological abyss from my level

of being?" Of course no one but a philosophy professor like me would put it in those terms.

Then I would make the leap. If I love them so much when they are so much lower than me, that explains, in a way, how God can love us even though the abyss between the divine and man is much larger than between man and cat.

And, to continue the metaphor – don't I love my cats even when they scratch me, just as God loves us even when we sin? Of course I try to stop them, as God tries to

stop us, but I don't reject them because of their sharp claws. And, even when they have been far away, disappearing sometimes for days, don't I greet them when they return with a love like that of the father for the prodigal son?

If You, God, could only love equal beings, there would be a Trinity and nothing else.

So, let us rejoice in our dear animal friends, and let us trust that God finds us just as lovable and funny.

And, one day, we will run out of the storm of life into the waiting laps of the Holy Family, and ... purr!




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