



## Good Deeds Should be Done With Good Intentions<sup>1</sup>

**Gregory:** The most pious Bishop Fortunatus of Tuderti<sup>2</sup> once freed a demoniac by his prayer from the scourge of his demon. The evil spirit had scarcely been expelled from the man, when, evening already approaching, he changed himself into a stranger and fled into the city, running about shouting and saying:

“Oh! Look what Bishop Fortunatus has done to me! He threw a stranger out of his lodging; so I am looking for some place to rest and I can find nowhere in this city.”

A certain man, who heard this voice and who was sitting with his wife and son beside the fire, called to him and asked him what the Bishop had done to him. He then took the demon into his house and bade him sit near them by the fire.

The evil spirit sat down, and while they were talking among themselves, entered into the boy and threw him into the fire, killing him instantly.

Then that unfortunate man realized whom the Bishop had expelled and whom he had welcomed; by his deeds, he was taught not to consider himself better or more charitable than the Bishop.

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**Peter:** How is it that the enemy was given authority to kill in the house of one who, thinking him to be a stranger, vouchsafed him hospitality?

**Gregory:** Many things, Peter, seem to be good and yet are not, because they be not done with a



**good mind and intention;** and therefore our Saviour saith in the Gospel: “If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness” (St. Matthew 6:23). **For when the intention is wicked, all the work that followeth is naught, although it seem to be good.** Therefore this man who lost his child, though he seemed to give hospitality, yet I think that he took not any pleasure in that work of mercy, **but rather in the detraction and infamy of the Bishop.** For the punishment which followed did reveal that his reception [of the “stranger”] was not void of sin. For there are some who are careful to do good works, to the end they may obscure the virtue of another; neither take they pleasure in the good thing which they do, but in the conceit of that hurt which thereby they imagine redoundeth to others. Therefore I verily suppose that this man, who gave hospitality to the devil, **was more desirous to seem to do a good work than to do it indeed; to the end that he might seem more charitable than the Bishop, in that he entertained him whom the man of God, Fortunatus, had expelled.**

**Peter:** It is verily so, as you say; for the end of the work declared that the intent of the doer was not good.



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1. *The Dialogues of Saint Gregory the Dialogist*, Dialogue I, ch. 10. Translation from *The Evergetinos*, Volume 1, Hypothesis XXXV, ed. and trans. Archbishop Chrysostomos, Hieromonk Patapios, et al. (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2008) p. 340, and [www.tertullian.org/fathers/gregory\\_01\\_dialogues\\_book1.htm#C10](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/gregory_01_dialogues_book1.htm#C10).

2. Tuderti is now Todi in Umbria. St. Fortunatus reposed in 537, and is commemorated on October 14.