

St. Joseph of Cupertino

Feast Day: September 18

Born: June 17, 1603

Died: September 18, 1663

Beatified: February 24, 1753 by Pope Benedict XIV

Canonized: July 16, 1767 by Pope Clement XIII

Patron: aviation, astronauts, examinations, students, mental
handicaps



At birth, St. Joseph of Cupertino was named Giuseppe Desa. His parents were Felice Desa, a carpenter, and Francesca Panara. His father had accumulated debt and before Joseph was born, the family house was seized. His mother had to give birth to him in a stable on June 17, 1603.

As a child, Joseph struggled in school and seemed incapable of learning. He often lost his temper in frustration. Joseph turned to God and immersed himself in prayer. He was so deeply focused on Jesus and Blessed Mary that in a state of ecstasy, he forgot about the material world. For these reasons, he found it hard to learn a trade and keep a job.

Joseph's mother tried to get him into the Franciscan Order where her brother held a high position. Joseph was rejected for his lack of education. He was accepted by the Capuchin Friars in 1620. This did not last long. He was dismissed for lacking the capacity to learn and for not performing his tasks. Misinterpreting his frequent ecstasies, they thought he was just simple minded when he would drop his work, kneel and stare at seemingly nothing. Joseph said that taking his habit away was like having his skin ripped off.

Joseph's mother took him back to the Order of Friars Minor. They agreed to take him in as a servant. At first, it seemed that Joseph's only ability was to help in the stables. His brother Franciscans began to take note of his incredible piety. He was observed going into ecstasy during prayer. He was then ordered to prepare for priesthood. However, he had trouble in every area of study except one. When it came time for his exam, the only question he was made to answer was the only one he knew! He was ordained in 1628.

Not all of his brother Franciscans were happy for him. They were jealous because knowledge came to him through prayer rather than through his own effort of studying. His holiness could not be denied. On October 4, 1630, on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Joseph was seen levitating for the first time during Mass. This began to happen every time he was in a state of ecstasy. The more Joseph had to rely on God (which was most of the time), the more he was in a state of ecstasy. He was said to be more often "in flight" than with his feet on the ground. A fellow friar tried to use pins and burning embers to get his attention, but he would only respond to his superiors.

St. Joseph of Cupertino's holiness was renowned. People would flock to see him levitate. He had to be moved from one monastery to another because of the crowds that gathered. He died at age 60, September 18, 1663. Great crowds attended his funeral. He was canonized on July 16, 1767 by Pope Clement XIII.

'You are the Spirit, and I am only the trumpet, and without your breath I can give no sound.' ~
St. Joseph of Cupertino