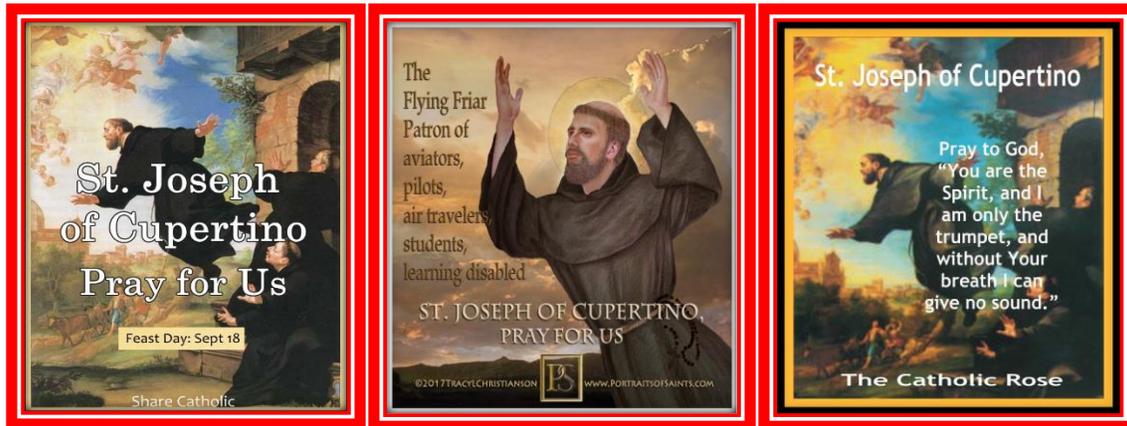


Daily Saints - 18 September



Feast of Saint Joseph of Cupertino

He is the patron saint of aircrews, Air Forces, air travelers, flyers, aircraft pilots, aviators, flyers, astronauts, paratroopers, test-takers, students, schoolchildren.

Born: Giuseppe Desa 17 June 1603 Copertino, Terra di Otranto, Kingdom of Naples, **Died:** 18 September 1663 (aged 60) Osimo, Marche, Papal States, **Venerated in** Roman Catholic Church (Franciscans) **Beatified:** 24 February 1753, Rome, Papal States, by Pope Benedict XIV, **Canonized:** 16 July 1767, Rome, Papal States, by Pope Clement XIII, **Major shrine:** Basilica of St. Joseph of Cupertino, Piazza Gallo, 10, Osimo, Ancona, Italy, **Feast:** September 18, **Patronage:** The City of Copertino and the City of Osimo, aviation, astronauts, mental handicaps, examinations, students

Joseph of Cupertino was born on 17 June 1603 at Cupertino, diocese of Nardo, near Brindisi in the kingdom of Naples, Italy as Joseph Desa. Joseph's father, Felice Desa was a poor carpenter who died before the boy was born. Creditors drove his mother, Francesca Panara, from her home, and Joseph was born in a stable. Starting at age eight, he received ecstatic visions that left him gaping and staring into space.

At times, his widowed mother abused him. Joseph's development suffered—he had a hot temper and became absent-minded. Village people knew him as “the gaper” around town because he would wander about aimlessly with his mouth open. One thing did consume his attention: he threw himself into devotional practices and grew in his faith.

When he reached maturity, he was apprenticed to a shoemaker but failed at that position. He applied to several monasteries but was refused. The Capuchin order accepted him on a trial basis as a lay brother, but he was inept and clumsy—he would drop whole piles of dishes, or forgot his duties, or could not be trusted with even minor responsibilities.

He returned home in a great depression. His mother was not happy to see him, and she pleaded with her brother, who was a Franciscan monk, to have him accepted to his monastery as a servant. He was taken in and given work cleaning out the stables. The consistent work and community life seemed to suit Joseph, and he became more trustworthy and capable. He had a certain humility and sweetness and was diligent in his prayer and devotional life—within a few years, he was accepted as a full brother in the community.

Though he struggled in his studies and had nothing to offer in the way of eloquence, he was ordained a priest in 1628. His devotional life increased, and he took on rigorous fasting and disciplines. Joseph still had little education, could barely read or write, but received such a gift of spiritual knowledge and discernment that he could solve intricate questions.

His life became a series of visions and ecstasies, which could be triggered any time or place by the sound of a church bell, church music, the mention of the name of God or of the Blessed Virgin or of a saint, any event in the life of Christ, the sacred Passion, a holy picture, the thought of the glory in heaven, etc. Yelling, beating, pinching, burning, piercing with needles - none of this would bring him from his trances, but he would return to the world on hearing the voice of his superior in the order. He would often levitate and float (which led to his patronage of people involved in air travel) and could hear heavenly music.

“Pray,” he told everyone. “Pray. If you are troubled by dryness or distractions, simply say the Our Father. Then you make both vocal and mental prayer.”

Even in the 17th century, there was interest in the unusual, and Joseph's ecstasies in public caused both admiration and disturbance in the community. For 35 years he was not allowed to attend choir, go to the common refectory, walk in procession, or say Mass in church. To prevent making a spectacle, he was ordered to remain in his room with a private chapel. He was brought before the Inquisition and sent from one Capuchin or Franciscan house to another. But Joseph retained his joyous spirit, submitting to Divine Providence, keeping seven Lents of 40 days each year, never letting his faith be shaken. He died on 18 September 1663 at Ossimo, Italy of a rapidly developed but severe fever.