

PARISHES OF
ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH
AND
SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW
WEEKLY REFLECTION

Sunday 31st August 2025: 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
St Joseph of Cupertino

One of my granddaughters has recently taken her A level examinations. I obviously hoped and prayed that she would cope with the stress of the exams and would do well. It caused me to wonder if there was a patron Saint for students preparing for examinations. I am aware that St. Benedict is the patron saint of students, but I wondered if there was one specifically for those preparing for examinations. I discovered that the answer was yes, St. Joseph of Cupertino.

St. Joseph was born in 1603 at Cupertino, in the diocese of Nardo in the Kingdom of Naples. His father died before Joseph was born. His mother, who was unable to pay the debts, lost her home and gave birth in a stable. It is said that his mother often considered Joseph a nuisance and treated him harshly. Joseph was thought to be slow to learn and absent-minded. He was said to frequently wander aimlessly, with his mouth gaping open. He had a bad temper, so he was not at all popular. He began having mystical visions when he was seven and was often lost to the world around him.

He tried to learn the trade of shoemaking but failed. He asked to become a Franciscan, but they initially would not accept him. Finally, he did join the order of Capuchins. However, eight months later, they sent him away. Sources say it was because he could not seem to do anything right. He dropped piles of dishes and kept forgetting to do what he was told. His mother was not at all pleased to have the eighteen-year-old Joseph back home again, so she got him accepted as a servant at the Franciscan monastery. He was given the friars habit and put to hard work taking care of the horses.

About this time, Joseph began to change. He grew in humility and gentleness, fruits of the Holy Spirit at work in a person. He became more careful and successful at his work. He also began to pray more and do more voluntary acts of penance. Finally, he was able to enter the Franciscan order and, eventually, study for the priesthood. He wasn't a good student and found studying very hard. During his seminary exams, the examiner happened to ask him to explain the only thing he knew well, and so he was ordained a deacon, and later a priest.

It is said for the last thirty-five years of his life as a priest he was unable to celebrate Mass in public because he would often, without being able to help it, be lifted up into the air when he went into an ecstatic state. This had happened at nearly every Mass. It took only the slightest reference of anything to do with God in order for this state to be induced in him. Once as Christmas carols were being sung, he soared to the high altar and knelt in the air, in ecstatic prayer.

Despite being moved from one friary to another because of the disruption he caused by his ecstasies and the persecutions from some of his brothers who were jealous of his gifts, he remained profoundly inundated with the joy of abandoning himself to Divine Providence.

He died on 18 September 1663 and was canonised by Pope Clement XIII 1767. In addition to being patron saint of students preparing for exams he is also patron Saint of air travellers!!

Bernard Kellett