



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PILGRIMS GATHERED IN ROME
FOR THE FOURTH CENTENARY
OF THE BIRTH OF ST JOSEPH OF CUPERTINO**

Saturday, 25 October 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to offer my cordial welcome to you all, who have gathered in Rome on the occasion of the solemn celebrations for the fourth centenary of the birth of St Joseph of Cupertino. I greet first of all the dear Friars Minor Conventual, accompanied by their Minister General, Fr Joachim Giermek, whom I thank for his courteous words on behalf of all those present. A special thought goes to Cardinal Sergio Sebastiani and the Pastors of the ecclesial communities who are taking part in today's pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles. Lastly, I greet you, dear pilgrims who have come from Puglia, Umbria and the Marches, places linked to the passage on earth and to the memory of this "Flying Saint".

As I mentioned in my *Message* published last February, Joseph of Cupertino continues to be an extraordinarily up-to-date Saint, for he is "spiritually close to the people of our time", whom he taught "to pursue the path of daily holiness, that flows from the faithful fulfilment of daily duties" (*Message to the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual*, n. 9).

2. Indeed, St Joseph was first and foremost a *teacher of prayer*. His day was centred on Holy Mass, followed by long hours of adoration before the tabernacle. The most genuine Franciscan tradition states that he felt drawn to and moved by the mysteries of the Incarnation and Passion of the Lord. St Joseph of Cupertino lived in intimate union with the Holy Spirit; he was entirely possessed by the Spirit, from whom he learned the things of God in order to then express them in simple language that all could understand. Those who encountered him were content to listen to what he said for, as we learn from his biographers, although he was not an orator and his

handwriting was uneven, when he spoke of God he was transformed.

3. Secondly, the Saint of Cupertino *continues to speak to young people*, and in particular to students who venerate him as their patron. He urges them to fall in love with the Gospel, to "put out into the deep" in the vast oceans of the world and of history, while firmly anchored to contemplation of the Face of Christ.

My hope is that you, dear young people and students, as well as those of you who work in the sector of culture and education, may follow St Joseph's example, striving to combine the wisdom of the faith with the rigorous methods of science, so that human wisdom, ever open to transcendence, may move safely on towards fuller and fuller knowledge of the truth.

4. St Joseph of Cupertino shines out as an *exemplary model of holiness* for his confreres of the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor Conventual. His constant effort to belong only to Christ made him an icon of the Friar "Minor" who, at the school of the "Poverello" of Assisi, makes Christ the centre of his entire existence. Eloquent is his determined commitment to turn his heart constantly to God so that nothing would separate him from "his" *Jesus*, whom he loved above all things and all people.

May the witness of this great Saint that shines with a special brightness in his centenary be an encouraging *message of evangelical life*. To those who have embraced the ideals of a life of consecration, he makes a strong appeal to live totally consecrated to the Lord and to the indispensable service of charity to their brethren.

5. Like all the Saints, *Joseph of Cupertino never goes out of fashion!* Four centuries later, his witness continues to invite everyone to be holy. Even if he belonged to an age in some ways so very different from our own, he points to a path of spirituality that is valid in every age; he recalls the primacy of God, the need for prayer and contemplation, passionate, trusting adherence to Christ, commitment to the missionary proclamation, and love of the Cross.

As I express once again the hope that the centenary celebrations will help to make the "Flying Saint" better known, I invoke upon all the organizers and participants the heavenly protection of the Virgin Mary.

With these sentiments and wishes, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you who are present here, to your communities and to all the supporters of the Saint of Cupertino in Italy and throughout the world.

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