

finally successful, having Calasanz suspended from the generalate and taking control of the order later that same year.

Calasanz was subjected to humiliating and insulting treatment during Sozzi's reign. In 1643, Sozzi died and was succeeded by Fr. Cherubini, who continued this policy. Calasanz bore this treatment with patience and meekness, urging the order to obey his persecutors as the authority, and one time protecting Cherubini from an angry mob of young priests, who were enraged by his behavior. The Vatican, meanwhile, was investigating the matter, and in 1645, at age 88, Calasanz was reinstated as general of the order. This victory was short-lived, however. In 1646, Calasanz's enemies, with the help of a relative of the Pope, convinced Pope Innocent X to turn the control of the order over to local bishops. In effect, the order was dissolved. Calasanz was reported to have said, upon hearing this news, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

The job of reorganizing the schools fell to Fr. Cherubini, but his maladministration in other jobs resulted in his removal and disgrace. Calasanz was reconciled to him on Cherubini's death bed in 1648. A few months later, Calasanz himself died a few days before his 92nd birthday. His order was reconstituted in 1656, and restored as a religious order in 1669. The Clerks Regular of the Religious Schools (Piarists or Scolopi) spread from Italy into Spain, Germany, and Poland. Calasanz was canonized in 1767, being referred to as "a perpetual miracle of fortitude and another Job", praised for his heroic patience in adversity. His story inspired and consoled many other saints and priests in their own times of persecution.

*(excerpted from: <http://membes.bellatlantic.net>)

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Saint Joseph Calasanctius

Feast Day: August 27



PATRONAGE:

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SAINT JOSEPH CALASANCTIUS

*Joseph Calasanctius (Jose Calasanz) was born on September 11, 1556, to Maria Gaston and Pedro Calasanz in the family castle near Peralta de la Sal in Aragon, the youngest of five children. He studied the humanities at Estadilla, where his piety and virtue earned him the disrespect of his classmates. Though his father hoped he would be a soldier, Joseph went instead to the University of Lerida, where he took a doctorate in law. He then proceeded to study theology at the University of Valencia. He left Valencia to escape the attentions and temptations of a young kinswoman, and finished his studies at Alcala. He was ordained in 1583.

After various experiences which earned him many admirers, Calasanz was appointed vicar general of the district of Trempe by the bishop of Urgel. He was so effective that the bishop sent him to the desolate Pyrenean part of the diocese, in the valleys of Andorra. His work here to revive religion and to reform the clergy was very successful, and the bishop soon made Calasanz the vicar general of the whole diocese. Calasanz believed that he was being called to other work, and, in 1592, after leaving his fortune to family and charity, he left Spain for Rome.

In Rome, Calasanz came under the patronage of Cardinal Ascanio Colonna, whom he had known at Alcala. During the plague of 1595, he distinguished himself by his courageous service to the sick and dying, and entered into a "holy rivalry" with his friend St. Camillus of Lellis over who should give himself most freely in this charitable cause. For most of his first five years in Rome, however, Calasanz was concerned mostly with the instruction of poor children. As a member of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, he taught both children and adults on Sundays and feast days, and he became aware of the appalling lack of education among the children of the poor. He soon came to the conclusion that free schools were necessary for the religious and secular education of the poor. His attempts to convince the parish - schoolmasters, the Jesuits, and the Dominicans to offer this service were unsuccessful. Therefore, he opened a school himself in 1597, with the help of three other priests.

The school soon had many more than 100 students, and Calasanz had to hire additional paid teachers from the unemployed clergy. In 1599, the school moved, and Calasanz took up residence at the school as the Headmaster. By 1602, the school had more than 700 students, and moved once more, to a large house next to the church of Sant' Andrea della Valle. Calasanz broke his leg while hanging a bell, and was crippled and in pain the rest of his life.

The school's success, and a grant from Pope Clement VIII, aroused the envy of the local parish-schoolmasters, who began publically to complain and criticize it. A surprise inspection ordered by the pope returned such positive reports that Clement took the school under his protection. This protection was continued by Pope Paul V, who doubled the grant in 1606. In 1611, the school purchased and moved to a palazzo near the church of San Pantaleone. By this time, the school had about 1000 students, including a number of Jews who had been invited by Calasanz himself. Other schools were soon opened, and in 1621 the teachers were recognized as a religious order, the Clerks Regular of the Religious Schools, of which Calasanz became superior general. The congregation prospered, and spread through Italy and into the Empire.

Calasanz's success, however, continued to bother the local parish schoolmasters, as well as other rivals within the Church. It has also been suggested that the wealthy classes were alarmed by free education for the poor, fearing that their own superior positions in society would be threatened. Thus, a Fr. Mario Sozzi, who had entered the order in Naples in 1630, contrived to take power away from Calasanz. In 1639, he used his connections at the Vatican to become head of the order in Tuscany. He used this position to slander Calasanz and stain his reputation, denouncing him as too old and doddering to run the order. Legal battles, involving Calasanz's defender Cardinal Cesarini, resulted in Sozzi having Calasanz arrested and carried through the streets as a felon. Intervention by Cesarini saved the 82-year-old from prison, but Sozzi was unpunished. Sozzi was