

Saint Joseph (Desideri) of Leonessa

1556-1612

Saint Joseph Desideri was born in Leonessa in the year 1556 to a noble family. He was soon orphaned, with neither father nor mother and became entrusted to an uncle who nurtured grand projects for his future. Regardless of the contrary will of his uncle, Joseph decided, however, to follow in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi.

In 1571 he entered the Order of the Capuchin Friars and conducted a life of great austerity and apostolic work. In 1587 he was sent on a mission to Constantinople where he dedicated himself to the care of the wounds of the Christian and Turkish slaves, consoling them and bringing them back to God. In 1589 he decided to openly

was busy with some work of charity, he would send in his place his Guardian Angel who would faithfully bring them to completion in his stead. One day, at the exit of the church a young widow approached him who refused to forgive her husband's murderers and he said to her: "Stop crying, Tisba!" The young widow then saw him



confront the Sultan Murad III to intercede on behalf of those to whom he gave assistance. For this attempt he was condemned to the Penalty of the Hook which consisted in being hung on a fork with one hook hooked into the tendons of his right hand and, with a vertical pole in position, the other hook hooked into his right foot. Hanging in this way he would have had to have experienced, along with atrocious pains, death. After three long days of agony he was freed however by his Guardian Angel and heard a voice that told him: "Go back to Italy quickly and attend to the conversion of sinners; your mission here is finished." His healing was immediate and complete. In 1589 he returned to Assisi and dedicated himself to preaching. Numerous were also the prodigies that he accomplished in life. Saint Joseph died in Leonessa in 1612.

The Angels were always helping him in his ministry. When for some special reason Saint Joseph could not complete his duties because he

surrounded by a troop of luminous Angels who were wearing sparkling armors of light, and Saint Joseph continued: "I want that, for the love of God, you forgive!" Tisba at that time felt a great peace descend into her, and publicly gave her pardon to the assassins. The Angels then quickly disappeared leaving behind a trail of light. Another day, Saint Joseph visited a certain Aquilana, to alert her that he was aware of her plot of vendetta against one of her servants whom she wanted to have killed; to the woman, disturbed by this revelation, he explained: "He who let me know of this is he who will castigate you if you put into practice this plan of yours. It is your Guardian Angel!" The woman repented and asked forgiveness. Saint Joseph of Leonessa had a very special relationship with Saint Michael the Archangel to whom every year he consecrated a Lenten period of fasting and penance for 40 days.