

Feb. 8, Bl. Jacoba de Settesoli

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Feb. 8, 2010 NCR Today

St. Francis of Assisi asked that [a letter be sent](#) [1] to "the beloved Lady Jacoba of Settesoli," informing her of his impending death and asking her to bring "a shroud of hair-cloth in which to wrap my body, and wax for the burial. I pray thee, likewise, that thou bring to me some of that food which thou wast wont to give me when I was in Rome."

But God had already revealed to Jacoba that Francis was dying, and now God revealed to Francis that Jacoba knew. "Do not write more, for it is not necessary."

"And after a little while at the door of the house there was a loud knocking, and Saint Francis sent the porter to open it; and when it was opened, there was the Lady Jacoba, the most noble lady of Rome, with her two sons, who were senators, and with a large escort of other knights."

She gave Francis the food, and he ate it. What was the food, and who was "Brother Jacoba", as he called his beloved friend and benefactor?

Jacoba de Settesoli was born in 1190 at Torre Astura, a fief of the Frangipani. By 1210, she was married to Graziano Frangipane and had two sons, Giacomo and Giovanni. By 1217, Graziano was dead, leaving Jacoba ["his several castles and landed estates](#) [2] scattered all over Rome and the Roman countryside", including a castle at Marino.

In [Marino](#), [3] since ancient times, special pastries are made in October, during the time of vintage, with [must](#). [4] (Note, in the Wikipedia article on must, the references to Thomas Aquinas and Cardinal Ratzinger.)

These Marinese delicacies called mustaccioli are still popular. Click [here](#) [5] to see a type with a creamy filling containing honey. Some accounts of Francis's death say he specified almond and honey. Maybe he liked the cream filling known as [frangipane](#). [6]

Francis and Jacoba met when she went to hear him preach in Rome. She asked him how to be charitable, and he told her to stay with her family. She joined his Third Order. (Some say he founded the Third Order for her.)

Francis stayed at Jacoba's house when he was in Rome. It is said that he gave her a pet lamb he had saved from slaughter, and that she made his shroud with wool sheared from the lamb.

For more about Bl. Jacoba de Settesoli, see [Saint Francis of Assisi: A Biography](#), [7] by Johannes Jörgensen, Longmans, Green, 1912; and [Francis of Assisi: Performing the Gospel Life](#), [8] by Lawrence S. Cunningham, Eerdmans, 2004.

What did Jacoba look like? This [detail](#) [9] from a Simone Martini fresco in the Lower Basilica at Assisi is supposed to represent St. Clare, but there are those who think it is actually Jacoba de Settesoli. For one thing, there are seven suns in the halo -- sette soli. And Clare is ordinarily shown in a religious habit, including in other works by Martini in the Basilica.

Bl. Jacoba died in 1273. Her remains are in the crypt of the [Lower Basilica](#) [10] with those of St. Francis.

A very happy feast day to all Franciscans and to all friends of St. Francis of Assisi!

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Links:

[1] <http://tiny.cc/notfZ>

[2] http://www.firponet.com/Francesco/Servants/Jacopa/Fran_serv_Jacopa_eng.htm

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marino,_Italy

[4] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Must>

[5] <http://www.dolcipersieri.it/mustaccioli.htm>

[6] <http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/content/knowhow/glossary/frangipane/>

[7] <http://tiny.cc/8O6vY>

[8]

http://books.google.com/books?id=718t3Y1F2lkC&pg=PA112&vq=jacoba&dq=death+of+francis+of+assisi+1273&output=html&source=gbs_search_r&cad=1

[9] <http://tiny.cc/HysLu>

[10] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_of_San_Francesco_d%27Assisi