

Franciscan Season of Giving

a word from Eileen

Join us in a season of prayer, thanksgiving, and reflection.

For the next several weeks we offer you voices from this Franciscan community so you may pay attention to what is sacred in your life.

We also ask for your support in prayer, with your presence, and financially. We hope to raise \$55,000 to meet our year end obligations.



Brother Jacoba's Companionship

Clear building signage means so much to visitors. While way-finding might not be the issue here at the Franciscan Spiritual Center, knowing what office to head to is. When staff chose Franciscan-related name for the offices, there wasn't even a question what name I would choose.

Others chose place names like Greccio (where Francis assembled the first living Nativity), Gubbio (where Francis befriended the wolf), Assisi (you know), Carceri and La Verna (remote hermitages), San

Damiano (Clare's monastery). One chose Peace (a Franciscan value). Some of us chose names of people close to Francis, like Brother Junipero (a companion dedicated to the poor). I chose Brother Jacoba.

If you know Italian, you may think that's a misnomer—a male-related title and a female-related name. But if you know the story--!

Francis had deep relationships with several people in his lifetime. Clare, Brothers Leo, Angelo, and Rufino. Lady Jacoba also had an important place in Francis' life. A Roman noblewoman of some wealth, she had seven sons and was known for her care for the poor. She provided hospitality to the brothers when they visited Rome and supported them financially. Although Francis is rightfully and closely associated with St Clare, Lady Jacoba is said to have been of "one spirit" with Francis. Her tomb is closer to Francis' than even the brothers.

But how did she get named "Brother Jacoba"?

I love this part of the story for its tenderness and the intimacy it implies. When Francis lay dying in the Porziuncula of the Franciscan monastery in Assisi, he longed to see his friend one last time. As he prepared to send a brother to make the week-long journey to Rome to fetch her, a knock sounded on the monastery door. When told it was Lady Jacoba, Francis responded, "Well, allow Brother Jacoba to come in!"

Because, of course, a woman could not enter the brothers' monastery.

She remained with Francis, nursing him until his death. I love that Francis knew how to bend the rules. I love that Lady Jacoba knew across distance that it was time to return to him. And she brought his favorite almond cookies.

Maybe it's the cookies that speak of the tenderness for me. Lady Jacoba brought her best, something totally gratuitous, like the woman who anoints Jesus' feet with expensive oil.

Of all the characters in the life of St Francis, I find Brother Jacoba's example most accessible to me. Maybe it's the cookies and their gratuitous nature. Supportive, specific to Francis, they display the spiritual gifts of attentiveness and hospitality, not to mention their being the occasion of some judicious, graceful rule-bending.

I see Brother Jacoba's gifts in the practice of spiritual direction. Maybe it's about hospitality—attentiveness, deep knowing, responsiveness to Spirit's nudges, mutuality. I am grateful to observe the exercise of these gifts in a multitude of ways at the Franciscan Spiritual Center.

Peace and goodness,

Eileen Parfrey
Spiritual Director and Training Program & Retreat Facilitator

To make a charitable donation to the
Franciscan Spiritual Center
PO Box 144, Marylhurst, OR 97036
or
use our online portal.

Give

To share your own word of reflection, thanksgiving, or prayer
email info@francisspctr.com.

Franciscan Spiritual Center | PO Box 144 3159 Furman Dr. | Marylhurst, OR 97036 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!