

# FRANCISCAN NETWORK

Published by the Missionary Franciscan Sisters, 115 Turner Rd., Kedron, Q 4031

December  
2016



Dear friends, once again we find ourselves in the season of Advent. As we prepare to welcome the Christ Child I would like to share with you a reflection by Wayne Simsic. I hope you will find it as thought provoking as I did.

“One of the most beautiful and powerful events related in Franciscan Literature is Francis’s re-creation of the Christmas tableau in the little hill town of Greccio.

Imagine that we are one of the pilgrims on that Christmas Eve in 1223. We begin our journey just before midnight at the foot of the mountain. With candles in our hands and our companions by our side, we slowly climb a winding path to the prepared cave. Joyful voices and melodious singing fill the night. We watch as a necklace of candlelight wrapped around the mountain transforms night into day.

When we arrive at the cave we see a little man with dark features dressed in a tattered cloak presiding over the celebration. We can smell the fresh hay as we listen to the sounds of the animals shuffling and snorting. Our gaze rests on the small crib that holds a wooden carving of a child. Francis picks up the figure and it seems to come alive. We embrace the child in the depth of our hearts and remain silent.

Mass is celebrated and Francis, acting as a Deacon, preaches on the vulnerability of a child born in an insignificant, out-of-the-way town, a child who is the fullest expression of God’s love. At the conclusion of the liturgy we depart together with the other joyful pilgrims who sing and share their awareness of the spirit of



*“An Aboriginal Christmas” by Elder Aunty Betty Pyke featuring the Baby in the Coolamon.*

‘Christ who has once again come alive in their hearts’.

Through the example of a humble Christ alive in the depths of our hearts and in the depths of creation, we learn the poverty and humility necessary to love others as well as creation, as authentically as we are able.”

At the close of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, we might ask ourselves how we have been agents of God’s merciful love to others over the past 12 months. How can we continue to practise the spiritual works of mercy during Advent? In what ways might we be heralds of Christ’s coming?

Try to set aside periods of silence for prayer. Stepping away from the hype and bustle that precedes Christmas we will leave space for God to be heard, and for us to listen to God’s whispering in our hearts.

- Sr Liz.

## San Leo

HERE, in 1213 St Francis met Count Orlando Cattani of Chiusi, La Verna, during a feast. St Francis spoke in the castle square, repeating the words, “The



## Jacoba of Settesoli

ACCORDING to the biographer Alberto Crielesi, Jacoba was born in Rome in the Region of Trastevere and was named Jacoba de' Normanni. At an early age she married Graziano Frangipane d' Settesoli who came from a noble and extremely wealthy family. They had two sons. She was a young widow when she heard of the holy man of Assisi. She longed to meet him for she wished to ask his spiritual advice.

In 1210 Francis came to Rome to obtain Papal approval for his Franciscan way of life. Jacoba was delighted when she heard of his arrival and went to hear him preach. She then went to meet him and sought his guidance on how to use her wealth for the good of others, for she had inherited several castles and properties on her husband's death.



Francis advised her not to abandon her family but, if she wished, to join the Third Order of St Francis. She then handed over the administration of her affairs to her sons. The rest of her life was spent doing good works.

When Francis came to Rome she was instrumental in finding him

good that awaits me is so great that every punishment is my delight". Count Orlando was very impressed by these words and asked if he could speak with the Saint.

St Francis, using much discretion and humility replied that first he had to honour some friends who had invited him to a meal. After that Francis promised that he would speak with the Count.

Count Orlando remained one of Francis's very first friends (perhaps a Tertiary Franciscan) and it was he who gave the Saint the mountain of La Verna as a gift.

### Meditations on Advent

THE secret of the Advent mystery is the awareness that I begin where I end because Christ begins where I end.  
 In more familiar terms:  
 I live to Christ when I die to myself.  
 I begin to live to Christ when I come to the "end" or to the "limit" of what divides me from others:  
 when I am willing to step beyond this end, to cross the frontier, become a stranger, enter into the wilderness which is not "myself", where I do not breathe the air or hear the familiar comforting racket of my own city, where I am alone and defenceless in the desert of God.

- Thomas Merton



Jacoba retired to Assisi as a Third Order member. Her death took place on February 8, 1239. She is buried in the crypt of the Basilica of Saint Francis opposite his tomb which lies above the altar. Her remains lie between the two staircases leading to the crypt, behind a black metal grille. In the front is written, "Brother Jacoba d'Settesoli" and underneath "Here rests Jacoba, Saint and Noblewoman of Rome". Her feast is kept on February 9.

## The Benediction of St Clare

*Now, go calmly in peace,  
for you have a good escort.  
He who created you  
has sent the Holy Spirit who guards  
you as a mother tenderly  
loves her child,  
AMEN*

## Remembering Sr Noela Leamy mfc

NOELA was born in Brisbane on December 21, 1931 to James Leamy and Bridget Rynne. She was the fourth of five children.



accommodation with the Benedictines at Ripa Grande. (Legend had it that she was the one who organised the Papal visit with Innocent III).

Thereafter, whenever he travelled to Rome, Francis would stay as her guest. She donated some of the property in Trastevere to Francis and his brothers to use as a hospice for lepers. She provided for all their needs during their stay. Thus Francis and Jacoba became very good friends.

When he was dying, Francis wrote her a letter requesting her to be present at his death. He said that if she wished to see him alive she must hurry, because by the following Saturday he would have departed this earth. He also instructed her to bring a shroud in which to wrap his body and candles for his burial. His last request was for her to bring him the almond biscuits she always made for him, especially when he was unwell and which he enjoyed so much. (The same almond cookies are made here in Australia by the Italian women in Gippsland). Even before the letter arrived, Jacoba had already prepared the almond biscuits as well as the shroud and candles.

When Lady Jacoba arrived at Our Lady of the Angels there was much consternation among the Friars, for women were forbidden to enter the cloister. However, Francis made an exception for this Roman lady and told his brothers to allow her in. He had always recognised her great holiness and was grateful for her kindness and hospitality. For these reasons he had always called her "Brother Jacoba". On seeing her, he welcomed her to his side and she remained with him until he drew his last breath.

Sr Noela was a woman of great giftedness. Though rather small of stature, she had huge abilities. She was intelligent, creative, a perfectionist, generous and compassionate. She was a woman of faith and held opinions on a wide range of topics which she loved to share with others, Noela loved the old-fashioned elegance of good manners, hand written thank you notes, starched doilies and fine china tea cups. Her handiwork skills were legendary, as were her painting, her cards, her cake icing skills, remembrance of birthdays, her gardening, and her cooking.

She read widely, studying alternative therapies, new theology and unfolding spirituality. Through her life she championed women, particularly in terms of ensuring their education, and in later life she supported ACRATH, an organisation that works against the trafficking of women.

Noela became a very talented educator, and worked in both Primary and Secondary schools. She went on to work in a number of high level leadership and administrative positions such as Deputy Principal and Dean of Women at Kaindi Teachers' College in PNG. She set up the National Christian Education Secretariat in Port Moresby and worked with the Bishops to effect constitutional change that allowed the teaching of Religious Education in schools.

Noela also held a number of leadership roles in the community including terms as Councillor at the Generalate and in the Provinces of Australia and Papua New Guinea. After returning to Australia from PNG, Noela spent a sabbatical overseas and obtained an accreditation in Reflexology. Later she added "Certification in Healing Touch" to her repertoire.

She was generous with her gifts and made herself available to anyone who was ill or carrying a lot of stress.

Noela had suffered chronic respiratory disease from birth so it was amazing she was able to accomplish so much. She accepted her ill health as part of life, never complaining, and kept on with what she considered important. When Noela knew that death was close at hand she talked about her funeral and expressed the desire that her liturgies celebrate all the blessings

that had been hers throughout her years of life. Rest in Peace dear Noela, you have been a blessing to your family, to the people of Papua New Guinea, to the women and children trafficked around the globe and you have been a blessing to us, your mific sisters.

## Conclusion

*The Lord comes mandating  
compassion for the poor.*

*Amen*

*The Lord comes urging forgiveness  
and peace on earth.*

*Amen*

*The Lord comes desiring gentle  
mercy towards all.*

*Amen*

*And this Christmas may the Lord  
Bless us one and all with His Love,  
Joy and Peace.*

*Amen*

Love,

Sister Liz

