

# Message from the Director

At the centre of our monastic spirituality is the recognition that our closest encounters with God most often occur in times of silence and solitude, when we are able to get away from the busyness of the world and flee from the distractions and anxieties which can so easily plague the human heart and mind. It was thus that the ancient prophet Elijah (a prototype of monastic life) found God, not in the fire, nor in the earthquake, nor in the rushing wind, but in the “still, small voice” speaking gently to his soul. At New Norcia, we aim to be a place of encounter with the Divine, where the ear of the heart can be sensitively attuned to the voice of God communicating within.

In 2023, we are excited to offer a varied and stimulating range of retreats and study weekends. In keeping with the Benedictine charism of hospitality, the monastic community is delighted to welcome as our guests persons from all backgrounds of life and all traditions. Our scenic and serene environment and the quite prayerfulness of the monastic routine form the perfect backdrop for seeking and finding peace, enlightenment, renewal and clarity.

*In pace Christi,*  
Fr. Robert Nixon, osb

Below: Fr. Robert Nixon plays the piano in the monastery music room



## WEEKEND START AND FINISH TIMES

The first session for all Institute Weekends begins at 7:30pm on the Friday (participants are encouraged to attend Vespers at 6:30pm, followed by dinner, if possible). The final session each weekend will conclude at 11:30am on the Sunday.

## CUSTOM RETREATS

The NNIBS is delighted to be able to offer ‘custom’ retreats, for groups of four or more participants, subject to availability. These retreats, presented by monks of the monastery, can be adapted to the particular needs and interests of the group, and scheduled on any mutually convenient dates. If you are interested in organising a special retreat for a group, please contact Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB, at [institute@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:institute@newnorcia.com.au).

## INDIVIDUAL RETREATS

Persons are welcome to stay in the monastery Guesthouse to make individual retreats. These may be done without direction, simply allowing the experience of prayer, silence and solitude to enrich and renew one’s spirit. Alternatively, it is often possible to arrange for a monk qualified in spiritual direction to meet daily with retreatants. Enquiries may be directed to the monastery Guesthouse, at [guesthouse@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:guesthouse@newnorcia.com.au).

# NEW NORCIA Institute for Benedictine Studies

The New Norcia Institute for Benedictine Studies seeks to broaden and deepen awareness of the monastic tradition within Christianity. It offers an environment conducive to prayer, study and reflection with excellence in teaching and research. It aims to encourage participants at all stages of life to reflect on their journey of faith with the pastoral support of rich traditions in prayer, discernment and discipleship, whether as lay people, professed religious, academics, or in ordained ministry.

### Course and Retreat Costs

Participants are asked to contribute \$300 which covers the course expenses and full board for two nights (Friday and Saturday) at the Monastery Guesthouse. It also includes entry into the Museum and Art Gallery.

### For Enquiries and Bookings

Bookings are to be made via New Norcia’s webshop at [www.newnorcia.com.au](http://www.newnorcia.com.au)

For all other queries please contact Fr. Robert.Nixon, osb, at [institute@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:institute@newnorcia.com.au)



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NEW NORCIA

# Institute for Benedictine Studies Study Weekends and Retreats

## PROGRAMME 2023





# Benedictine Experience Weekends

Benedictine spirituality is more readily experienced than defined. These weekends in the monastery Guesthouse (beginning with Vespers at 6.30pm on Friday, concluding after lunch on Sunday) provide the opportunity to enter fully into the monastic rhythm and balance of prayer, work, lectio divina, hospitality and community life. There will be opportunities to ponder the riches of the scriptures and monastic literature, both in group discussions and personal silence and solitude, bringing from the 'storeroom, things both new and old.' Participants are also invited to join the community for silent meals in the refectory, one of many invitations to listen with the 'ear of the heart.'

March 10 – 12 | May 26 – 28 | July 28 – 30  
September 22 – 24 | November 24 – 26

Cost: \$300 (includes accommodation, meals and entry into the Museum and Art Gallery).

*Pictured: St. Bonaventure*



# Institute Weekends

February 24 – 26

*Lenten Retreat—The Seven Last Words of Christ, with St. Bonaventure*

The “Seven Last Words of Christ” refer to the seven utterances of Jesus during His final hours upon the cross. These utterances express a summation of His entire message, and have provided fruitful and profound meditation for Christians for many centuries. As a preparation for the season of Lent, this retreat will reflect upon the spiritual meanings of these words, guided by the writings of the early Franciscan mystic, St. Bonaventure.

March 10 – 12

*BENEDICTINE EXPERIENCE WEEKEND I*

March 31 – April 2

*Letting Go (Sr. Lilian Bong, SJA)*

As we journey through life, we are in a continual process of ‘letting go’, in many different ways. This letting go can be the result of the loss of loved ones, of the process of ageing, of relationship changes, and families growing up, etc. On the other hand, there can be things in our hearts – anger, regret, grief, attachment – of which we would like to let go, but find it difficult to do so. Yet, in learning to ‘let go’, we can embrace God’s plan for us more deeply, and thus come to live with greater fullness and freedom. This retreat will provide companionship and guidance in this process.

April 28 – 30

*Female Benedictine Mystics of the Middle Ages: St. Hildegard of Bingen, St. Gertrude the Great, and others*

While monasteries and convents of Benedictine nuns flourished throughout Europe during the entire Middle Ages, the amount of writings left to us, in comparison with male Benedictines of the same period, is relatively small. Yet among these writings are many treasures, expressing the life of mystical prayer, remarkable visions and revelations, and an ardent love for God. This weekend will examine the remarkable lives and writings of several medieval Benedictine mystics; Hildegard, Elizabeth of Schönau, Gertrude the Great, and others.

May 26 – 28

*BENEDICTINE EXPERIENCE WEEKEND II*

June 30 – July 2

*The Apocryphal Gospels—Meeting the Jesus of Myth and Imagination*

In addition to the four Gospels contained within the New Testament, a considerable number of other Gospels exist. Although these works embody myth and creative imagination rather than historical truth, they offer intriguing, surprising, and sometimes challenging perspectives, embodying a range of alternative understandings of the person of Jesus. This weekend will present an overview of the history and context of the non-canonical Gospels, and an illuminating survey of some of the more significant and interesting of these apocryphal writings.

July 28 – 30

*BENEDICTINE EXPERIENCE WEEKEND III*

August 25 – 27

*The Desert Fathers – The Earliest Christian Monks*

The term ‘Desert Fathers’ (and ‘Desert Mothers’) refers to Christians who, from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, adopted eremitic and/or coenobitic modes of life in the deserts of North Africa and the Middle East. The thoughts, sayings and anecdotes of these remarkable and curious figures are well documented in various ancient writings, which in the course of time came to serve as models and inspirations for both Western and Eastern monasticism. The Desert Fathers continue to offer rich insights and challenges to modern Christians. This weekend will offer an introduction to the amazing world of the Desert Fathers.

*Pictured: St. Gertrude the Great*



September 22 – 24

*BENEDICTINE EXPERIENCE WEEKEND IV*

October 6 – 8

*St. Francis of Assisi—Prophet of Freedom and Peace*

St. Francis of Assisi is amongst the most deeply loved and admired of all the saints in the Christian tradition. He is identified with the embrace of radical Evangelical poverty, simplicity and freedom, and the encounter with the Divinity through the created world. Emerging from the chaos and turbulence of plague and war-ravaged 13<sup>th</sup>-century Italy, he remains a source of deep inspiration for many people in the contemporary world. This weekend will draw upon the earliest primary sources, including the writings of Francis himself and the primitive hagiographical accounts, to present an authentic picture of this beloved figure.

November 24 – 26

*BENEDICTINE EXPERIENCE WEEKEND V*

*Pictured: St. Francis of Assisi*

