

The Chimes



Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia

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Retreat, reflect, renew:

Why New Norcia remains a spiritual haven

New Norcia continues to be a favourite place of spiritual retreat for many people, and is attracting an ever-widening range of participants.

It is very common for retreats to be fully booked well in advance, such as our most recent weekend, on November 14-16, on 'Benedictine Secrets for Serenity and Balance.' The retreatants for that weekend (pictured above), included two independent groups from Singapore, as well as inter-state attendees. In addition, our regular visitors are always very welcome, many of whom attend several retreats annually and have done so for numerous years.

The participants at the retreat were all extremely grateful for the insights and hospitality, with comments that it was a unique and life-changing experience which they would certainly be recommending to their friends and colleagues.

Our retreats offer not only a restful, relaxing and re-energising experience, but also a rare opportunity to gain access to the wonderful wisdom and practices of an authentic and living contemplative monastic tradition.

Retreats for 2026 are now listed online at our webshop, and interested persons are encouraged to book early to secure a place.





The unique experience of liturgical music at New Norcia

By Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB

Today, many Australian parishes, especially those in rural areas, struggle with music ministry, as finding committed and capable musicians and singers is often a great challenge.

At New Norcia, however, we are delighted to present a very diverse and creative form of musical praise, thanks to our many wonderful participants. For All Souls' Day, for example, there were no less than two cellists, a violinist, two guitarists, and a choir of singers, and, of course, myself in the background

somehow putting it all together. And just the week before, the liturgy was enhanced by a visiting opera singer of international standing, singing in wonderful harmony with some of our gifted locals.

As well as the variety of instrumentalists and singers, the stylistic approach we have developed is also eclectic and yet cohesive. Original compositions, classical pieces, traditional hymns, contemporary worship music, mediaeval chants, and even hints of jazz, blues and world music, are all to be found, contributing eloquently to the same message of faith and freedom. I am very

keen on permitting (and even encouraging) musicians and singers to make full use of their skills and creativity (to use the words of the Psalm, "to play with all their skill"), which makes participation a genuinely rewarding and uplifting experience for them as well as the listeners. Indeed, few Sundays go by when someone does not comment that the music at New Norcia's Masses is outstanding, unique and unlike anything they have encountered elsewhere. In this respect, the vibrant tradition of musical excellence and originality, first brought to New Norcia by Rosendo Salvado himself, lives strongly once more.



Irish music concert

Robert Zielinski and Manuela Centanni gave us a wonderful concert of Irish music here at the Abbey church on Friday night 21st November.

We did joke with them about their very Irish surnames. Manuela thought she should put an O' in front of hers, but Robert insisted that his surname was traditional Donegal!

Robert is of Polish extraction, West Australian born, and lived 14 years in Ireland.

He has returned to the South West in the Denmark area, and his compositions are inspired by the landscape/seascape and the Karri forests.

Manuela and Robert mostly played Robert's compositions, punctuated by traditional tunes and reels.

Repainting the monastery

For a couple of weeks the monastery gate area was completely shrouded while the Eric Hood painters very carefully sandblasted the gate and the surrounding structure to ready it for painting.

And no, Eric Hood does not employ aliens to do the work. The sandblaster is well protected from the silica sand in a full suit and a ventilated and shrouded helmet.



Western Power fire risk mitigation works

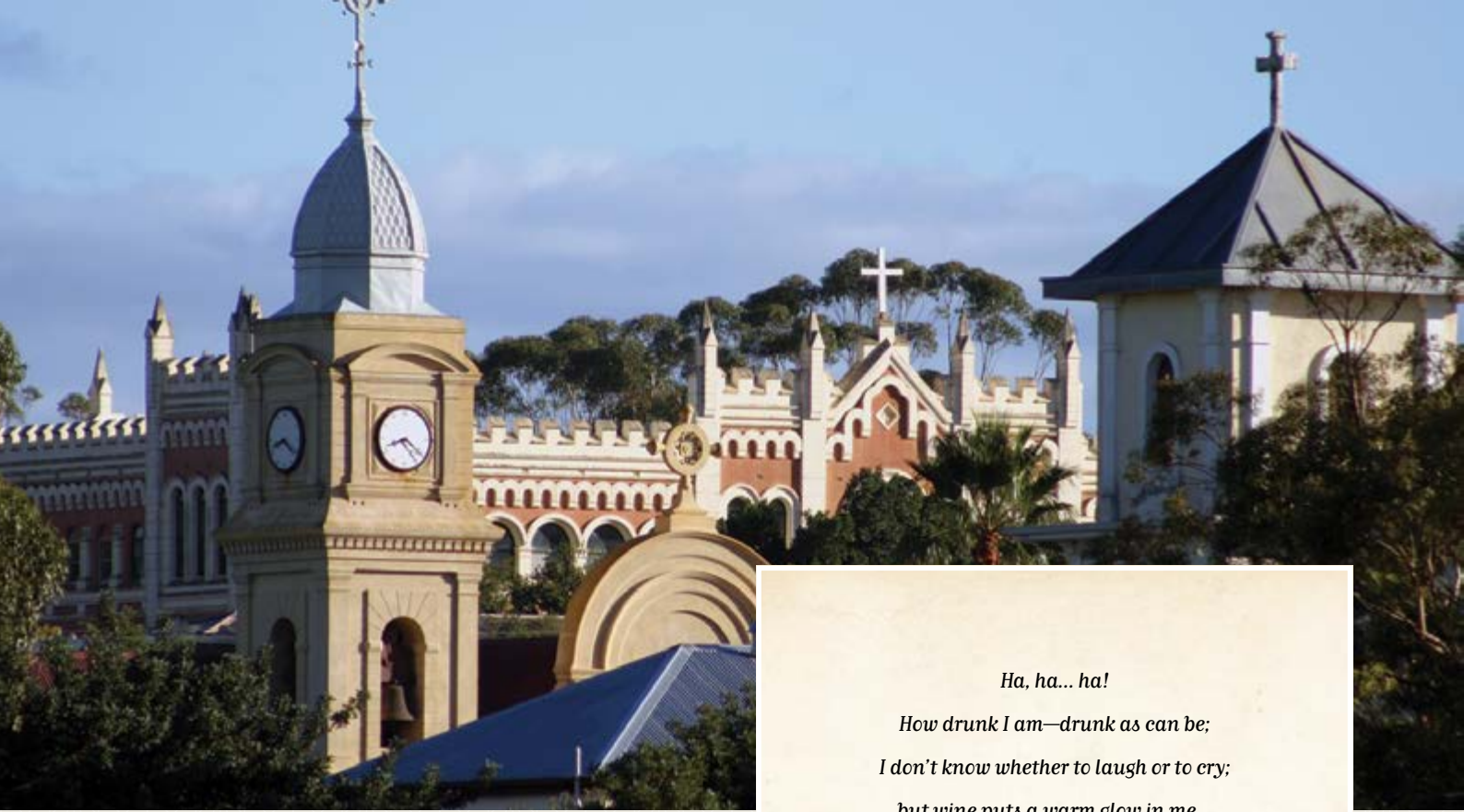
There was some excitement this morning (7th Nov) sparked by the sound of a helicopter close by, that I couldn't quite see, but was persistent and loud.

This is what I found:

Western Power had informed us that they would be washing pole top insulators using a helicopter. This mitigates the chances of pole top fires and the resultant (often long) delays while repair crews make their way to remote places.

I'm happy that I'm not flying a helicopter so close to power lines or sitting outside with the washing equipment, but these brave souls are doing a wonderful job!





An interesting discovery in New Norcia's archives

New Norcia's archives continue to be a source of fascinating and sometimes amusing glimpses into the past. Recently, internationally acclaimed opera singer Allegra Giagu has been researching the music of New Norcia in the 19th and early 20th centuries, supported by the Abbot Placid Memorial Scholarship.

One of her most remarkable discoveries, unearthed during one of her long nightly vigils in the music archives, was a song written by an unnamed monk of the community. She described it as "an unlikely piece of popular satire, perhaps never intended for posterity. It belongs to the world of Spanish café-concerts of the 1860s and 1870s: informal gatherings where songs of everyday life and social commentary were performed with theatrical humour.

These songs combined wit, irony, and local colour with simple, memorable melodies. The text is sung by a tipsy narrator whose utopian dream disintegrates with her hangover. In her fantasy, Parliament has closed for lack of disagreement, peace reigns across the nation, taxation is abolished, and "to every taxpayer—even the Government—a ham!" When she wakes, the only part of the dream that proves real is the merluza—literally "the hake," but in colloquial Spanish, a slang term for a spectacular hangover."

Ha, ha... ha!

*How drunk I am—drunk as can be;
I don't know whether to laugh or to cry;*

but wine puts a warm glow in me...

*Ah! I'm dizzy—how drunk I am,
how drunk I am, how drunk I am.*

When I've had four glasses

*I get in a shocking state,
and dream up foolish nonsense,*

like the dream I had today:

I dreamed there were no robberies

and all across the land

not a single riot, not a whisper of dissent;

and since there was nothing left to argue,

the country simply glided on;

No more budgets, no more taxes due,

and to every taxpayer,

even the Government—a ham;

and thinking of such marvels

(and keen to celebrate),

I seized a monstrous hangover

of truly colossal size;

but then I woke—oh cruel fate! —

for of those dreams,

Those honeyed memories,

only the hangover turned out to be real.

CHRISTMAS AT NEW NORCIA

Wed 24th Dec -Christmas Eve

With the monks - First Vespers of Christmas

6:00pm in the Oratory

10:30pm Mass in the Abbey Church

Followed by a festive supper.

Thur 25th Dec - Christmas Day

9:00am Mass in the Abbey Church

Saturday 27th December

Ecumenical Carols Service - Featuring the Georgian Singers

Afternoon tea at 4:00pm, Carols at 5:00pm



Photography Competition 2026

Capture the spirit of New Norcia!

Let your lens tell the story of our unique heritage.

Submit up to three photos showcasing your perspective
of New Norcia by 1st March 2026.

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Follow us on instagram or Facebook

Go to New Norcia's events calendar for entry forms and T&Cs

Submissions close 4pm (AWST) 1st March 2026



NEW NORCIA
BENEDICTINE COMMUNITY



*The monastic community
and everyone at New Norcia,
wish you a very happy and
holy Christmas, &
abundant blessings in 2026*

*Feliz Navidad / Bon Nadal / Boas Festas /
Bones Festes / Buon Natale / Joyeux Noël
/ Frohe Weihnachten / Feliz Natal!*

Photo: Oratory, Holy Trinity Abbey, New Norcia, 2025.





'La Table de l'Abbé'

The Abbot's Table



Spring roses, monastery central cloister, 2025

Spring

Saturday 29th November 2025

Welcome to the Spring Abbot's Table!

I've been reading the twentieth anniversary edition of Anthony Bourdain's *Les Halles Cookbook*, which includes recipes from his time at the famed New York French brasserie where he made his name.

But, as with all good cookbooks, it's not simply a compilation of recipes, it's a testimony to what's behind every good dish, every good restaurant experience, every good meal shared with family and friends. As Bourdain gently and encouragingly guides the reader through the preparation of the great French classics, he integrates the language of the spirit, the language of love. Bourdain's philosophy of cooking is based on his conviction that the creation and success of any dish, simple or complex, depends not only on the skill of mastering basic technique, but on accessing deeper skills ... "you need the will", "you need the desire", "you need love", and "do not be afraid!"

One has only to flick through the pages of the sacred scriptures to discover that this is biblical language; it's also the language of the spiritual life, that integration of every aspect of our lives. Whether butcher, baker or candlestick maker ... we all possess and have the capacity to access the things of the spirit, enabling us to achieve anything ... even the humble task of overcoming our mistakes and failures, which gives us the confidence to pick up our whisks (literally and metaphorically) and try again.

Spring is the season in which we celebrate new life, especially in our gardens, like the glorious spring roses on the cover of this menu, carefully nurtured by Sr Hilda who is presently gracing our monastic community with her prayerful presence and her own unique skills.

We hope you will enjoy the offerings of this spring menu, prepared and served indeed by a kitchen and front-of-house team with the will to succeed, the desire to serve, and the love of Benedictine hospitality.

Bon appétit!

Herewith feedback from a happy Abbot's Table guest:

"Saturday night was another triumph! The entrée was just fantastic. I marvel at your ability to get three different, high quality and delicious elements on one plate.

I loved the sirloin, potato cake, horseradish and the sauce.

Dessert was a show stopper! Loved the 3 flavours of ice-cream. The pastry was great as was the fruit. The cheese platter was a winner. Wines were just great."





New Norcia Retreat and Study Programme for 2026 now available

We are very pleased to announce that the programme for New Norcia's retreats and courses are now available for 2026.

On offer is a series of varied events focusing on Benedictine spirituality, meditation, and the cultivation of inner peace and freedom. As well as our customary weekend retreats, a number of one-day options is also available.

Our weekend and one-day retreats are an opportunity to step back from the usual concerns of life into a setting of tranquility and reflection, and to absorb the ancient wisdom of our monastic tradition. Participants are encouraged to book well in advance, as events are often fully booked.

Please visit the New Norcia online giftshop, at:
<https://shop.newnoria.com.au/collections/special-items>

Date	Retreat	Length
March 6-8	Lenten Retreat – blessed are the pure of heart (Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB) For forty days before commencing His public ministry, Jesus retreated into the desert, fasting and living a life of absolute simplicity. In imitation of this example, the forty days of Lent should be for Christians a time of consciously uncluttering our lives and heart, and freeing ourselves from all the extraneous baggage and complexities which hold us back from the freedom and simplicity to which God is calling us. This weekend retreat will assist participants identify practical and effective ways of simplifying and uncluttering their lives and heart.	Weekend retreat
March 21	Prayer – Connection with the God who knows you (Sr. Hilda Scott, OSB) This retreat will be a gentle day allowing us to wander through our own connections with God and the many ways in which He connects with us, as we are in the here and now. That connection is "prayer" and as there are so many and varied ways to say "I love you", there are that many ways to pray, to connect with God and He with you. Prayer it is that brings meaning and sustenance to our lives in all weathers, indeed "More things are wrought by prayer than this world ever dreams" said the English poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson.	One-day retreat
April 10-12	Benedictine secrets for balance and serenity (Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB & Sr. Hilda Scott, OSB) The Benedictine way of life is recognized for its promotion of balance and serenity, and the flourishing of the Order of St. Benedict for over 1,500 years is clear testimony to this reality. This weekend retreat will unlock for participants the secret wisdom of St. Benedict, for achieving a sustainable life of balance and serenity.	Weekend retreat
May 1-3	Meditation and union with God (Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB) The practice of meditation and the experience of union with God form a key part of the mystical life of many of the saints, and also appear (in varying forms) in most of the great religious traditions of the world. Meditation consists of a deliberate stilling of the mind and spirit, and liberating it from distractions, illusions, sensory perception, and its usual assumptions and perspectives. In this way, the spirit is opened up to a unitive vision of a higher reality- God Himself, and the true self. Through this discipline, practitioners are able to arrive at peace, freedom and inner joy. This retreat will combine a general orientation and the experience of specific practices.	Weekend retreat

The Easter Triduum at New Norcia 2026

Bookings available now!

The Easter Triduum is the greatest solemnity of the Church's liturgical year and staying at New Norcia over these three days is a wonderful and unforgettable way of being immersed in the great beauty, mystery and splendor of this occasion.



To book, please go to: shop.newnoria.com.au



Book your next sundowner in St Ildephonsus' Courtyard

Bookings available from February 2026



For more information, please contact Joyce:
groups@newnoria.com.au





Abbot's Table: Summer

21st February 2026

\$180.00

We are pleased to announce the date for the first dinner of 2026, to be held at the grand old New Norcia Hostel.

This series celebrates a set four-course menu of fresh seasonal produce and showcases New Norcia wood-fired bakery products, olive oil, Abbey Ale and Abbey wines, to be shared with family and friends – or strangers – in this special place, a town like no other.

In the spirit of community, guests will sit together at long tables throughout the venue.

- Pre-dinner drinks begin at 6.00 p.m.
- All-inclusive dinner: \$180 per person
- When booking, please notify us of any special dietary allergies.

Book online via the [webshop](#).

PLEASE NOTE: For group bookings: please list the name of each group member attending in the notes section of your order. There is a limit of 8 tickets per booking. Thank you!

Coming Events

From December 2025

Please note: There are no 1:30pm town tours for the month of January 2026. Thank you for your understanding.

6-8 March, 2026

Lenten Retreat - Blessed are the pure of heart

21st March

One Day Retreat: Prayer - Connection with the God who knows you

Visit our website for a complete list of Coming Events - newnorcia.com.au/whats-on/events-calendar/current-events

Liturgical Calendar

From December 2025

Saturday 13 December
St Lucy (Memorial)

Sunday 14 December
Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday 21 December
Fourth Sunday of Advent

Wednesday 24 December
Christmas Eve

Thursday 25 December
Christmas Day

Friday 26 December
St Stephen

Saturday 27 December
St John

Sunday 28 December
Holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Monday 29 December
5th Day of Octave

Tuesday 30 December
6th Day of Octave

Wednesday 31 December
7th Day of Octave



NEW NORCIA
BENEDICTINE COMMUNITY

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