

The Chimes



Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia

Vol. 26 No. 1 - Feb 2026

A joyful start: Two baptisms at the Abbey



Clune & Verghoot families



Baby Charlotte

On Saturday 31st January, we rejoiced with the Clune and Verghoot families as Isabella and Wyatt presented their first child, Charlotte, for the Sacrament of Baptism.

There was a small moment of confusion to begin the day – the family gathered at St Ild's Chapel (where Isabella and Wyatt were married), while Abbot John was waiting at the Abbey Church. Thankfully, our ever-reliable weekend Grounds and Maintenance man, Bob, came to the rescue and helped ensure everyone arrived at the right place.

Once reunited at the Abbey Church, the celebration unfolded beautifully. It was a joy-filled occasion, marked by warm smiles, prayerful reflection, and – to everyone's delight – not a single

tear from baby Charlotte. Following the ceremony, Abbot John warmly invited the family to enjoy a tour of the monastery, adding a special touch to an already memorable day.

The following Saturday, the Abbey Church once again welcomed family and friends as the Birkle family gathered for the baptism of Eleanor Louise Birkle, celebrated by Fr Robert. It was another blessed and happy occasion for our community, as we continue to share in these important milestones of faith and family life.



Birkle Family

A MUSICAL SOIRÉE



Great piano concertos

6.30pm Saturday 28th March 2026
at the New Norcia Hotel.

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In this recital, New Norcia's Fr. Robert will perform solo arrangements of music from the greatest and most popular piano concertos, including those of Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Rachmaninoff's No. 2 and No. 3, Beethoven's Emperor Concerto, Liszt's No. 1, Mozart's No. 21, Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, and others.

These works feature stirring and beloved melodies, as well as moments of demanding and dramatic virtuosity. The combination of fine music and food will ensure that this is an evening to be remembered.

The evening is accompanied, as usual, by fine food and cocktails in New Norcia's historic hostel.

Accommodation is booked separately,
e-mailgroups@newnorcia.com.au



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PURCHASE TICKETS



Dorothy & Abbot John

Farewells and faithful friends

January brought Abbot John two poignant farewells, each a reminder of the quiet but lasting ways lives become woven together through faith and service.

On January 22nd, Abbot John travelled to Bunbury to assist at the funeral of Nathan (Nook) James. Twenty-one years ago, Abbot John had presided at Nook's marriage to Jillian while serving as parish priest of Dardanup – one of those joyful occasions that marks the beginning of a shared story. In the years that followed, that story continued at New Norcia, where he baptised their children. To walk with a family through such milestones, and then to farewell them at the last, is one of the most profound privileges of priestly life.



Nathan James



John Date OAM

After spending the long weekend with John and Nicole Ogilvie, Abbot John travelled to Melbourne for the funeral of John Date OAM – a man whose generosity shaped New Norcia in ways that will endure long after his passing. As a partner at Cornwalls, the community's legal advisors, John gave considerable pro-bono support during New Norcia's significant transition from an incorporated association to a company. His quiet dedication to religious communities across Australia was recognised with both an OAM and a Papal Knighthood – honours well deserved by a man who served so faithfully and so humbly.

We thank God for the presence of both these men in our lives, and commend them to His mercy. May they rest in peace.

On his way to the airport, Abbot John stopped to visit his mother Dorothy in her nursing home – and found her, happily, in wonderful spirits and beautifully cared for. A devoted reader of *The Chimes*, Dorothy is very much part of our extended community. It was a moment of real joy amid a week of farewells.

Cooking with gas

After years of faithful but increasingly unreliable service, the hostel kitchen's venerable 'medieval' stove has finally been retired – and the upgrade has been well worth the wait.

The kitchen now boasts a brand new Moffat Blue Seal six-burner stove with oven, a chargrill, and a sleek new stainless-steel bench.

All equipment was sourced through Caterlink and expertly installed by Matt from Avon Valley Plumbing and Gas.

As for the Abbot, who is known to moonlight as guest chef at the hostel, the verdict is simple – he is very happy indeed.



Matt from Avon Valley Plumbing and Gas



Christmas at New Norcia

The Benedictine Community, local parishioners and visiting guests gathered for beautifully prepared liturgies on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day – with Fr Robert at his finest, and a little something from Santa for the children present.

The monks and Sr Hilda were delighted to host a long-table Christmas lunch for local friends and the hardworking backpackers who kept New Norcia running through the busy season. Dom Daniel's elaborately dressed table did not disappoint –

marinated prawns, dhufish, roasted beef fillet, duck breast, glazed ham, cherry cheesecake and traditional pudding, all enjoyed in the hostel bar, which locals will know houses the finest air-conditioning in town. Santa made an appearance here too.



Dom Daniel

The Easter Triduum at New Norcia 2026

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 splendour of this occasion.



New Norcia is delighted to be able to offer our guests packages including accommodation, meals and participation in the liturgy and other events.

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The events over these days include:

Holy Thursday (April 2)
Mass of the Lord's Supper (7.30pm)

Good Friday (April 3)
Liturgy of the Passion of the Lord (3.00pm)
Taize Chant and Prayer (7.30pm)

Holy Saturday (April 4)
Musical Recital (10.30am)

Easter Sunday (April 5)
Vigil Mass of Easter(4.30am)
Morning Mass (9.00am)

The Monastic liturgy of the hours also continues to be prayed and these are all open to our guests.



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La Table de L'Abbé

The Abbot's Table 2026

Autumn
16th May 2026

Scan below to book



Winter
22nd August 2026

Scan below to book



Spring
21st November 2026

Scan below to book





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 tranquillity 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.newnorcia.com.au/collections/special-items>

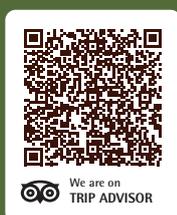
We value your feedback

At New Norcia, your feedback helps shape a better experience for every visitor.

We actively listen through a variety of channels:

- Our in-house visitor survey
- Reviews on TripAdvisor and WikiCamps
- Conversations and comments on Facebook and Instagram

Whether it's a suggestion, a story, or a snapshot—every bit of feedback helps us grow and improve.





Studies Day 2026 – Monks and Music

Saturday 23rd May.

This popular event returns for 2026 and will be held in the beautiful chapel of St Gertrude's College.

Our speakers this year include Judith McGuinness, former Abbot Placid Scholar, who will bring us up to date on the last of the Santos Salvado letters written following his return to Spain in 1868.

Our new 2026 Scholar, Paul Watt, who is the Adjunct Professor of Music at Adelaide University, will speak about the history of music at New Norcia, while Allegra Giagu, our current Scholar and whom many of you will remember from her wonderful performances with Fr Robert Nixon, will give us her paper on Salvado's music. Abbot John will join them to bring you up to date on the various restoration works that have been completed and plans for the future.

Finally, we are delighted to launch another book in the Abbey Press series: The Griver Letters – a joint project between New Norcia Archives and the Catholic Archdiocese Archives. Sarah Connor, who translated the letters but who lives in Mexico, will give a short speech about the book via a pre-recorded presentation.

Costs are \$100 per person (\$85 for pensioners and students) which includes morning and afternoon teas and lunch in St Ildephonsus' College dining room.

Go to [Retreat and Event Tickets – New Norcia Museum Gift Shop](#) for your ticket.

Coming Events

From March 2025

6th – 8th March 2025

Weekend Retreat:

Blessed are the Pure of Heart

21st March 2025

One-Day Retreat: Prayer:

Connection with the God who Knows You

10th – 12th April 2025

Weekend Retreat: Benedictine Secrets For Balance and Serenity

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

Liturgical Calendar

From March 2026

Sunday 1 March

New Norcia
Foundation Day

Sunday 8 March

Third Sunday of Lent

Sunday 15 March

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Tuesday 17 March

St Patrick (Solemnity)

Thursday 19 March

St Joseph (Solemnity)

Saturday 21 March

OHF Benedict (Feast)

Sunday 22 March

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Wednesday 25 March

Annunciation of the Lord
(Solemnity)

Sunday 29 March

Passion (Palm) Sunday
Holy Week Commences

Thursday 2 April

Holy Thursday

Friday 3 April

Good Friday

Saturday 4 April

Holy Saturday

Sunday 5 April

Easter Sunday
(Solemnity with Octave)



NEW NORCIA
BENEDICTINE COMMUNITY

The Chimes is a monthly publication of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia. To subscribe to the digital version, email publications@newnorcia.com.au.

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