

# The Chimes



Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia

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## A place where the light enters

A reflection contributed by Allegra Giagu

*In recent months, I have found myself pausing more often at thresholds, drawn first by the mystery of what lies beyond them—like Alice peering through a keyhole into another world.*

Without understanding the reason, I began photographing them, noticing the worn grain of timber and the detail of carved stone; ornate archways caught in the afternoon light; doors locked against rooms whose secrets remained sealed within; and the glow of stained glass above the broad steps of the Abbey church as the sun set behind it each day. Through each threshold, the beauty and richness of life and landscape beyond came into view, framed by the doorway itself.

A doorway is an in-between place. It belongs neither to where we have been nor to where we are going. As we cross, we are briefly suspended between departure and arrival. For a moment, past and future exist together.

The more I consider this, the more certain I become that much of life is lived within

that vast, unknowable in-between. New Norcia itself inhabits that space. It is secluded and monastic, yet accessible and public; historically significant and insistently alive. Layers of time coexist here. This is Yued Country, lived upon and cared for across tens of thousands of years, and the monastery stands upon this red earth within a much longer story—one that is still unfolding and quietly asking what might yet emerge.

While preparing in June to sing the music of Saint Hildegard of Bingen, the twelfth-century Benedictine abbess, I found myself thinking more deeply about suspension and becoming within her music. Hildegard often takes a single word and unfolds it across many notes—a musical gesture known as a melisma. The singer leaves the realm of ordinary speech and syntax and dwells within the word, lingering beyond its usual duration before passing into silence, breath, or the next arc of the phrase. Her melismas rise and curve like the rounded arches of a Romanesque monastery, suspending the voice between earth and heaven.

*The reflection continues on the next page...*



Images by Allegra Giagu

Hildegard's texts are filled with images of becoming: the liminal light of dawn poised between darkness and day; verdant gardens in which flowers are still unfolding; and longing suspended between absence and fulfilment. Each inhabits a moment in which something has begun but has not yet fully come into being. In Hildegard's vision, transformation occurs not upon arrival, but within these gentle, luminous spaces in between.

Perhaps each of us has a place or practice that becomes such a threshold.

For some, it may be music. For others, tending a garden, walking through the bush, painting, reading quietly in the library or sitting in the nave as the afternoon light moves across the stained-glass windows. In these moments, time softens, and we become more receptive and present.

The Rule of St Benedict shapes life at New Norcia through these quiet movements: between silence and speech, work and prayer, darkness and dawn, the person one has been and the person one is still becoming. I have learned that monastic life does not seek to escape these in-between places. Rather, it teaches us to inhabit them faithfully. I believe this to be one of New Norcia's great gifts.

The historic doorways offer a fitting image for this sense of dwelling in the

in-between. People arrive here seeking rest, history, beauty, or prayer, and all of us arrive, knowingly or unknowingly, at a threshold. Some open onto beginnings; others are marked by loss, uncertainty, or change. These interstitial moments are rarely comfortable, and we often want to hurry through them. Yet they ask us to pause and remain open to revelation.

For Hildegard, then, music was itself a mode of revelation: a way of entering, a passage from the visible into the invisible and from the individual self into the wider harmony of creation. Her melodies belong to a vision of the universe in which creation is ordered through harmony, and the human voice is both conduit and threshold to a realm of music already sounding beyond the veil of ordinary perception. The task of the singer is not to impose the self upon the music, but to become quiet enough to hear it—and then to bring it forth.

This experience is not confined to Hildegard's world. Performers and listeners alike still recognise those rare moments when the boundaries between self, sound and silence dissolve, and something passes between them that cannot be explained.

I have been a performer for most of my life, and I recognise the rare sensation of entering a kind of universal chorus: those moments when everything aligns, and the music seems to carry everyone within it.

What I cannot explain so readily is why, since becoming part of the community at New Norcia, I find myself entering that realm more often—there is a moment, just before a phrase begins, when something changes. I am standing in a doorway—between effort and grace—not removed from the world, but somehow more deeply present within it. A saying attributed to Hildegard, shared with us by Father Robert, offers illumination on this feeling:

*"There is a music of Heaven in all things, but we have forgotten to hear it until we sing."*

I believe that I cross that threshold more readily during Mass, because the singing is for the liturgy, for the community and for God. As Sister Hilda shared during the same retreat, it is only by receiving more deeply that we become able to reveal more openly.

And so perhaps, in addition to their stone, timber and light, the beauty of thresholds lies in what they have come to represent and the reflections they provoke. It is possible that some of God's gentlest and most important work takes place in the spaces between certainty and unknowing.

## First Holy Communion — Letter of gratitude

*Good evening Fr. Robert,*

*Salve Maria.*

*Elizabeth and I did express our gratitude yesterday, however on the drive home we were struck by an awareness of how abundantly blessed Artie was by God's grace through your hospitality.*

*Catechism in general is often neglected and the sacraments seem not to be treated with the respect they deserve. We are sure the significance of the occasion was not lost on Artie thanks to your generous attention to her through mass and the homily. It was very beautifully done, so please accept our thanks again (and please prepare for Marcus next year! You already have his music request).*

*We will offer a family rosary for your ministry and community.*

*I have attached a few photos of the day. If this is the kind of thing that the community would like to share in the newsletter, we give our permission for them to be used.*

**Kindest regards, Christopher Gwinnett**  
Lieutenant, Undergraduate Student (UNDA)  
Long Term Schooling — Army Personnel Support Unit, Western Australia





## Mandorla People's Choice Award

The 2026 Mandorla Art Award – People's choice award – sponsored by the Benedictine Community of New Norcia was won by Helen Forbes with her entry "Moth Seeking the Truth in the Light of the Moon."

Here's a glimpse into Helen Forbes' studio and the making of "Moth Seeking the Truth in the Light of the Moon."

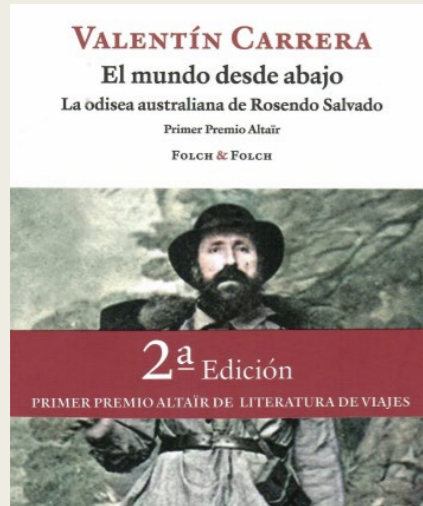
Working with recycled metal, acrylic paint, synthetic polymer and kaolin clay, Helen carefully builds up textured surfaces that seem to vibrate with light. Each piece of metal is cut, sanded and shaped by hand, catching and reflecting light to create a shifting, luminous effect. Sourced locally from Kakulas Sister in Fremantle, her reclaimed materials, including recycled tins, are transformed into something contemplative and almost metaphysical.

This deeply considered process came together in a work that resonated strongly with audiences, earning Helen the 2026 Mandorla Art Award People's Choice Prize, supported by the Benedictine Community. Congratulations Helen.

## The World from Below

By Valentín Carrera

Readers of *The Chimes* may remember that, two years ago in July 2024, Valentín Carrera and his colleagues from the Spanish audiovisual production company, *Bierzo Paradiso*, visited the archives in search of material about Bishop Salvado.



Valentín was the producer for a documentary series on the life, work and legacy of Bishop Salvado which was being produced for Galician television (TVG); but he also wrote a book entitled *El mundo desde abajo: la odisea Australiana de Rosendo Salvado*, which was recently presented to Pope Leo XIV. Although currently only in Spanish, an English language version is in the works. I have read the draft and it is very good! Below is Valentín's press release, translated by the ever-obliging Mr Google.

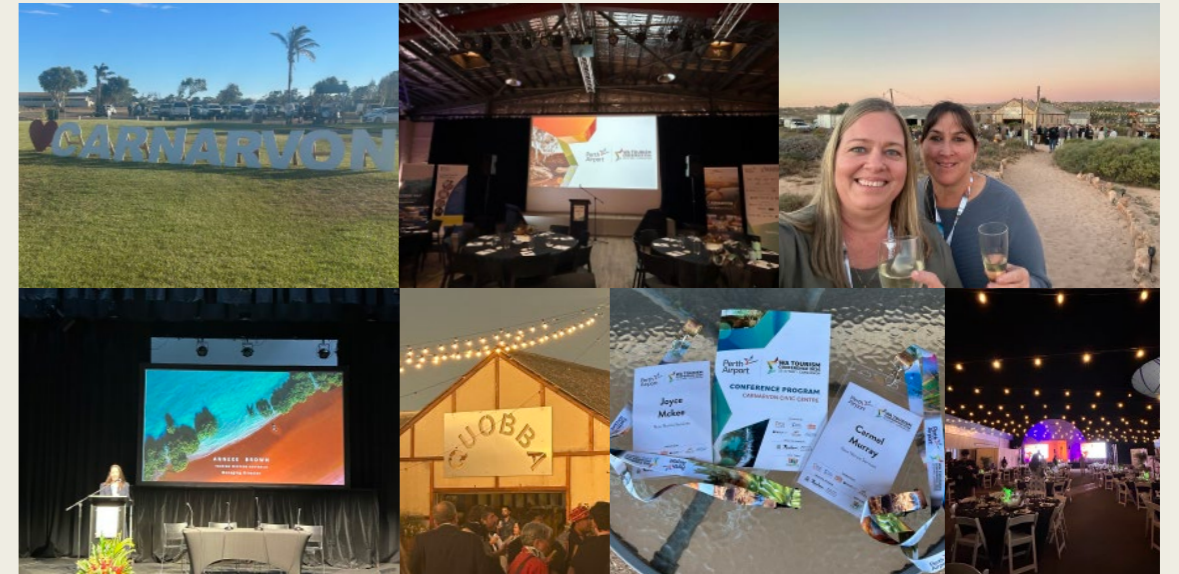
From Missionary to Missionary: Montserrat Abbey presents Pope Leo XIV with *El mundo desde abajo* [The World from Below] – the book the Pope is reading recounts the Australian odyssey of Friar Rosendo Salvado, defender of equality and human rights against racism. Written by Valentín Carrera, winner of the 2026 Altair Prize.

BARCELONA, June 10 – "From missionary to missionary: from the Galician Benedictine friar Rosendo Salvado in Australia to the Augustinian Robert Francis Prevost in Chulucanas." With this message from the author, the Abbey of Montserrat today presented Pope Leo XIV with the book *The World from Below*, by Valentín Carrera, winner of the 2026 Altair Prize, which recounts the life and work of Salvado, who lived for several years in Montserrat in the mid-19th century.

Like Salvado, the missionary [Robert] Prevost—later Pope Leo XIV—came from the indigenous communities with whom he had lived for over twenty years. Like Salvado, Prevost was a staunch defender of human dignity.

In a recent interview with *eldiario.es*, Jesús Bastante, a journalist specialising in religion, asked Carrera who Rosendo Salvado would be today: "Prevost, without a doubt," replied the author of *The World from Below*. "Today, Rosendo Salvado would be the missionary Prevost. If anything it characterises the biography of Leo XIV, it is his profound missionary vocation, which began at the start of his priestly career in 1985 as a missionary in Peru. Like Leo XIV, Friar Rosendo Salvado is an ethical example, a model of a life dedicated to the poor indigenous people. His example challenges us: we must step outside our own self-interest and embrace the world below."

"That is why," Carrera explains, "we have asked the Abbot of Montserrat, Father Manel Gasch, through the publishing house Folch&Folch, to send our book to the Missionary Pope Leo XIV during his visit to Montserrat. Reading this work connects the invisible threads of the missionary vocation of Salvado and Leo XIV, their intimate connection and solidarity with the world from below."



## WA Tourism Conference 2026

At the end of May Carmel and Joyce attended the WA Tourism Conference in Carnarvon.

We had an incredible few days attending workshops and listening to speakers showcasing Carnarvon and tourism industry leaders and businesses providing updates on the tourism sector in Western Australia.

Day 1 of the conference was all about visitor centres in WA and how we can all help each to improve and reach more tourists in our

towns. The sessions were followed by a wonderful sundowner at the amazing Quobba Station. With fairy lights, firepits and the ocean in the background, accompanied by live music and wonderful local foods and drinks, it was a wonderful conclusion to the first day.

After another full day of conference sessions, day 2 concluded with the Conference Awards Dinner held beneath the iconic satellite dish at the Carnarvon Space & Technology Museum. New Norcia was proud to be a finalist in the Tiny Town

category and although we didn't win an award, we were happy with the exposure our beautiful town received.

On day 3 we heard from different Indigenous tourism operators followed by drinks and canapés at the One Mile Jetty and a special performance from the Perth Orchestra.

The conference was a wonderful success and we look forward to heading to Albany next year for the 2027 WA Tourism Conference.



## Camino walkers — CEO WA

On the 3rd – 4th of June we welcomed Camino walkers from the Catholic Education Office of WA.

Over the past six years, staff from the office have walked the different sections of the Camino – some have walked all six sections and others a few.

The last two sections were walked in June with an overnight stay at the Hostel.

It was a very special and emotional welcome by Dom Daniel in the Abbey Church to welcome the walkers to New Norcia at the conclusion of their six year pilgrimage.



Setting the west side fence onto New Norcia Rd



South side fence.



The Sheoak shingles and Top Gun Roofing workers.



Steve, paint brush in hand, and the new roof.

# Renovation update

*There is a lot of renovation work underway at New Norcia by contractors and our own Grounds and Maintenance staff.*

As you will have read in previous editions, the massive painting contract for the monastery buildings continues. Here, as you can see, the Torres gate is looking magnificent.



The U.I.O.G.D is again restored to gold and the shield has had all its coats of white paint removed to reveal that it was in fact always a magnificent piece of marble.

To translate the Latin of the U.I.O.G.D:

*So that God may be glorified in all things"*

Across the road, lots of work is being undertaken in the renovation of the old Novitiate building.

Adrian and his colleague are doing a magnificent job of renovating the internal lower floor ready for occupation by Sister Hilda, having already rebuilt the rear verandahs, featured in a past edition of the Chimes.

Steve Mossman has been busy painting the exterior of the building, and the building has been reroofed in corrugated iron. When the old corrugated iron was removed, we were treated to a few days of reminiscence as it revealed the original roofing in hand cut Sheoak shingles.

Another 100m north and we come to Kelly's Cottage where Oleksandr, assisted by Dimitri, have been installing a fancy picket fence which really defines the cottage space.

This work has been funded by generous donors Sue and Kim Gardiner.



"Good Times Gone By" by Paul Goh



"Heavenly Connection" by Paul Goh



"Bringing Tourism to New Norcia" by Cara Christie

# 2026 New Norcia photography competition

Congratulations to the winner & runner up!

**Paul Goh**  
*@pslgoh*

**Cara Christie**  
*@takeyoutheretours*

*The winning image titled "Good Times Gone By"*

*The runner-up image titled "Bringing tourism to New Norcia"*

*The "People's Choice" image titled "Heavenly Connection"*

# Carl Jung & Spirituality

*In response to many requests, a one-day seminar on Carl Jung and Spirituality will be offered by the New Norcia Institute for Benedictine Studies on Saturday, August 8<sup>th</sup>.*

This will cover, in intensive form, most of the material offered during our weekend already scheduled for July 17-19, which has long been fully booked. Carl Jung was one of the key figures in the development of modern psychoanalysis. A student of Freud, he came to appreciate the deep importance of spiritual, mythological and religious traditions as representing fundamental truths of the human condition.

In particular, he recognised in the person of Christ as an archetype of a new and redeemed humanity and a connection with the transcendent. Presented by Fr. Robert, this one-day seminar (commencing at 9:00am and concluding at 4:45pm, and including lunch and morning and afternoon tea) will explore the work of Jung in the field of spirituality, and hopefully lead participants to fresh insights and deeper self-knowledge.

Bookings may be made at the New Norcia webshop: <https://shop.newnorcia.com.au/collections/special-items>

