



The Chimes

Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia

February 2023



Mystery Solved! Keys to Codex

On New Year's Eve, Abbot John was up in the monastery library showing the grand room to a couple who were spending a few days in the monastery guesthouse. As Benedictine Oblates, they had a 'family' interest in seeing the library. As it was a Saturday, the Abbot was slightly less involved in the administrative aspect of his role and took the opportunity to show the visitors the part of the library that is housed in its original location on the first floor of the south wing.

There is one large room—the main library—entered via the adjoining smaller room on its east side. This latter room opens from the veranda. It contains the Migne collection of the *Patrologia Graeca* (Greek Patrology) and the *Patrologia Latina* (Latin Patrology) in the open shelves of the east wall. The open shelves on the other walls have miscellaneous books on monasteries, historical, biographical and hagiographical works, dictionaries and encyclopaedias. Below the open shelves all around there are enclosed shelves in locked cabinets.

The other smaller room, to the east of the first, houses the no-longer-used library card catalogue. Our librarian began the digital catalogue in the early 1990s. The card system

stopped being kept up to date once the digital catalogue contained all the library's holdings. It's now a fairly impressive museum piece, better displayed in the place where it was used.

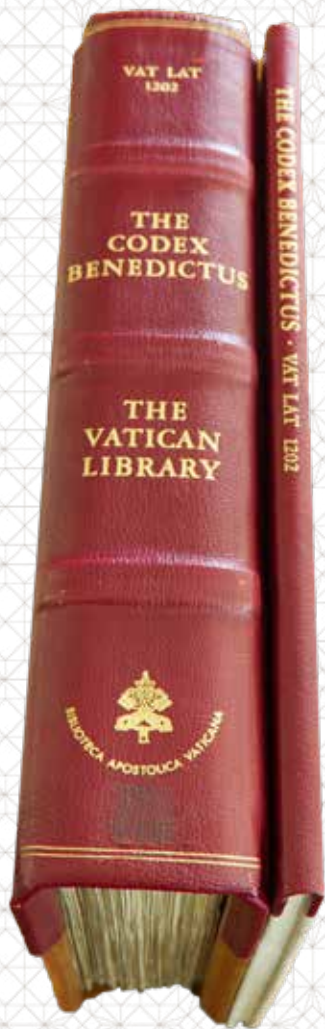
For a number of years, a particular item in the library holdings, too large and bulky to be placed upright on a shelf, and not something in regular use, had not been sighted. Published in 1982 and purchased in 1983, it is an elaborate facsimile of a mediaeval lectionary from the Abbey of Montecassino now located in the Vatican Library. The writer remembers having last seen it when it was housed in a cabinet in the main room under the section with books on monasticism and the Benedictine Order.

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New Norcia Road, New Norcia WA 6509, Australia
(08) 9654 8018



With changes in the monastic community and in librarians, we lost track of one of the keys to the locked cabinets in the Patrology room. While showing the visitors the card catalogue as mentioned earlier, Abbot John opened one of the drawers marked NO, i.e., with cards beginning with the letter 'N' followed by those with 'O', and was surprised to find two keys with tags marked 'Glass Case 1' and 'Glass Case 2' for opening the two large book cases with glass doors in the top half in the same room. There was a third key, a flat Lockwood, with nothing on its tag. He emailed the news to the members of the library committee.

After Mass the next day (the civil New Year's Day, liturgically the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God) the writer went to investigate. Beginning at the locked cabinet at the north-east corner, he opened the doors in succession, finding some shelves full of books, some with empty boxes or a few books, others empty. When he reached the cabinets under the dictionaries and opened the second one, to his relief he immediately recognised the large wooden case containing the 'long-lost' large and richly-bound Codex Benedictus with its simple companion volume containing a history of the Codex and details of its contents and the illuminated capital letters that enhance elaborate liturgical manuscripts from the Middle Ages prepared for use on major feast days – in this case, those of St Benedict, St Maur and St Scholastica.

~ Fr David OSB

Summer at New Norcia – It's All About the Birds!

Some find it just too hot to travel north in the midst of summer in Western Australia. For some, it's just too noisy. It's true, our resident cockatoos make quite a chorus when the sun shines (and often even when it doesn't!) but, as in any community, the quieter ones often get overlooked. Photographer, New Norcia resident, and bird-watcher Jim Longbottom shares his insight into lesser-known bird life on the fringes of our town.

Birdlife at New Norcia

by Jim Longbottom

If you never travel far from the monastery cloister or guest-house, you could be excused for thinking that birdlife at New Norcia was limited to thousands of Corellas, pink and grey galahs, and a smattering of ringneck parrots (28s). As you move away from the "monastic Corellas" who live noisily in community, the birdscape changes.

Where I am living, towards the top of Piggery Lane, the Corellas thin right out and there are more ringnecks, who monopolise my bird bath in the mornings, and we have a number of Carnaby's cockatoos who move through the area.

For me, the highlight has been with the little birds that are ever present in the area: little yellow plumed honeyeaters, silver eyes, blue wrens and red breasted robins. The latter two put me in mind of scripture:

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Mt 6:25-34

Jim Longbottom
PHOTOGRAPHY

Jim Longbottom
PHOTOGRAPHY





Maintenance Team on the Move!

Improving Amenities for Tourists

When the weather heats up, New Norcia's visitors taper off, which means less campers and caravanners at the campground behind the Roadhouse. The Grounds and Maintenance team has taken advantage of this lull by making additions and improvements to the amenities around the Salvado's Café and the Roadhouse.

One attractive feature is the installation of decorative screens outside the toilet/shower block (above). This improves privacy for anyone entering and exiting the showers. Plus they add a lovely appearance to the north end of the complex, where people often congregate to relax with a cuppa or a bite to eat from the Café. Thanks, team – it looks fantastic!

Box Gutters on the Old Convent

Extensive renovation work is being done on the roof systems of the Old Convent and Museum Art Gallery buildings. The box gutters, some parts of which are over a century old, require a sturdy maze of scaffolding to provide safe access for workers and contractors. In this case, the scaffolding was extensive and installed by QuickScaf.

Once the platform was installed, roof plumbers from Top Gun Roofing started working on the box gutter sections requiring replacement. Most residential homes have exposed guttering, but box guttering is different. As it implies, it is generally "boxed" in behind a façade and the roof sheets. These types

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New Tractor for a New Year

New Norcia grounds and maintenance teams welcome the addition of two new pieces of essential equipment.

The Maintenance and Grounds Department has been operating without a ride on mower for over a year, until the delivery of the new Torro mower in December 2022 (pictured right).

The extensive mowing that takes place continuously on the New Norcia grounds had been accomplished by a combination of a hired mower from the Victoria Plains Shire and a slasher hooked up to New Norcia's 30+ year-old John Deere tractor.

Sadly, the old tractor died late last year. But with the purchase of a new Kioti tractor from CD Tractors of Muchea, the teams are back on track to keep New Norcia shipshape. The tractor was delivered onsite in early January.



Pictured are Ian and Shady with the two new pieces of equipment on the lush green lawn in front of St Ildephonsus' College.

Maintenance Team on the Move!

Box Gutters....continued

of gutters are usually very large, which allows the gutter system to handle large amounts of water from the roof catchment.

The original box guttering on the south face of the Old Convent dates back 100 years. In those days builders and roof plumbers were limited to shorter lengths of sheet metal products, compared to this replacement which uses gutter lengths of up to 8 metres. They also did not have access to modern-day sealants and fillers widely used in the building industry today. This resulted in some very problematic gutter joints that had failed over time and allowed water ingress issues into the building ceilings and walls, causing damage. In the replacement process, Top Gun Roofing tradesmen have been able to eliminate water penetrating into the building for another 100 years!



St Ilds' College Dining Room Renovations - Update

Last month we reported on the excellent renovation work on the old St Ildephonsus' parlour, now used for lunches and morning teas for regular bus tours visiting the town. Renovation work on heritage-listed buildings is a painstaking and exact craft. Fortunately, we have that expertise on site and available to us through regular contractors, including Colourwest Painting, Mark Leuba Electrician and ACM Air Conditioning.

As with the parlour walls, the old dining room, used for nearly 100 years by the boys of St Ildephonsus' College, got its cladding stripped bare. Approved contractors were used to remove the asbestos cladding. The composite of two photos (next page) shows the degree of restoration work undertaken thus far to restore this room to its former glory. When complete this dining area will provide a larger space for use by our Group Accommodations.

continued next page





St Ild's Updates....continued

Steve Mossman was onsite in January to commence with the laborious task of filling holes in the wall. He then applied an undercoating to the walls and painted the pressed metal ceiling. Pressed metal ceilings leach rust if not properly treated but Steve is the consummate professional and has completed a wonderful first stage of the restoration.

The latest work saw Ian and Greg from our Maintenance team stripping three layers of lino, tiles and Masonite to expose

the original floors. Fiddly work, removing thousands of 15mm staples that held the Masonite in place!

And, there is still much work to be done: the floors, window frames, rails for art works, replacement fans and Gyprock wall sheets installed to achieve a clean flat service on the western end wall. Shady and Ian from the Maintenance team will assist Steve as the work continues. Stay tuned for updates!

Meet a Team Member...

Joyce came to New Norcia just over four years ago after an employee mentioned to her husband (while he was painting her house) that New Norcia was looking for staff. She had just left her previous workplace so was open to checking it out. Living just down the road in Bindoon was a bonus and she was hired as Manager of Groups Accommodation and School Activities Team Leader.

Her job involves organising all accommodation bookings and itineraries for those groups staying at the Hostel, Old Convent and St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' Colleges. She also organises the school day trip visits and leads activities with the school kids – a personal favourite.

What does she love about New Norcia? "The old buildings and the history of New Norcia", she said. "I also love meeting people. In my job I get to meet new people all the time as well as welcome back all the regulars who I love catching up with".

Prior to coming to New Norcia, Joyce worked as a personal assistant for a commercial real estate company in Perth for many years. Before that she was a secretary for a yacht builder in Henderson, and for few years after her second son was born, she was a stay-at-home mum. One of her most challenging jobs was working at a recycling centre driving loaders, excavators, etc – completely out of her comfort zone but fun to learn!

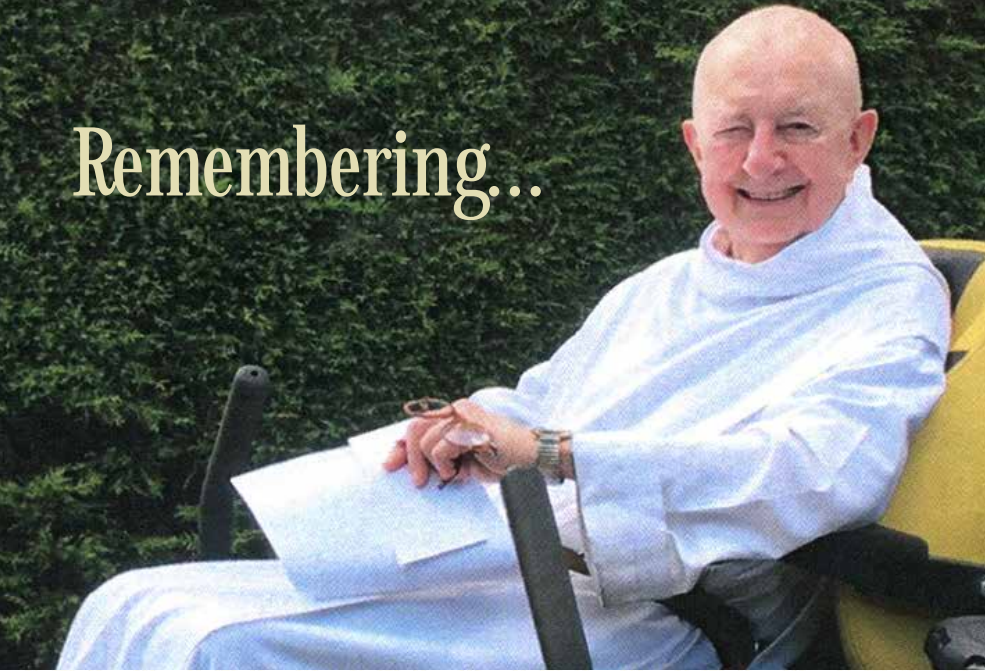


Joyce McKee

In her spare time she loves to read and she's currently reading *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn. Her current TV binge is *Yellowstone* on Stan. She also enjoys family time with her husband and three awesome sons – Connor (20), Jake (18) and Ethan (13).

When asked what would be the one thing she would change if she could, Joyce responded with: "The one thing I would change in the world is to make people more understanding, inclusive and empathetic towards those living with a disability".

Remembering...



Dom Placid Lawson OSB

Having tested COVID-negative after seven days of isolation, **H**i was able to travel to Victoria to assist at the Requiem Mass (11th January 2023) of Dom Placid Lawson, a much-loved monk of St Mark's Anglican Abbey, Camperdown, the only Anglican monastery in the Subiaco Cassinese Congregation to which New Norcia belongs.

Dom Placid, Australian born (1934), entered the Anglican Abbey of Nashdom (England) in 1966. In the late 70s, he returned to Australia to assist (for a couple of years) with the newly established Anglican Benedictine Community, which had its beginnings in Fitzroy (1975), moving to Camperdown in 1980 where Dom Placid eventually transferred his stability in this monastic community of monks and nuns, and remained till his death (31st December 2022).

I have many fond memories of Dom Placid, an exemplary monk of steadfast faith. He had a profound love of prayer (both personal and liturgical) along with work, hospitality and community, the core components of monastic spirituality. Dom Placid was most renowned for his skill in the garden, the place where he felt particularly close to God, and revelled in the beauty of creation. It was no secret that he much preferred digging in the garden to balancing the books in the Bursar's office. He loved to read (serving as librarian), was passionate about the Arts (himself a talented painter) and had the wonderful gift of humour – he made us laugh.

Like many monks and nuns who have lived a long life, Dom Placid witnessed many changes in the Church, the world, and in the monastery, yet even in the things and people he found challenging, he embraced them graciously, trusting that “all will be well”, a product of the unwavering commitment to his monastic vows of obedience, stability and conversion of life. Throw in a good measure of humility (often considered – along with listening – central to the Rule of St Benedict) we were given in Dom Placid a model monk.

With attendees including his family, bishops, abbots, clergy, religious, associates and dear friends, along with the inclusions of his beloved plain chant, dignified ritual and a very fine homily prepared and delivered by his monastic sister and superior Sr Raphael Stone, the Requiem Mass gave testimony to a wonderfully rich monastic life. One was left feeling, however, that it was in the concluding rites that the essence and radiant joy of Dom Placid was truly captured – as we processed from the abbey church to his place of rest in the abbey cemetery overlooking the rolling hills surrounding this most beautiful place, we sang with great gusto words of life, words of hope:

“...I am the life that'll never, never die. I'll live in you if you'll live in me; I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.”

~ Abbot John

Statement from Archbishop Timothy Costelloe on the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

“The death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who relinquished the role of Pope in 2013, brings to an end the earthly life of a man of deep faith, of gentleness and humility, and of unwavering dedication to the service of God and of God's Church.”

Read or listen to Fr Costelloe's full statement:

www.perthcatholic.org.au/Our_Archdiocese-Archbishop-Latest_News-Statement_Death_of_Pope_Benedict_XVI.htm



Liturgical Calendar

FEBRUARY

Thursday 2 February – The Presentation of the Lord (Feast)

Friday 3 February – St Anscar (Optional Memorial)

SUNDAY 5 FEBRUARY – FIFTH IN ORDINARY TIME

Monday 6 February – St Paul Miki & Companions (Memorial)

Friday 10 February – St Scholastica (Feast)

Saturday 11 February – St Benedict of Aniane (Optional Memorial)

SUNDAY 12 FEBRUARY – SIXTH IN ORDINARY TIME

Tuesday 14 February – Sts Cyril & Methodius (Memorial)

SUNDAY 19 FEBRUARY – SEVENTH IN ORDINARY TIME

Tuesday 21 February – St Peter Damian (Memorial)

Wednesday 22 February – ASH WEDNESDAY (Lent begins)

SUNDAY 26 FEBRUARY – FIRSY SUNDAY OF LENT

Wednesday 1 March – NEW NORCIA FOUNDATION DAY

Employment Opportunities at New Norcia



Ever fancied working in our iconic town? New Norcia is a beautiful, picturesque, historic town and a popular tourist destination. We currently have job openings in Hospitality.

New Norcia is the only monastic town of its type in Australia. It is a beautiful, picturesque, historic town owned and operated by the Community of Benedictine Monks. New Norcia is home to many historic buildings dating back to 1847 including the New Norcia Hostel and the local Roadhouse and it is a very popular tourist spot.

We currently have openings for a **Hospitality All-rounder** and a **Carpenter**. Head to our Employment page to find out more:

www.newnorcia.com.au/contact-us/employment



Coming Events

18 February 2023: Abbot's Table – Summer

18 February 2023: Thomas Merton day retreat: 'Called to be True – New Seeds of Contemplation'

24-26 February 2023: Lenten Retreat – The Seven Last Words of Christ, with St Bonaventure

10-12 March 2023: Benedictine Experience Weekend

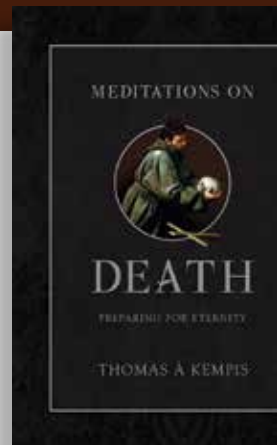
18 March 2023: An Evening of Schubert, Piano Concert

Fr Robert Nixon's Book of the Year

In early January, TAN Books announced Fr Robert's new translation for this year's Book of the Year: *Meditations on Death* by Thomas à Kempis. This latest of Fr Robert's translations, part of TAN Books' Resurrection series, draws the reader to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Catholic faith, particularly as it relates to death and the after-life.

'It brings home both the terrors and the uncertainty of death in a very striking fashion, and reveals the mysteries of what comes after death with startling clarity and detail', said Fr Robert. 'Death is a constant and inevitable reality in human life and one our culture often seeks to minimise or reduce to a medical event'.

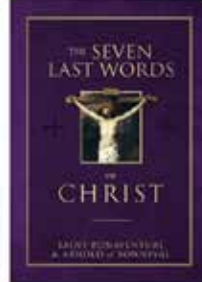
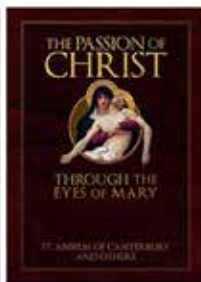
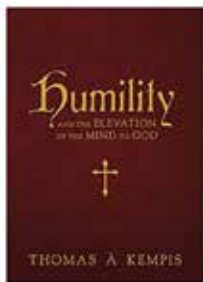
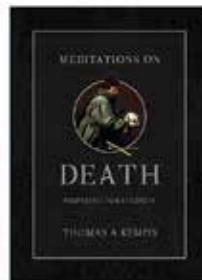
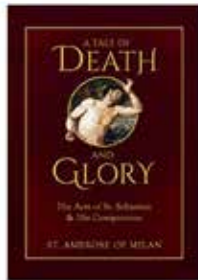
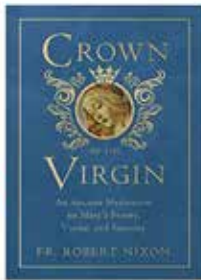
Fr Robert described this work by à Kempis as a sombre and soul-jarring meditation on death itself, with vivid descriptions of Final Judgement, Heaven and Hell.



What's on Sale at the MAG Shop?

Fr Robert's Set of Seven Books

Buy the
Set of
Seven!
Sale: \$140
Reg: \$175

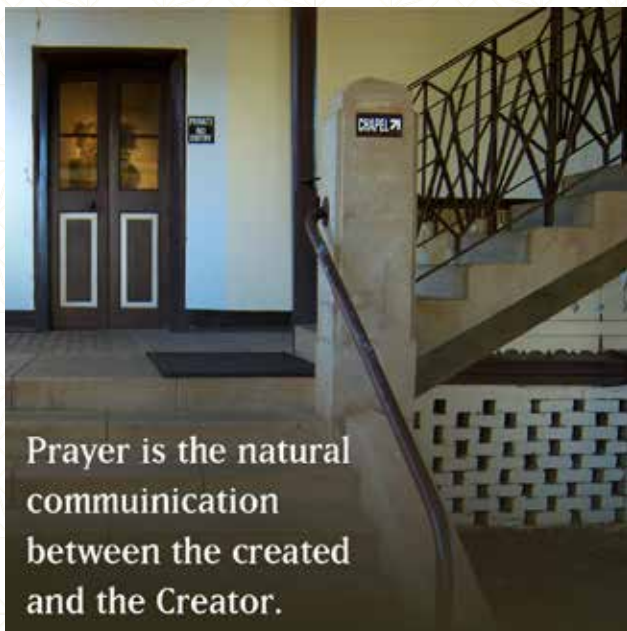


Fr Robert Nixon, OSB, has translated seven ancient Christian texts for Tan publishers in America. The Museum & Art Gallery Gift Shop is offering a 20% discount if you buy all seven! The set includes:

- Crown of the Virgin: An Ancient Meditation on Mary's Beauty, Virtue, and Sanctity
- A Tale of Death and Glory: The Acts of St Sebastian and His Companions St Ambrose of Milan
- Meditations on Death: Preparing for Eternity Thomas à Kempis
- Humility and the Elevation of the Mind to God Thomas à Kempis
- The Passion of Christ Through the Eyes of Mary St Anselm of Canterbury & Others
- The Glories of Heaven: The Supernatural Gifts that Await Body & Soul in Paradise St Anselm of Canterbury
- The Seven Last Words of Christ St Bonaventure & Arnold of Bonneval

<https://shop.newnoria.com.au>

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'He should first show them in deeds rather than words all that is good and holy.'