



# The Chimes

*Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia*

January 2023

## Many Blessings for 2023



from the Benedictine Community of New Norcia

### Internationally Renowned Countertenor Sings at New Norcia

**N**ew Norcia's reputation as a centre for musical and artistic beauty continues to flourish, as internationally renowned Hungarian countertenor, Zoltán Daragó, has just released videos of his performances recently recorded in New Norcia's St Ildephonsus' chapel. Zoltán's virtuosic and heart-rending interpretations of some of Handel's most beloved arias, were fittingly framed in the splendid chapel of St Ildephonsus' College.

In 2015, Zoltán became the youngest singer to perform for the Hungarian State Opera, and since then has won acclaim for his lead roles in many productions, ranging from Philip Glass's *Akhnaten* to Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*.

This recording project at New Norcia came about as a result of the previous collaborations of Paul Carasco, the producer and director of the videos, with New Norcia's Fr Robert.



Watch Zoltán Daragó's performances: [youtu.be/cZf8ULM9TMY](https://youtu.be/cZf8ULM9TMY)

The Chimes is a monthly publication of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia.

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## Ecumenical Carols 2023

**T**he spirit of ecumenism shone brightly over the 30th Annual Ecumenical Ceremony with Carols, held in the Abbey Church at New Norcia, 2 January 2023. Her grace, Most Reverend Archbishop Kay Goldsworthy, AO, officiated alongside the Right Reverend Abbot John Herbert, OSB.

The well-attended service included a series of readings, read by students of the Anglican Wollaston Theological College, New Norcia locals and Fr Robert Nixon, who began and ended his reading from the first chapter of John in a robust Latin.

The 35-member Georgian Singers, accompanied by organist John Beaverstock, presented six chorale pieces with heavenly precision. And New Norcia's own community chorus and musicians contributed three delightful pieces, and led attendees in a round of carols.

Archbishop Goldsworthy led the intercessory prayers, joining Abbot John in offering traditional prayers and blessings for the new year.







## Creating Culturally Safe Communities

**T**he monks and staff of New Norcia participated in a Cultural Awareness Training Day on 1 December 2022. Deacon Greg Lowe, Director of the Western Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (WACMRO), led the half-day training with the theme 'Creating Culturally Safe Communities'.

'Culture is not something we think a lot about', Deacon Lowe said. 'It's second nature to most of us so we don't have a clear conception of how it impacts how we think, feel and behave'. Yet understanding the way cultural norms influence our communication, within our communities and personal relationships, helps people feel safe, appreciated, and valued for what they have to offer, he said.

Culture is defined as 'the complex pattern of ideas, emotions, observable behaviour and symbols that tend to be expected, reinforced and rewarded by and within a particular group'. So for example, European Australians tend to value informality, egalitarianism, common sense, and humour; the Chinese favour modesty, interdependence, filial piety and stoicism; and people from Middle Eastern cultures appreciate honour, generosity, sincerity and tolerance.

Understanding the difference between stereotypes and generalisations, however, helps avoid fixed characterisations (that lead to xenophobia and racism) and increase our understanding that common and normal behaviours within a group of people always have exceptions, depending on the nature, personality and life experience of the individual.

Cultural fine-tuning is always about growing relationship, Deacon Lowe said, relating to people from all walks of life with awareness, sensitivity, and safety so that no one feels threatened. 'At the end of the day', he said, 'the human heart is shared and cuts across all languages and cultures'.

Starting in the 1960s, Australia has moved from a policy of assimilation to multiculturalism. Before then, immigrants

(including Aboriginal people) were expected to 'lose their identity' to merge with the dominant (European) culture to create a single, uniform 'white Australia culture'. The second half of the 20th century placed greater emphasis on acceptance of different cultures living in the same community. In the 21st century the official policy is moving towards not just acceptance, but allowance, meaning sub-cultures can freely and openly live how they wish within the broader community. Hence, public displays of culturally specific events are becoming more common.

New Norcia plays a key role in advocating for this shift in cultural perspective, first in respecting and reconciling with the first nations people and in recognising and appreciating the growing cultural diversity of staff, residents, and visitors.

Deacon Lowe offered these practical tips for how to grow in cultural awareness:

- Identify cultural differences in the people we encounter
- Value the positives in those traits and values
- Practise being culturally self-aware and aware of other cultures
- Celebrate different cultures and cultural differences

Cultural Atlas (<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/>) is a free educational website for learning about different cultures and religions.



# St Ild's Dining Room Upgrades



Following upon the heels of the recent upgrades to accommodation at St Gertrude's College, her brother down the road is also getting some much-needed attention. What was once deemed the 'Green Room' for its iconoclastic '70s style wall colour, the east dining room has transitioned from a dated food hall for rambunctious school kids to an elegant, modern lunch room for guests attending live events at New Norcia.

Director of Visitor Services, Carmel Murray, rummaged through the many hidden-away closets of New Norcia's memorabilia to decorate the room with repurposed items that would otherwise be left forgotten and dust-covered, including a vintage fireplace mantelpiece that adds an air of noble elegance to the room. She also rustled up some stored artwork from New Norcia's vast Collections to adorn the newly painted antique white walls.

Staff enjoyed an inaugural luncheon in the dining room following their recent Cultural Awareness Training day in December.

Guesthouse meals are currently prepared in the St Ildephonus' kitchen, which adjoins the newly renovated dining room. To the west of the kitchen lies a second dining hall, another relic of the college's school-day past – and currently a sight for sore eyes. But Carmel has keen visions for the dilapidated room. Using her well-prepped interior design magic wand, the larger dining hall will one day be a beautiful respite for bus tours to enjoy morning tea, lunch, or a sundowner in style and comfort. (The very-competent Grounds and Maintenance team will do doubt also play a key role.) A work in progress – stay tuned!

## New Norcia's ESA Ground Station Plays Key Role in Moon Landing

On 11 December 2022, Japan launched the first mission by a private company to land on the lunar surface. Under a commercial contract, the European Space Agency (ESA) is responsible for ensuring communication between the spacecraft and its teams on Earth throughout the mission. New Norcia is part of the agency's global network of tracking stations that are being used to transmit commands to the spacecraft and receive scientific data and status information from Mission 1 and the experiments carried out on the Moon.

The lunar lander will be supported by ESA's largest deep space antennas, including the 35-metre dish located near New Norcia, and a smaller antenna also on the site. The New



Norcia ground station will also provide support as part of the 'Estrack extended network'.

ESA's first contact with the lander after launch took place over the New Norcia station. This crucial moment allows mission control to check that the lander is healthy, survived the rigours of launch, and is on the right path.



# Quality Over Quantity Wins New Norcia's Olive Oil Multiple Awards

Following a sabbatical year of dormancy in 2020, New Norcia's 170-year-old olive grove is back with a bang. Winning Gold for its 2021 oil and no less than five awards for the 2022 vintage, the monastery's olive oil continues to prove itself worthy of the highest status in national and regional competitions.

'This year was the first time the team attended the 2022 West Australian Olives Award night in the Swan Valley\*,' said Property Manager Ian Smith. The harvest team included Maintenance/Grounds staff along with refugee workers assigned to gain work experience on site from Mercy Care in Perth. Volunteers from the Guesthouse also came out to assist with picking, which began on 16 May and continued through to the end of June.

The monks assist by hand picking and cleaning the leaves and small twigs before the olives are sent to the York Olive Oil Company for pressing. This year's harvest produced 14kgs, or 1,400 litres of oil, approximately a 10% return – down from the average of 18-19% in previous years. Still, winning Premium Gold, Best Oil of Show, and Best WA Oil in the WA Olive Awards, plus Gold and Best WA Oil in the Australian Olive Association competition proved that quality over quantity is the key to success.

Planted between 1850 and 1860, with additions from the 1990s, the grove now has close to 500 trees, the majority of which are WA Mission varieties. Dom Paulino Gutierrez, the last Spanish monk before he died in 2010, was a driving force in running and caring for the olive grove. He also oversaw the production of the extra virgin olive oil with the old stone mill, along with long-time resident Lester Jacobs. For many years the duo was supported by the Old Boys of St Ildephonus' College, led by Laurie Watson, who came up to assist with harvests until retirements and health issues precluded them from coming.

This year's harvest was the longest ever, due to low numbers of pickers. 'We were fortunate to get help from the three refugees sent by Mercy Care', Ian said. Language barriers presented many challenges to the team of pickers, especially when attempting to explain to people with limited or no

English what needs to be done to harvest olives. The migrant pickers spoke different languages, including Ilshat and Ilnuf from Kazakhstan and Yohannes from Eritrea, Africa. But this made for some fun and funny times.

'One time', recalls Ian, 'we asked one of the pickers if he could move the ute with the air compressor to the next set of trees near the fence. Next thing we know, the ute with the air compressor is parked on top of the fence, no longer next to the fence'.

Another afternoon, the team was working to place mats under the trees. 'As we approached one tree, a 1.2 metre brown snake was sunning itself at the base of the tree!' Needless to say, those olives are still on that tree.

Despite the few mishaps, the whole crew got on well, working with the challenges that can be experienced when English is not the common language. The camaraderie and sense of a common purpose made it a great experience for all, Ian said.

Ian attended the annual conference of the Australian Olive Oil Association in Tasmania this year, learning about new technologies in the industry. One equipment upgrade he's made is the purchase of an Olinet, an upside-down umbrella that catches the olives and funnels them into a central container under the tree. With diminishing availability of pickers, this makes the harvest a lot quicker and easier, he said.

Along with the peace and prayers that waft across the land from the nearby monastery oratory, the olive grove is blessed with regular attention by the Grounds team, along with migrant sheep, who graze under the trees and provide natural fertilisation. Like their prayer life, the monks have always liked to keep the grove as simple and natural as possible. Perhaps this then is the hidden recipe for success in their award-winning oils.

\*Errata: a previous version of this article incorrectly stated that the Grounds team had attended the awards ceremony in Tasmania, when in fact they went just down the road to Swan Valley. Ian Smith attended the Conference in Tassie.

Left: Ian Smith working on the 2022 olive harvest.





# Liturgical Calendar

## JANUARY

**SUNDAY 1 JANUARY – MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD (Solemnity) Octave Day**

Monday 2 January – Ss Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen (Memorial)

**SUNDAY 8 JANUARY – EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (SOLEMNITY)**

Monday 9 January – Baptism of the Lord (Feast)

Tuesday 10 January – St Gregory of Nyssa (Optional Memorial)

**SUNDAY 15 JANUARY – SECOND IN ORDINARY TIME**

Tuesday 17 January – St Antony (Memorial)

Saturday 21 January – St Agnes (Memorial)

**SUNDAY 22 JANUARY – THIRD IN ORDINARY TIME**

Tuesday 24 January – St Francis de Sales (Memorial)

Wednesday 25 January – Conversion of S Paul (Feast)

Thursday 26 January – AUSTRALIA DAY

Friday 27 January – Ss Timothy & Titus (Optional Memorial)

Saturday 28 January – St Thomas Aquinas (Memorial)

**SUNDAY 29 JANUARY – FOURTH IN ORDINARY TIME**

Tuesday 31 January – St John Bosco (Memoria)

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

Friday 3 February – St Anscar (Optional Memorial)



## Coming Events

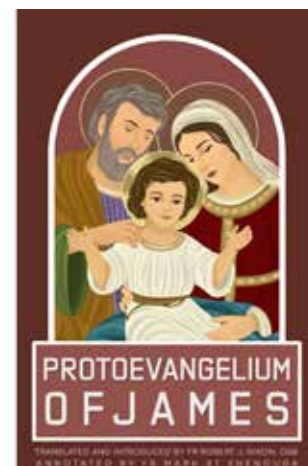
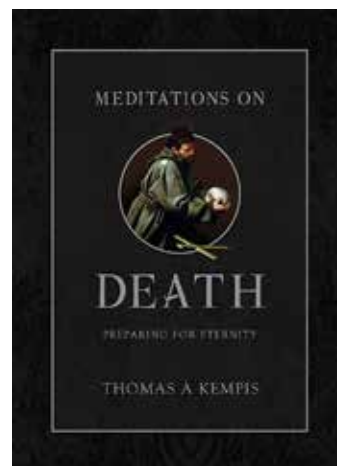
**18 February 2023: Abbot's Table – Summer**

**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**

## New Works Available by Fr Robert Nixon



**T**wo new translations by New Norcia's Fr Robert Nixon are now available: *Meditations on Death*, by Thomas à Kempis (TAN Books), and the *Protoevangelium of James* (St Shenouda Press).

*Meditations on Death* is a long-forgotten and rare work attributed to Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), the author of the ever-popular *The Imitation of Christ*. Fr Robert has recently produced the first English translation of this work. It is a series of meditations and visions depicting the moment of death, Final Judgment, and the afterlife, in vivid, colourful and often frightening detail. Published by TAN Books, it is available through New Norcia's webshop and all major online booksellers.

The other book is a new, annotated translation of the *Protoevangelium of St James*, prepared by Fr Robert in collaboration with Fr Mark St Shenouda of St Shenouda's Coptic Monastery in NSW. This fascinating and significant work exists in over forty ancient languages, and recounts the earliest and most reliable traditions and legends of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the birth of Christ. The new edition includes extensive notes on the variants in the many redactions of the work, and its influence in the liturgical and devotional practices, especially in the Coptic tradition.

**Breaking News:** *Meditations on Death* has been selected as TAN Books' 'Book of the Year' for 2023! Fr Robert said the news came as a surprise. 'It is a wonderful opportunity to share this profound meditation on eternity and mortality with a large readership', he said.

## Fr Robert Elected Dean

At the most recent meeting of the the monastic conventual chapter, Fr Robert Nixon was elected Dean of the monastic community.

Abbot John subsequently appointed Fr David Barry as the second Dean.

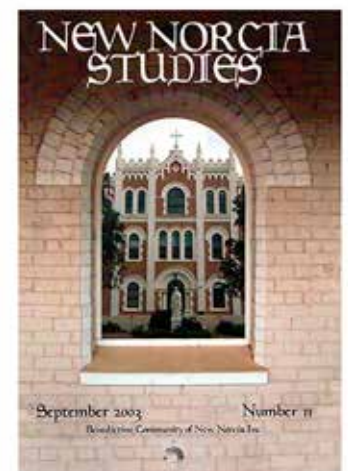
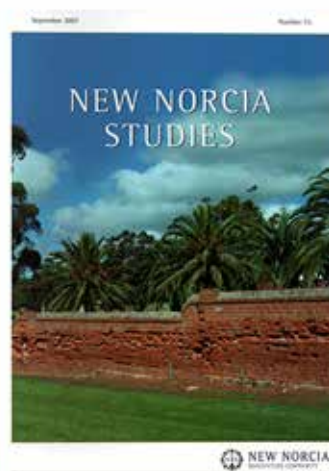
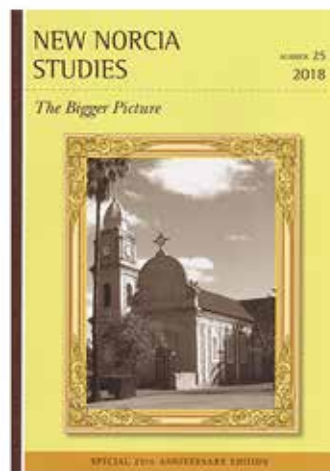
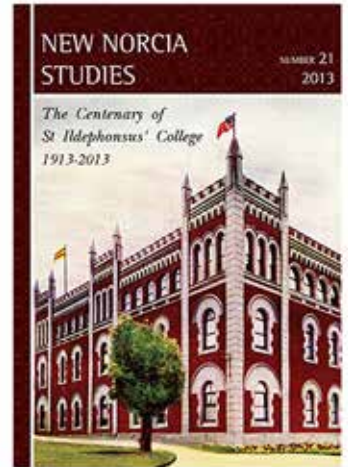
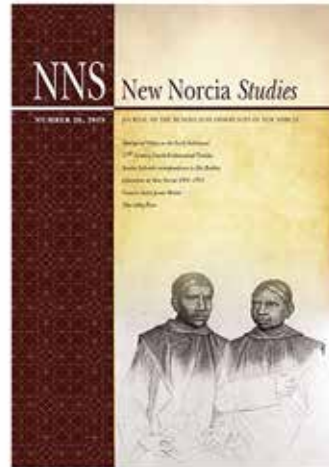
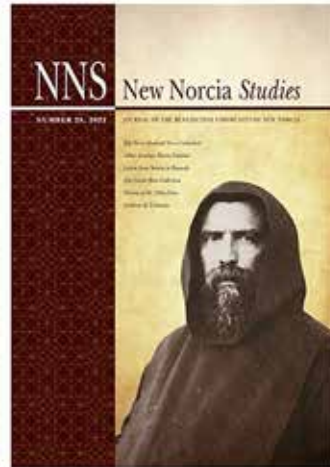


# What's on Sale at the MAG Shop?

## New Norcia Studies Journal

**N**ew Norcia Studies has been publishing scholarly articles on New Norcia since 1993. These timeless volumes offer an unprecedented account of New Norcia's fascinating history since its inception as a mission in the mid-19th C. You'll also learn about the settlement of the early colony of Western Australia, which happened simultaneous to New Norcia's establishment. Meet the colourful characters that make up the story of New Norcia, its shift from a mission to a place of education and art, to its role as an icon of Western Australia today.

**Choose any three of the available volumes for sale at the Museum and Art Gallery Shop and receive a 15% discount.**



**...And don't forget your calendar for 2023!**

The 2023 New Norcia calendar is bursting with interest and colour, with twelve magnificent photos from professional photographer and New Norcia resident, Jim Longbottom. It will also help you to get organised, add notes and follow liturgical and other dates of importance, including school and public holidays.

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

**'There is nothing better to display the truth in an excellent light than a clear and simple statement of facts.'**