



# The Chimes

*Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia*

May 2023



## Let the Harvest begin!

**Y**ou might be thinking, “Wow, that’s sure come around quick!” For indeed it has: with a late 2022 harvest, New Norcia’s intrepid team of olive-pickers are at it again: back on their autumn target as the 2023 harvest of New Norcia’s award-winning olive grove commenced on 26th April.

After years of toting around a noisy compressor and using pneumatic rakes, the harvesters are enjoying the acquisition of the new OliNet, a contraption specifically designed for making olive collection easier. Lucky break, since, following the 2022 harvest, the old compressor died and the rickety rakes were becoming unreliable.

This year the Grounds team has added two electric (battery-powered) rakes, so quiet they can hear the birds sing again! The crew includes some old hands as well as new recruits. At the end of day two, having already harvested over one tonne of olives, the crew sent the first lot of produce to York for processing. After last year’s bumper crop the team expects a lesser yield this year, but still adequate to produce New Norcia’s fine vintage olive oil.

## Tiny Town New Norcia Makes the Finals!

**O**n only our second try, New Norcia has won Finalist in the Top Tourism Town Awards for 2023. Along with 5 others in the Tiny Tourism Town category, we’re racing to the finish line on 26 April when the popular votes are tallied.

Winners will be announced 16 May.  
Thanks to all who voted for us, your favourite Tiny Town!



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

To subscribe to the digital version, contact: [publications@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:publications@newnorcia.com.au).

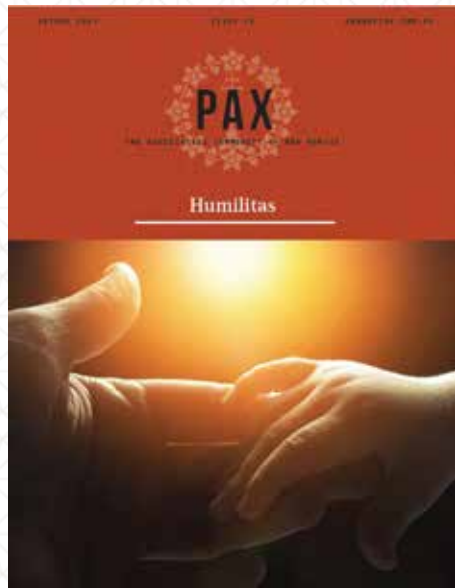
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# PAX's Warm Welcome

"I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate receiving a hard copy of this magnificent publication. I had read some of the articles when you sent the digital version out, but the high quality printed document adds so much more! I am enjoying the stimulating articles and thought provoking ideas that are in this edition. Many thanks, again, for bringing such a valuable and meaningful journal into my life".

-PAX reader, K Cundale



"Thank you for the copy of the 1st edition of PAX. I found it not only interesting but also enlightening and from it I believe I have gained a little more hope and a lot more encouragement for my spiritual growth".

- PAX reader, F Deary

Subscriptions to the latest addition of New Norcia's Abbey Press publications were running high on the day of its release. PAX quickly won the hearts of New Norcia's friends and supporters with its thematic deep dive into spiritual living and Christian practice.

We thank everyone who sent in encouraging notes, purchased a print copy, and subscribed to the bi-annual publication!

It's not too late to submit your feedback, which helps guide our editorial development. We appreciate your thoughts and ideas. (Take the survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PGPWQ5Q>.)

Join us again this Spring when our second edition explores the theme of "Prayer". Contributions of essays, personal reflection, book reviews, poetry, photographs and other inspired creations are welcome and can be submitted to the Editor ([publications@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:publications@newnorcia.com.au)).



## Abbey Press Debuts on Website

Along with the attractive display room in the Education Centre, New Norcia's Abbey Press has staked additional ground, this time on the monastery's website, [newnorcia.com.au](http://newnorcia.com.au).

The invincible hundred-year-old press has proved adaptable to modern times and is now publishing digitally, along with its selection of printed books, brochures and the new PAX magazine.

New Norcia's Publications Manager, Sui (Joan) Oakland, who wrote an article on the History of the Abbey Press (New Norcia Studies, 2022), has consolidated the various branches of the monastery's publishing ventures into an attractive, easy-to-access webpage.

"While we've published both digital and print copies of The Chimes for many years now, our new PAX maga-



zine is a significant step forward in the digital publishing arm of the Press," said Sui. She hopes to create digital versions of all Abbey Press publications, including the range of books and New Norcia Studies journals, currently available as printed publications for sale at the Museum & Art Gallery Gift Shop and online.



## Institute's Retreat Programmes Thrive & Inspire

New Norcia's Institute for Benedictine Studies 2023 programme of retreats and study weekends continues to generate strong support, with recent and current retreats booked to capacity.

On the weekend of 28-30 April, the retreat and study weekend focused on the lives and writings of female Benedictine mystics from the Middle Ages, including St Hildegard of Bingen, St Gertrude the Great and several other lesser-known figures. These great women showed themselves not only to be sensitively open to the mystical inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but gifted with the ability to express this with courage and wisdom – and often with a degree of freedom from ecclesial, political and theological restraints not enjoyed by their male counterparts. Participants enjoyed opportunities to explore the treasures of their writings and the fascinating stories of their lives in a monastic atmosphere of prayer and contemplation.

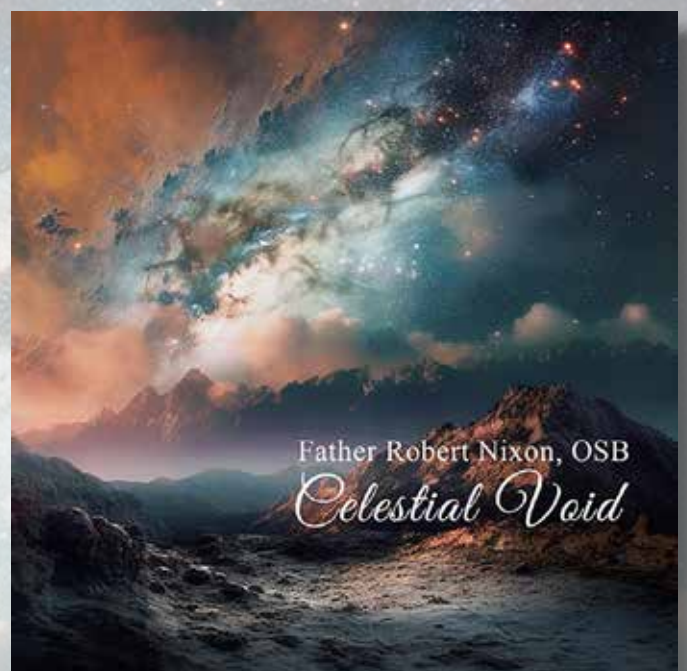
Earlier in April, the ever-popular “Letting Go” retreat, led by Sr Lilian Bong, SJA, offered grateful participants a powerful and touching experience of coming to the liberty and peace of freely “letting go” of burdens, cares, anxieties, fears, attachments and regrets.

For information on other retreats offered by New Norcia and to make bookings, please visit the Institute's Directory of Retreat & Study Weekends for 2023 at <https://www.newnorcia.com.au/education-research/institute/2023>.

## Fr Robert's New Album Coming Soon!

**F**r Robert Nixon has a new album, scheduled for release on 4 June (the feast of the Holy Trinity). The album, entitled *Celestial Void*, contains 14 tracks of emotional and meditative piano-centred compositions written by Fr Robert in the last few years, recordings of which have been frequently requested by local audiences and visitors (as well as some pieces which have not been heard before).

The album, which will be available on CD and digitally, is being released by US-based label Moon Coil Media. For information and updates on this exciting and unique artistic work, please visit the website specially dedicated to this release : <https://mailchi.mp/f9e6b24d2cdf/father-robert-nixon-osb-new-album-celestial-void>.





## A Centenary of Light

by Fr David Barry, OSB

**E**arly in 1972, New Norcia began its final preparations to move from generating its own electricity and become part of the state electricity grid, under the State Electricity Commission (SEC). That year, I undertook some research into the introduction of electricity to the town forty-nine years earlier, in 1923, which is a hundred years ago this year.

I recently discovered in the 1972 Monastery Chronicle [NNA 00485] a couple of typed pages from that research, along with a photocopy of a page from the St Ildephonsus' College Magazine for 1923. The following write-up appeared in that issue of the SIC Magazine, page 29, with the title 'Electric Light at New Norcia':

Since Friday evening, the 27th July, the installation of the electric light in New Norcia is an accomplished fact. This year His Lordship the Abbot brought about this much-needed improvement. The undertaking was a big one, and necessarily entailed great expense. The actual work was carried out expeditiously, and in spite of inconvenience caused in the classrooms by the continuous hammering when the workmen were piercing the massive College walls, all cheerfully put up with it, realising the great boon that would soon be theirs.

The power house is a very neat and compact little building situated in the Monastery grounds. The source of power is a twelve HP oil engine, which drives a powerful little dynamo. The storage cells, 55 in number, are very neatly arranged in a room just off the engine house. This part of the work was carried out by Mr Allsopp of Malloch Bros. In the power house is the main control switch for the whole Mission, and

the main meter. Here also is an ingenious arrangement whereby the current is cut off automatically each night at 10 o'clock.

The buildings that are lighted are the Monastery, Cathedral, St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus'. St Mary's Orphanage is to be wired in the near future. Altogether there are 370 lights. Each building has a meter, a main control on the ground floor, and a floor control on each storey. The wiring is the exposed conduit system, and was very capably carried out by Mr R Johnson of North Perth, assisted by Brothers Placido and Alberto. The Cathedral choir and sanctuary are beautifully illuminated by massive chandeliers. The magnificent new organ has a motor attached to the bellows. Now that so much demand is made on the engine's power, it is the intention of His Lordship to install a new auxiliary gas engine to relieve the oil engine.

In conclusion, we wish to congratulate His Lordship and Father Ubach on the successful completion of the work, which is such a boon to all engaged in compulsory night studies.

The Monastery Chronicle for 1923 also made a number of references to the work of introducing electricity as it progressed. It should be said here that 'His Lordship' mentioned above in the SIC write-up and below in the Chronicle was Abbot Anselm Catalan (1915-1951). The person mentioned as Manager and Procurator in the Chronicle extracts is the Fr Ubach mentioned above. And the Mission is the [tiny] town of New Norcia.

continued next page

Here are the excerpts from the Monastery Chronicle for 1923:

2 January: The Manager and Fr Boniface go on horseback looking for posts to use to carry the wires when electricity is installed in the Mission, which is said to be ready for realisation in the middle of February.

5 January: Mr Henderson, of British Electric, Perth, visits the Mission. His company sells most of the equipment required for installing electricity.

16 January: Fr Procurator went to the bush with a truck in search of posts. He returned at six in the evening fully-loaded (i.e., the truck) and distributed them through the town. These posts will support the wires conducting the electricity.

22 January: Brothers Placid and Adalbertus begin putting electrical wires in St Gertrude's, in the company of the electrician.

25 January: Brothers Placid and Adalbertus continue working with the electrician.

26 January: The electrician and some Natives begin putting in the posts to take the electric cable to the Colleges and the Church.

1 February: The Procurator and the electrician leave for Perth.

6 February: Mr Johnson, the electrician, arrived. We hope he will work better than the previous one.

14 February: At five in the morning, Fr Procurator leaves for Moora, and the Natives Biggs, Benny Taylor, Ven [Ben? Ven, from Buenaventura?] Ryder and Maher accompany him. They went to fetch the machine that produces electricity. At 6.15pm they were already back with the machine and the expert from Moora who is coming to install it.

1 March: *NOTA BENE* From this day till the 13th the thing most deserving of mention is: 1) that the shed to house the machinery to produce the electricity has been completed; that they have already tried how the electricity works in St Gertrude's, and the result was that all the boarders were delighted and jumped for joy.

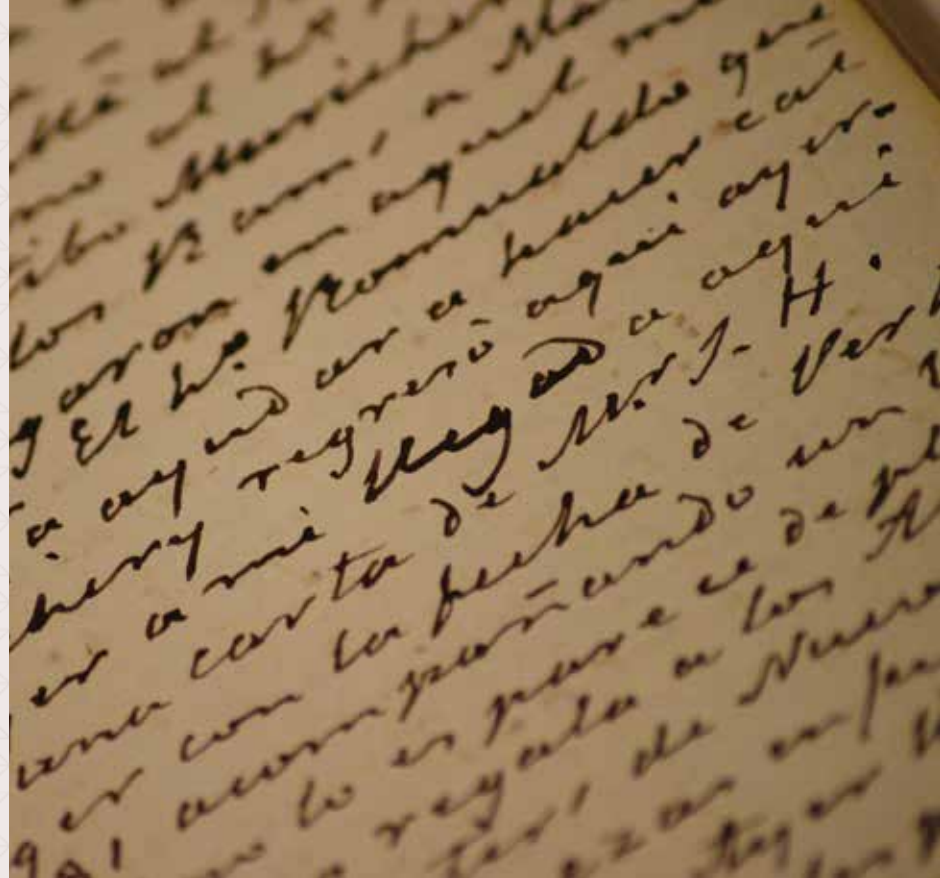
15 March: They begin to install electricity in St Ildephonsus'.

2 April: They finished installing electricity in St Ildephonsus' and to see if everything was in order, they ran the machine. We all witnessed the bulbs light up with the electric current which began from the shed in which the dynamo is, etc. etc.

3 April: Mr Johnson, the electrician, began installing electricity in this monastery.

11 July: For the first time we have supper by electric light; it was only a test to see if all the globes lit up, and they all lit up in the whole monastery, with the exception of two (belonging to particular cells?).

17 July: A special electrician begins work on the batteries in the electricity shed; he was sent by the company which sold us the plant.



27 July: Since last evening the electricity machine has been working and the batteries have been getting charged; those responsible for their care are Fr Ubach and Br Adalbert. At 6.00pm all the globes were lit, both those of the monastery and those of St Ildephonsus' and St Gertrude's. The light produced is brighter and more abundant than that of the 11th of this month, so that all are happier and more satisfied. Blessed be God!!! The installation of our organ is going ahead, so that it is hoped next week to tune its pipes (?).

28 July: They continued the work on the new organ. We used the electric light to recite Matins and the rest until seven o'clock, when they switched off the current.

I should point out that the current produced from the Monastery power house until late 1965 was DC (direct current). An AC (alternating current) generator was installed at the Shell Service Station (now the Roadhouse) in the late 1950s, mainly for use at the New Norcia Hotel (now once again the New Norcia Hostel) and for some purposes at St Ildephonsus' College. When AC came on stream, all sorts of domestic appliances became usable, which further contributed to the rising standard of living, and added to the pressure for a much greater output from the power house.

It would seem appropriate to conclude this article with two extracts from the already-mentioned 1972 Monastery Chronicle, which was being written in English from about 1954:

Tues. May 23: Electricians are busy in converting the northern half of NN to SEC. This should be completed by mid-week; the southern half was completed last week.

Wed. May 24: Our Lady, Help of Christians. This is a historical day in New Norcia. The generation of electricity ceased here today after some 50 years of operation. Everybody noticed the silence last night, with no noise from our power house. For better or worse, we are now entirely with the SEC.

# Groups Are Growing at New Norcia

**W**hen overnight school camps ceased in 2021 (due to Covid), things went a bit quiet at the old colleges at New Norcia. The halls of the dormitories, once filled with echoes of children's clamour, now seemed empty and desolate. What to do?

An enterprising team, headed by Abbot John and Director of Visitor Services Carmel Murray, got to work on reviving the dormant accommodations. Over the past two years, "Groups Accommodation" has grown with the renovation of rooms in the Hostel, Old Convent, St Gertrude's College, St Gertrude's Flat and St Ildephonsus' College – all of which can accommodate ten or more guests. And bookings are growing substantially.

This month, Joyce McKee officially took on the (permanent) role of Groups Manager, taking the place of the now redundant Groups and Education Centre Manager that once looked after the school camps. Joyce's repertoire of groups is extensive – ranging from car, motorcycle and hunting

week. Upon arrival at New Norcia, the weary walkers are welcomed by an intonation of bells pealing from the Abbey Church for the last fifty metres of their trip. They are then greeted by a monk who places their walk in the context of the ancient tradition of spiritual pilgrimage, and offers them a place of rest at the end of their journey.

For the growing numbers of groups choosing New Norcia for their destination, Joyce handles all overnight groups of ten or more, organising accommodation and meals, which can be delivered to the venue. Groups staying at the Hostel can also choose from an a-la-carte or buffet menu and there's the option to have the bar open for pre-dinner, dinner and after-dinner drinks.

The recent renovation of St Ildephonsus' dining rooms has been a boon to bus tours, who visit the town regularly. Passengers are treated to a catered lunch and a private tour if requested.



clubs to birthday, anniversary and wedding celebrations. Long time locals Keith and Bobbi Hunt (Carmel's folks!) recently celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary by renewing their vows with Abbot John and hosting an array of family and friends in town.

There's even been a few Girls' Getaway Weekends. And the quarterly Abbot's Table dinners at the Hostel always draw a crowd eager for a sumptuous meal and overnight stay in the iconic lodge.

One of the more inspiring groups is the Camino Walkers, intrepid pilgrims retracing the footsteps of Dom Salvado from Subiaco to New Norcia, a hefty hike of roughly a

One of Joyce's favourite tasks is organising High Teas and Dinners for special occasions, such as the upcoming King's Coronation celebrations, taking place in the St Ildephonsus' large dining room in May.

So if you're planning a gala event, ponder the possibilities offered at New Norcia. Wildflower season commences soon and is considered a prime time to visit the Victoria Plains, and a drive across the shire in early spring provides breathtaking views of paddocks beaming with yellow canola. Book early to secure your place in this special spot!

Contact Groups Manager Joyce McKee for more information ([groups@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:groups@newnorcia.com.au)).

## St Ildephonsus' Art-full New Dining Rooms



**A**fter months of upheaval – involving lots of heritage-class refurbishments – the two dining rooms at St Ildephonsus' College are ready to receive visitors. The latest renovations in the large dining room have turned the former school canteen into a light and airy room for large groups, particularly bus tours, which have been growing steadily.

“The bus tours often have up to fifty tourists on board”, said Groups Manager Joyce McKee, “and are usually people on a coach tour from Perth. They spend around an hour in New Norcia, where we serve them lunch in the new large dining room, before they head off to the Pinnacles and then back to Perth”.



### New Lesmes Lopez Exhibition

St Ildephonsus' College chapel houses arguably the most spectacular of the ornamentation works of the Spanish monk artist Fr Lesmes Lopez OSB (New Norcia: January 1913–August 1922). Fittingly, a selection of another collection of Lesmes' works on paper – largely unseen for over 100 years – is now showcased in other areas of the St Ild's reception.

“Father Lesmes was an avid sketcher, primarily in pencil”, said Jim Longbottom, who is assisting in curating the exhibition, “and we have nearly 900 to choose from. Eventually there will be thirty-two framed art-quality prints hung in the passageway from the front door to the smaller dining room (including the fourteen ‘Stations of the Cross’) and thirty-two portraits and other sketches in the small and large dining rooms”.

Jim is planning for a specially prepared board describing the life and works of Fr Lesmes in New Norcia, along with a glass case display of his leather-bound sketch books.



# Easter Highlights ~ Then a Break



Above: Musicians and contributors to the Easter liturgy enjoy an Easter feast with the monks

**A**fter a solemn Easter Triduum, followed by an uplifting Easter Sunday, the monks of New Norcia donned their civvies and headed for the coast.

Their annual Easter Tuesday Picnic was spent in Lancelin (right), a small coastal town northwest of New Norcia. A sunny day near the turquoise sea provided a welcome reprieve from the arid inland summer.



## Liturgical Calendar

### MAY

**SUNDAY 7 MAY – FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Thursday 11 May – Holy Abbot of Cluny (Memorial)

**SUNDAY 14 MAY – SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Monday 15 May – St Pachomius (Memorial)

Friday 19 May – St Celestine (Optional Memorial)

**SUNDAY 21 MAY – ASCENSION SUNDAY (Solemnity) (Seventh of Easter)**

Wednesday 24 May – OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS (Solemnity)

Thursday 25 May – Venerable Bede (Memorial)

Friday 26 May – St Gregory VII (Optional Memorial)

Saturday 27 May – St Augustine of Canterbury (Optional Memorial)

**SUNDAY 28 MAY – PENTECOST SUNDAY (Solemnity)**

(Ordinary Time resumes, Week 8)

Wednesday 31 May – Visitation of Our Lady (Feast)

## Coming Events

### MAY

20 May 2023: DAY RETREAT: Thomas Merton: Answering in Creativity – A Hidden Wholeness

20 May 2023: Abbot's Table - Autumn SOLD OUT

26-28 May 2023: Benedictine Experience Weekend II

17 June 2023: Women's Day of Prayer & Reflection at New Norcia

30 June - 2 July 2023: The Apocryphal Gospels—Meeting the Jesus of Myth and Imagination

"We both really enjoyed our recent visit to New Norcia. The tour guide, Tracey, made the tour perfect with her sense of humour, expertise and absolute passion for New Norcia".

Visitors, Julie & David Collins

"The sleepy like to make excuses".

Benedict of Nursia



# Easter at New Norcia: A First-timer's Reflection

by Jim Longbottom



**A**s a recent new resident, as well as oblate, at New Norcia, I was excited to “bathe” myself in the entirety of Holy Week and the Easter Triduum here. It was a most wonderful spiritual journey for me.

I took photos at the Palm Sunday service, where we started in front of the monastery with the Abbot reading the gospel story of the triumphal entry and blessing our olive branches. We then processed into the Abbey Church, led by Fr Robert playing tin whistle and Solomon on the acoustic guitar, all of us singing the Alleluia.

After we entered the church and the service began, I was part of the choir, so facing the congregation. I found it really moving as Fr Robert read the full Matthean account of the Passion narrative (Mt 26:14-27:66), while I was looking back over the unique Stations of the Cross and Fr Lesmes Lopez’ painting of Jesus before Pilate.

I had fully intended to take photos right through the Triduum, to share the experience with others, but so profound was the experience for me that I never once thought of taking another image.

The beauty of all the experiences included:

- The Divine Offices and daily masses that I attended in Holy week.

- Holy Thursday evening mass of the Lord’s Supper and foot washing.
- The Good Friday afternoon celebration of the Lord’s Passion, the procession and the vigil in the Spanish Chapel.
- I had a family wedding to attend in Perth Saturday, so I missed Fr Robert’s concert featuring the music of Philip Glass, which by all accounts was fabulous.
- I arrived home midnight Saturday, had a quick sleep and returned for the vigil in the Abbey Church at 4:30am. This was a particular highlight. We started at a fire outside the monastery gates, ceremoniously baptised the paschal candle, then each of us lit a taper at the three stops in the procession to announce the light of the world. Fr Robert then read scripture to bring home the point of the resurrection. The candlelit church was plunged into light and the service continued. When it ended, we proceeded to the Monastery parlour for a festive breakfast. After a short break we moved back to the church for mass.
- The Sunday was beautifully “rounded out” with solemn paschal vespers in the choir stalls of the Abbey Church at 5:30pm.

The whole experience made for a most profound and moving Easter experience.



# Staff Focus

## Meet Rose Taylor

Rosemarie (Rose) Taylor first came to New Norcia in 1978 when she got a job as a housemaid at the Hotel. Later she became a cook and in 1980 she moved over to the St Ildephonus' kitchen to work as a kitchenhand. A year later, one of the chefs left and Rose started cooking for the boarding school residents: 130 boys and 70 girls, three meals a day.

Around this time, Rose met her "soul mate", Tom (Tucker) Taylor. They married and had two kids, Greg in 1983 and Lisa in 1988. While the kids were small, Rose cooked for a shearing contractor who had sheds from Badgingarra to Quindanning.



Tucker was the wool presser. The family lived in New Norcia, Calingiri, Yerecoin, Mogumber and Gillingarra. "We made a lot of lifetime friends", Rose says fondly of those years.

In 2004, Rose and Tucker moved to Port Hedland, where Rose cooked at the hospital for seven years, which also included a nursing home of 79 residents. In 2010, the couple bought a caravan and travelled across Western Australia, the Northern Territory and South Australia. Returning to the area in 2012, the couple settled down in Calingiri. After Tucker's passing in 2018, Rose has continued to live in the home they purchased there.

Rose returned to work at New Norcia in 2015 to cook for the school camps that were using the colleges for retreats after the boarding schools were shut down. "I felt like I'd come home", Rose recalls. "I really enjoyed the schools; they were great fun". Sadly, the Covid era put an end to school camps and now she and head chef Marlon cook primarily for the monks and monastery guests, as well as tours and groups.

In her off-time, Rose likes looking after her extensive collection of plants and meeting up with friends and family. When she retires she hopes to rekindle her fondness for travel and buy a Winnebago that she and her lifelong friend Heather might take around Australia. "We live in a beautiful country and I can't wait to see it all", she muses.

## Women's Day of Prayer & Reflection

**W**omen of all Christian denominations are welcome to join the women of New Norcia parish for a day of fellowship, reflection and prayer to explore the lives of two inspiring women introduced in the gospels of Luke and John: Martha and Mary of Bethany.

The exchange between Jesus, Martha and Mary in Luke's gospel is a frequently recounted incident, often used to contrast busyness and stillness.

This day of reflection and prayer will look at the three gospel accounts and see what they might tell us about two faith-filled women who were such loyal followers of Jesus that two gospels include accounts of their words and actions.

The free event takes place at the Institute of Benedictine Studies. Morning tea is offered at 9:30am and the event starts at 10:00am. Participants are asked to bring a plate for a shared lunch.

To register, please email Carmel Ross (carmelm08@bigpond.com) or call 0408 124 404 by Thursday 8 June.

## Second Staff Safeguarding Training

**P**resenters from the WA Professional Standards Office and the Diocesan Safeguarding Program Office delivered another excellent training session for monks, staff, parishioners and volunteers in the Institute lecture room.

It was an important session, because the new National Standards now include Adults at Risk, as well as children.

New pathways of reporting were explored, along with our collective responsibility in safeguarding, and how we can all make a difference when it comes to making New Norcia a place where all are safe, loved, respected and cared for.

The training concluded with a delightful lunch in the freshly-painted St Ild's dining room, over which everyone acknowledged how much they had learned.

We sincerely thank the presenters, not only for this training, but for their incredible service to the Archdiocese of Perth.

~ Abbot John