

# The Chimes



Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia

Vol. 25 No. 1 - Feb 2025

## Our bells are finally back home!

*December was exciting as, after two and a half years, our bells arrived back on site and were reinstalled in the campanile. All four of our bells are Spanish, the oldest dating back to the 18th century, but two are militia bells, and are believed to be the only two militia bells remaining in the world today.*

The bells were removed in May 2021 for much needed maintenance and a good clean and spruce up! Equally as exciting, was that Rhys Greenhalgh had installed the new side mounted strikers and had the bells chiming through the new computer-controlled system before our Christmas celebrations.

As the bells arrived back in town, we had a brief "meditative" pause so they could reacquaint with what has been their home since 1908.

Remarkably, all four bells were reinstalled inside four hours. Rhys will return to New Norcia soon to electronically animate the clock faces.



The bells arriving back in town.



The last and largest bell is placed.



Ian and Oalexandr from our Grounds and Maintenance team position one of the bells on the new mounts.



## Prayers and Reflections for Piano.

A MUSICAL SOIRÉE  
with Father Robert Nixon OSB  
22nd March 2025  
at the New Norcia Hostel.



Scan for tickets

The evening will commence at 6.30pm  
A sumptuous supper and drinks will be served.  
Bookings are online [www.newnorcia.com.au](http://www.newnorcia.com.au)  
Tickets are \$120 per head

Accommodation is \$130 per room  
and can be separately arranged by e-mailing  
[groups@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:groups@newnorcia.com.au)  
The Hostel is fully airconditioned

In this musical soirée, New Norcia's Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB, will perform a concert consisting of his own piano compositions, including several new pieces which will be premiered at this event.

The works are primarily inspired by the life and environment of New Norcia, and also draw upon the Benedictine monastic spirituality of reflection and contemplation.



## Meet Rohan: New Norcia's New Postulant

*New Norcia welcomes Rohan, whose search for meaning took him from a secular upbringing through philosophy, wellness, and Eastern spirituality. A chance visit to the monastery sparked a profound transformation, leading him to embrace Christ and the Benedictine life. Here, he shares his journey of faith and calling.*

I was raised with no religion. My parents had none as well despite my father's predominantly Hindu heritage and my mother's Anglicanism. I had a typical middle-class upbringing in Sydney: backyard cricket, action figures, video games. Bible study at primary school and a weekly service at the Uniting Church high school was about all the contact I had with Christianity.

Growing up worldly meant I had all the standard worldly opinions of God: He's probably not real, don't worry about heaven or hell just have fun, Jesus is just a nice dude, Christians are a bunch of squares, religion is healthy on Sunday but other than that, unremarkable, something left over from the past that should be cleared away.

Despite these opinions I was interested in the search for Truth, for deeper meaning, for the great spiritual adventure, for the good life. After years of denial I had to admit to myself that secular life couldn't nourish these desires and that the conventional 'wisdom' of "you make your own meaning" was, at best, a serviceable coping strategy for life and, at worst, an absurdity. There was a hole inside my soul that nothing seemed to fill. And everyone else on earth seemed to be in the same boat.

After finally being fed up with living wastefully, I made spirituality a priority, or the last roll of the dice.

I found progress like many other spiritually colour-blind westerners, in eastern meditation. I mixed it greedily with New Age practices, a myriad of 'wellness' and fitness gurus and stoicism/samurai codes to supplement my neglected masculinity. And like before, this heady concoction, this boilerplate experiment ran out of steam and didn't satisfy the longing in the heart for the infinite, for perfection, for God. And I was growing tired of having to build my own spirituality.

Out of pure curiosity I attended a weekend retreat at New Norcia, a place I didn't know existed until my father emailed me the link. That one stay lit a spark, or rather, a fuse to a breaching charge Christ had set on the door to my heart. That one stay, coupled with actually meeting Christ after he blew the door in and many other wonders is the reason why I have returned to become a postulant. Christians aren't a bunch of squares, they're brave warriors embarking on the great adventure, filled with peril, awe and love. Christ is indeed the Way, the Truth and the Life. The good life, no, the best life!





The completed demolition works.



The piles on the ground.

## Lightning strikes!

*Back in November 2024, there was a huge thunderstorm right over New Norcia, and the town sustained a number of lightning strikes.*

The most dramatic strike was on the decorative parapet wall frontage of the old 1908 rebuild of St Mary's orphanage and mission school for aboriginal boys, these days a part of the education centre.

The strike blew bricks off the top of the parapet wall and split the wall, such that it was unstable and needed restoration.

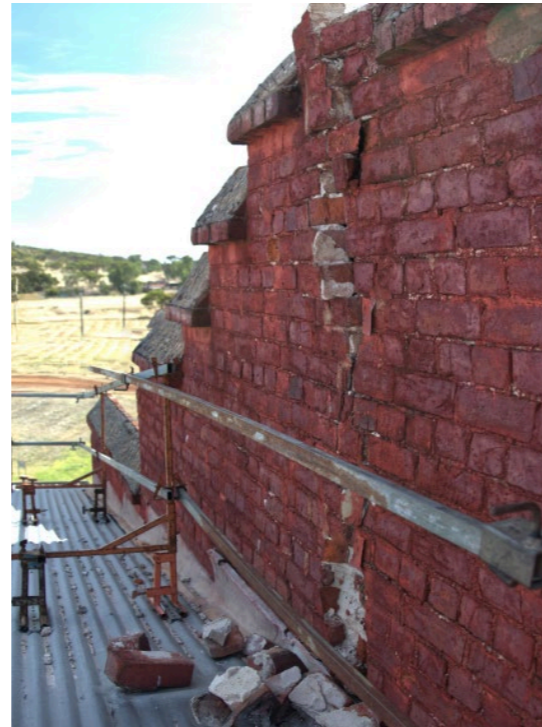
The building is heritage listed, and therefore all works needed careful documentation and assessing to make good the damage.

After the initial assessment, it was concluded that the wall should be demolished until a stable base was established.

This needed to be assessed as the work progressed. An extremely skilled demolition crew carefully demolished the 1908 wall, knowing that the bricks were hand made and that it would be very difficult to find additional bricks to complete the work to heritage standards.

The demolition was completed in December, and all the bricks and rubble carefully taken to ground, numbered and stacked in logical piles, ready for the reconstruction phase.

Reconstruction will be undertaken under the auspices of our heritage consultants Urbis.



## Accommodation management changes

*Our Groups Accommodation Manager, Joyce McKee, has been appointed as Accommodation Manager across the whole site.*

The Guesthouse Manager, Bernadette Nuske, who has been in that role for many years, is taking a step back to part time, as she and Terry look towards a bit more exploring of their next stage of life.

Bernadette will continue to work in the Guesthouse

Our sincere thanks go to Bernie for her many years as guesthouse manager.



Joyce's appointment affords the operation the opportunity to consolidate our accommodation management, staff resources, and better consistency across all of our accommodation offerings.

Joyce will now operate from the guesthouse office.

Accommodation bookings can be made through [guesthouse@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:guesthouse@newnorcia.com.au) or [groups@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:groups@newnorcia.com.au)



Book your next sundowner at New Norcia  
in St Ildephonsus' Courtyard  
Bookings available from February 2025



For more information, please contact Joyce:  
[groups@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:groups@newnorcia.com.au)



# More visitors from Spain

*You may remember the account in the July number of The Chimes Newsletter of the visit early that month of a TV crew from Spain. They were from Galicia, which is the province of Bishop Salvado's birthplace, Tui, and their particular interest was in Salvado.*

Just recently, on 15 November, we had two more visitors from Spain, a married couple, this time from the city and province of Burgos, and with a family connection with New Norcia. In fact, the husband, Felix Gutiérrez, spent several of his childhood years living with his parents in New Norcia.

A fair number of our readers would remember Dom Paulino, the last of New Norcia's Spanish monks, who died in 2010. Given the time span, it would be safe to say that only a few of you would remember that a younger brother of Dom Paulino, Justo Gutiérrez, spent almost ten years working in New Norcia, from about 1957 to 1967. Justo came with his wife Dionisia and 18-month-old son Felix, and succeeded Signor Ernesto Bartoli in the role of pig keeper, occupying the PKC (Pig Keeper's Cottage), now also called the Guesthouse Hermitage, a much-appreciated facility for those seeking a few days of greater solitude and silence than can often be experienced in the Guesthouse itself.

While Justo's days were taken up with his work, his young wife and their son regularly spent some hours each day with the Spanish Benedictine Sisters at St Joseph's, Dionisia sometimes lending a hand in the laundry or sewing-room, while some of the younger girls at St Joseph's enjoyed helping to look after a very young Felix.

A few years after the Gutiérrez family arrived, Justo transferred from pigkeeper to dairyman, and that involved a change of dwelling to the dairyman's residence adjoining the dairy, neither of which exist any longer. Remnants of the buildings are still to be found a few hundred metres north-northwest of the New Mill. At about the same time, young Felix had reached school age and so was ready to begin attending school. This he did at Yerecoin, taking the district school bus service there and back each day.



In July 1960 there was an addition to the Gutiérrez family – another boy, born in Moora Hospital, and named Martin. He was baptised a few days later in the Abbey Church by Abbot Gregory Gómez.

Some of Felix's leisure time was spent with his uncle, Dom Paulino. As well as becoming familiar with Dom Paulino's workplaces – the bakery, the shoemaker's shop and the New Mill – he was also introduced to a couple of Paulino's 'extra-curricular' activities: making and releasing the traps Paulino used for catching some of the 'surplus' parrots (popularly called twenty-eights), for which Paulino had a licence to catch up to 200 a year. The twenty-eights are still plentiful in these parts, but probably not as numerous as in the 1960s. The other recreational activity they shared was catching gilgies (or yabbies – small freshwater crayfish no longer to be found in our brackish stretch of the Moore River).

Felix had vivid memories of accompanying Dom Paulino on the latter's only visit to his family in Spain in 1963. Their ship sailed from Fremantle on 7 May. Felix remembered as an eight-year-old having the run of the ship they were travelling on, which called at Singapore, and steamed through the Suez Canal, and so on. Dom Paulino and Felix returned from Spain on 6 August. Felix recalled regaling his mother with such stories of the wonderful welcome he received from his numerous aunts, uncles and cousins that she became quite homesick.

On the day of their visit, Fr David, who had caught up with Justo and Dionisia, and also Felix and his wife Nati (Natividad) and their two young sons while spending time in

Burgos during his year of archival research in 2002, accompanied Felix and Nati to the location of the former dairy, where a good deal of reminiscing occurred; next, to the cemetery to see especially Dom Paulino's grave, and then to the Museum/Art Gallery, where Jim Longbottom was on duty, to see some of the historical displays. While they were in the shop there, who should come in but May Taylor and her sister Georgina. May could remember Felix and his mother from the times they spent with the Spanish Sisters. May and Georgina met up with Dionisia and Justo while visiting Burgos in 2001 when in Spain to organise the great reunion that year of the Benedictine Sisters who had lived and worked at St Joseph's before their departure for Spain in 1977. Felix and Nati had lunch in the Guesthouse dining room and afterwards joined the 1.30 town tour also conducted by Jim. One of the highlights was the visit to the New Mill, where much of the display features Dom Paulino in his role as miller, a role he performed for more than fifty years. Afterwards, Fr David showed them Dom Paulino's shoemaker's shop which Felix remembered well, and then they walked down to the farm bridge over the Moore River to the area where Dom Paulino and Felix used to catch gilgies.

After what had been for them a memorable day, Felix and Nati returned to the Holiday Inn, Perth City Centre for their third and final night. They departed Perth Airport the next evening for Doha and then Madrid, with loads of photos of their three days in Cairns, three in Sydney, three in Melbourne and three in Perth, which included their day in New Norcia.



## New Norcia Retreat and Study Programme for 2025 now available

*We are very pleased to announce that the programme for New Norcia's retreats and courses are now available for 2025.*

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.

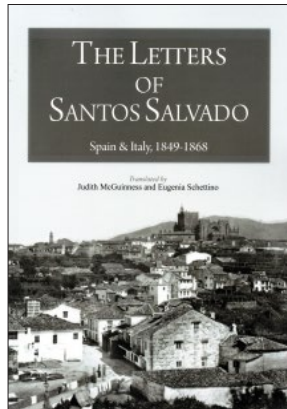
Our weekend and one-day retreats are an opportunity to step back from the usual concerns of life into a setting of tranquility and reflection, and to absorb the ancient wisdom of our monastic tradition. Participants are encouraged to book well in advance, as events are often fully booked.

Please visit the New Norcia online giftshop, at: [shop.newnorcia.com.au](http://shop.newnorcia.com.au)

Date	Retreat	Length
February 28 to March 2	<b>Pre-Lent Retreat—Uncluttering our Lives and Hearts (Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB)</b> For forty days before commencing His public ministry, Jesus retreated into the desert, fasting and living a life of absolute simplicity. In imitation of this example, the forty days of Lent should be for Christians a time of consciously uncluttering our lives and heart, and freeing ourselves from all the extraneous baggage and complexities which hold us back from the freedom and simplicity to which God is calling us. This weekend retreat will prepare participants for a fruitful and effective Lenten experience.	Weekend retreat
March 15	<b>Seeing is Believing (Virginia Jealous)</b> A reflective and engaging day spent looking into the heart of things, paying deep attention to objects and landscapes of New Norcia. Why does this matter? How might this bring us into closer relationship with the Divine, with what Dylan Thomas called 'the force that through the green fuse drives the flower?' What doors might open if we do this with those we encounter in our daily lives? Participants will spend time inside and outside, in discussion and in active silence (thinking, watching, waiting), and walking (together or in solitude).	One-day retreat
April 4-6	<b>Benedictine Secrets for Balance and Serenity (Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB)</b> The Benedictine way of life is recognised for its promotion of balance and serenity, and the flourishing of the Order of St. Benedict for over 1,500 years is clear testimony to this reality. This weekend retreat will unlock for participants the secret wisdom of St. Benedict, for achieving a sustainable life of balance and serenity.	Weekend retreat
April 25-27	<b>St. Francis of Assisi—Prophet of Peace and Freedom (Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB)</b> St. Francis of Assisi is amongst the most deeply loved and admired of all the saints in the Christian tradition. He is identified with the embrace of radical evangelical poverty, simplicity and freedom, and the encounter with the Divinity through the created world. Emerging from the chaos and turbulence of plague- and war-ravaged 13 <sup>th</sup> century Italy, he remains a source of deep inspiration for many people in the contemporary world. This weekend will draw upon the earliest primary sources, including the writings of Francis himself and the primitive hagiographical accounts, to present an authentic picture of this beloved figure.	Weekend retreat

# New release: The Letters of Santos Salvado, 1849-1868

**A**bbey Press is delighted to announce the release of the second book in the Letters of Santos Salvado series. This volume covers correspondence written from Spain and Italy in the years 1849-1868 before Santos travelled to New Norcia to be with his younger brother, Rosendo, co-founder of New Norcia.



Santos was born in Tuy, Galicia, on 5 July 1811 and entered the novitiate at St Martin of Compostela in 1825 where he was ordained ten years later. Despite living a privileged life as chaplain to the court of Queen Isabella II, he yearned for a simple monastic life as a missionary. He was a talented man, being an organist, chorister and watch repairer and he introduced photography to New Norcia; he also brought musical instruments to the monastery such as the harmonium, double bass and viola.



Judith McGuinness

Translated by Abbot Placid Scholars, Judith McGuinness and Eugenia Schettino, the 275 letters in this 550 page volume shed a fascinating light on the brothers' close relationship as well as providing a glimpse into the important issues of the day.

It is now available from the Museum Book Shop at \$64.99. Visit: <https://shop.newnorcia.com.au/collections/books>



Eugenia Schettino

## Coming Events

From February 2025

28<sup>th</sup> February - 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2025

Pre-Lent Retreat: Uncluttering our Lives and Hearts

15<sup>th</sup> March 2025

One-Day Retreat: Seeing is Believing

4<sup>th</sup> - 2<sup>th</sup> 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](http://newnorcia.com.au/whats-on/events-calendar/current-events)

## Liturgical Calendar

From March 2025

Saturday 1 March

New Norcia  
Foundation Day,  
Mass in oratory, 7:30am

Monday 17 March  
St. Patrick,  
Mass in oratory, 7:30am

Sunday 2 March

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary time,  
Mass in church, 9:00am

Wednesday 19 March  
St. Joseph,  
Mass in oratory, 7:30am

Wednesday 5 March

Ash Wednesday,  
Mass in oratory, 7:30am

Friday 21 March  
The Passing of St. Benedict,  
Mass in oratory, 7:30am

Sunday 9 March

First Sunday of Lent,  
Mass in church, 9:00am

Sunday 23 March  
Third Sunday of Lent,  
Mass in church, 9:00am

Sunday 16 March

Second Sunday of Lent,  
Mass in church, 9:00am

Tuesday 25 March  
The Annunciation,  
Mass in oratory, 7:30am

Sunday 30 March  
Fourth Sunday of Lent  
Mass in Church, 9:00am



**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](mailto:publications@newnorcia.com.au).

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