

THE CHIMES

March 2010

Dear Friends,

Following such an eventful week last week by way of extreme weather conditions in and around Perth (including as far north as New Norcia) and in a few other locations around Australia, many of you will be hoping for more peaceful conditions over the days of the Easter Triduum to regain your composure and continue repairs to your homes, gardens and businesses. Severe weather conditions are relatively rare in the south-western regions of WA, but they serve as a reminder of the degree of unpredictability life places before us when the unexpected happens before our eyes. As people went to work last Monday morning in Perth none would have had any inkling that their homes, businesses and vehicles would sustain thousands of dollars of damage from an unusual act of nature later that day.

The events remembered and celebrated over the Easter Triduum have something of the same quality – unexpected and to that extent unpredictable. The fortunes of Jesus during his final days of human life were variable in the extreme – the accolades during his entry into Jerusalem followed so soon by the poignancy of the Last Supper; then the brutality and injustice of his death followed by the triumph of the Resurrection only days later. No wonder his followers were both distraught and confused at his death, then jubilant at encountering his Resurrection. All of this was unexpected and unpredictable to those alive at the time, and now, 2000 years later, we each spend a lifetime trying to fathom even some of the mystery of the events of Easter that form the basis of Christianity. Faith mirrors life, and hopefully our lives mirror our faith.

Blacksmith's Shop Restoration

The 2008 Friends Special Project was the Blacksmith's Shop, and work on this commenced during 2009. A project like this entails a great deal of detailed research to determine the entire history of the building. Like the Mission Cottage, the Blacksmith's Shop has had many changes made over the years and these changes must be taken into account as conservation and restoration work is planned. The work on this building is progressing well. As you will see from the photo a new roof has been installed, and work is now being done on the walls, window and door frames and the doors themselves.

Funds raised to date for this project total \$148,347. These funds will provide



for structural survey works, brickwork repairs, roof structure repairs, new roof cover with gutters and downpipes, window and door frame repairs, construction of new doors by our Restoration Carpenter and removal of old staff toilets from the side of the building, however other aspects of this project remain unfunded at this stage. These include the internal fit-out with equipment and tools from the original shop, development and installation of interpretive resources inside and outside the building, as well as floor repairs, lighting and electrical works, improved drainage around building, and final lime washing to the exterior of the building. As these are essential to complete the project, we will reopen the Blacksmith's Shop as a Special Project for donations during 2010.

Wrought Iron Balustrade on Oratory Balcony

Around New Norcia are some striking examples of the output of the Blacksmith's Shop. One of the most remarkable is a balustrade located on the eastern balcony of the monastery oratory (see photo). Not visible to the public because it's in the enclosed area of the monastery, this balustrade was manufactured at the New Norcia Blacksmith's Shop in the late 19th century. Our research to date indicates it was probably intended to go to Perth for use in the Bishop's Palace. It seems it was never used in that building and decades later found its way to its current location in New Norcia. Our blacksmithing adviser John Kagi has commented that one of the features of this balustrade, the square scrolls, is rare – so rare that John has only ever seen a similar pattern on work produced in Majorca. There was a Majorcan monk at New Norcia in the late 19th century, and it seems he has drawn on the style of work in his homeland in crafting this balustrade.



As we seek more funding to finish the structural, interior and interpretive aspects of the Blacksmith's Shop, we also ask you to consider donating funds to the restoration of this balustrade. This task will require it to be removed from the balcony (requiring heavy lifting equipment); then transported to Perth for removal of rust; then its surface will be recoated to return it to its original beauty – and of course at some stage it needs to be relocated on the balcony outside the oratory! Your support in funding this Special Project with such a close connection to the Blacksmith's Shop will be very much appreciated.

→ Cont.

For Whom the Bell Tolls

The Chimes is published by the Benedictine Community of New Norcia and is distributed electronically to our current membership.

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Spanish Chapel

Late last year Dom Chris suggested that the Spanish Chapel in the monastery would be the Friends Special Project for 2010. Because considerable additional funding is needed for the Blacksmith's Shop and Balustrade, the Spanish Chapel will be deferred for one year and will become the Special Project for 2011. It will be a complex conservation and restoration project, and our heritage architects have advised there may be structural issues to be addressed and they need to do research into this before they can draw up the scope of works for this project. As well there are the many ornamental elements of this beautiful room, some of which will be both difficult and expensive to complete. Part of the initial work of our heritage architects on a project such as this is to draw up a detailed conservation plan for the room. This plan takes account of the history of the room, its current and intended use(s), and the architectural and other physical elements that need to be worked on during the project.

This research has recently commenced, but will take some time to complete. Later in the year we will have a detailed listing of the work to be done to conserve and restore this former oratory, so we'll pass this on to you once it is available.

Abbot Placid Spearritt Memorial Scholarship

The Abbot Placid Spearritt Memorial Scholarship has been remarkably well supported by hundreds of donors, including private individuals, organizations within and beyond the Church, and a large number of Friends of New Norcia. So far we have received \$448,200, an impressive total in a year when many experienced financial hardship. The target of \$500,000 is well within reach because additional to the donations already received, a number of donors have pledged on-going donations over the next few years. The scholarship will remain an open fund, so on-going donations into the future are welcome.

Work is underway on setting up the scholarship. This entails a surprising amount of administrative detail as well as careful thought on topics and how the research work will be undertaken. Our hope is

that the call for applications for the inaugural scholarship will be made later this year, and the inaugural scholar will undertake their research during 2011. We'll keep you posted as more details are firmed up. In the meantime, THANK YOU to all who have been donors to this very important initiative of the monastery.

Special Project 2010

You will realize from the information above that in 2010 we invite you to donate to either or both of these two projects:

1. Blacksmith's Shop (DGR eligible)
2. Balustrade on the oratory balcony, crafted in the Blacksmith's Shop at New Norcia (not DGR eligible)

The generosity of Friends is always appreciated, and we will be grateful indeed if you are able to support these projects. When making a donation this year, please be sure to indicate which project you would like the funds to be put towards, and note that only the Blacksmith's Shop is DGR eligible for taxation purposes. We'll keep you up to date in coming months about how each project is progressing.

Easter Blessings

Perhaps it's best if this letter ends on the topic it commenced with. As we move through the days of Holy Week and Easter may we be deeply aware of how richly blessed we are by the gift and abiding presence of the love of God in and around us. May the serenity that graces New Norcia be a reality in the lives of all supporters of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia.

Thank you for your on-going interest in New Norcia, it is much appreciated.

Take care

Carmel Ross
Chief Executive Officer

EASTER AT NEW NORCIA

HOLY THURSDAY – 1 APRIL
Mass of the Lord's Supper 7:30 pm

GOOD FRIDAY – 2 APRIL
Celebration of the Lord's Passion - 4.00 pm

HOLY SATURDAY – 3 APRIL
Holy Saturday Reflection – 9.15 am
Night Session – 7.30 pm
Both held at St Joseph's Hall

EASTER SUNDAY – 4 APRIL
The Easter Vigil – 4.30 am
Mass of the Day – 9.00 am

Pilgrimage on ABC

The Camino Salvado Pilgrimage will be broadcast at 7.30pm on Good Friday on Compass, ABC TV.

In September 2009 a group of walkers took on the 125 kilometre walk from St Joseph's Church in Subiaco to New Norcia, a journey made by Dom Rosendo Salvado in the 1860s.

The pilgrimage took six days and five nights. The group passed through the city and stopped at the three main churches and cathedrals, followed the banks of the Swan to Guildford, through Walyunga National Park to Muchea, Chittering and Bindoon and finally along Great Northern Highway to New Norcia.



From Dom Michael

And A Good Friday Was Had By All

You men there, keep those women back
and God Almighty he laid down
on the crossed timber and old Silenus
my offside look at me as if to say
nice work for the soldiers, your mind's
not your own
once you sign the dotted line Ave Caesar
and all that malarkey Imperator Rex

well this Nazarene
didn't make it any easier
really--not like the ones
who kick up a fuss so you can
do your block and take it out on them

Silenus held the spikes steady and I let fly
with the sledge-hammer, not looking
on the downswing trying hard not to hear
over the women's wailing the bones give away
the iron shocking the dumb wood.

Orders is orders, I said after it was over
nothing personal you understand--we had a
drill-sergeant once thought he was God
but he wasn't
a patch on you

then we hauled on the ropes
and he rose in the hot air
like a diver just leaving the springboard,
arms spread so it seemed
over the whole damned creation
over the big men who must have had it in for him
and the curious ones who'll watch anything if
it's free
with only the usual women caring anywhere
and a blind man in tears.

Bruce Dawe

Easter Sunday

Let's put the question bluntly... is Christ
really alive today,
in this twenty-first century?
I don't mean can we treasure His words,
or try to follow His example,
or imagine Him?
I mean, can we really meet Him,
commune with Him,
ask His help for our everyday affairs?

The gospel writers say 'yes'.
A host of men and women down the ages say 'yes'.
The Church says 'yes'.

Peter Marshall

Storm Batters New Norcia

New Norcia was not spared from the violent storms which devastated Perth earlier this week.

Gusts of wind and relentless rain caused widespread damage, with fallen tree debris scattered across town. It was estimated that 100mm of rain fell during the storm and the run off down the town's sloped site caused flooding in some areas.

We are grateful to the Grounds and Maintenance Teams for their endless work cleaning up the mess left behind.

A Letter from Dom Chris...

You will be pleased to know I hope that I have made it to America and am gradually getting myself settled in at St John's Abbey and University, Minnesota. I've now been here two and a bit weeks but am still landing emotionally.

Leaving Rome was not easy as it had been a great time for me. The Intensive Course on the Rule had started me thinking again about what monastic life was all about and I had made some good friends, especially amongst the afternoon coffee set. And then, of course, there was the experience of living for two months in that amazing but crazy city, Rome. However in the midst of tears the taxi arrived on time and with stitches newly removed I and my head flew out.

Well there in nothing quite like travelling around the world for 25 hours non-stop to deaden the emotions, although they came to life again when I finally arrived at Minneapolis and discovered my luggage was still in London and would not be joining me for three days. However I was now in America and St John's is all-American in the best sense of the word. The monastery has a free store and I was immediately able to outfit myself with all I needed for the interim.

As you have heard from Dom Mike in the last Chimes St John's is quite a place! In some ways it is like New Norcia -- off in the country, was founded in the mid-nineteenth century too (but by Germans) and is also like a little town unto itself. However there the similarities end. Unlike New Norcia there are about 2000 students on campus each day, it seems to run like clockwork and appears effortlessly successful. And if that were not enough there is the monastic community -- all 150 of them! So many seem to have written books or paint or organize study tours abroad and they sing like birds too -- it is all a little intimidating to one newly emerged from their cocoon in Rome!

However I can't afford to spend too much time agonizing over the monks as I have my studies. To keep the State Department at bay I am enrolled for three classes this semester -- Desert Ammas (read early monastic women), Western Christian Art and what they call an Individual Learning Project on the Rule of Benedict which is my main focus. Although I am only auditing the first two I have to do the preparatory reading and those Desert Ammas in particular have generated an extraordinary amount of literature over the last few years. However my main worry is the lecturer for my ILP who has the reputation here for making grown men cry! As one of the monks said to me in the laundry the other day, "and you are doing all that at your age".

But life at St John's does have its consolations. I have a comfortable room in the monastery and in a good neighbourhood with both the Abbot and Prior only doors away. The advantage is we each score our own bathroom and also a terrific view over the back garden and onto a large and very beautiful lake in the middle distance. My neighbours tell me it will be stunning in the spring as there are maple trees everywhere. Actually it looks pretty good to me right now as the snow has largely melted and the clean-lined, simple beauty of the grounds and the surrounding landscape is beginning to emerge. The thermals still await an outing!

As always my thanks to all those who have written to me. No, I have not turned faithless but I am slow, probably even slower I'm afraid. To all of you I hope this first letter from America finds you well and in good spirits. I send you all much love and a promise of my prayers. The adventure continues!

