



NEW NORCIA

Institute for Benedictine Studies

Study Weekends and Retreats

PROGRAMME 2021



A Message from the Director

The year which has passed has been a unique and challenging one. The world faced the unprecedented crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, and all the loss, grief and anxiety emerging from the effects of the virus. Moreover, the measures implemented to help contain the threat placed severe restraints on a variety of freedoms which had previously been taken for granted. Yet Divine Providence is active in all things. As a result of the strange and difficult conditions, many people have experienced a new spiritual awakening, and an increased awareness of the necessity of faith in eternal realities amidst this world's vicissitudes. Despite a suspension of NNIBS retreats for some months, once the initial restrictions were relaxed an immediate surge in interest was at once apparent. In a certain sense, one might compare the conditions of 'lockdown' with the traditional monastic notation of enclosure. Even when confronted with restrictions in the external conditions of life, a rich inner freedom may be cultivated and enjoyed.

In 2021, we are delighted to offer a truly fascinating range of retreats and study weekends. As always, the Benedictine Community of New Norcia is very pleased to welcome participants from all backgrounds of life. Our wonderful environment and the quiet prayerfulness of the monastic routine form the perfect background for an encounter with the peace, tranquillity, rejuvenation and clarity which God alone can offer.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Robert Nixon, osb

(Director)

February 28 – March 1

Lenten Retreat

Fr. David Barry osb

Lent is a time traditionally devoted to spiritual purification and refinement in preparation for the great celebration of Easter. During Lent, Christians are encouraged to adopt the practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. This retreat will help participants to embrace Lent prayerfully, with renewed energy, new insights and with an openness to the graces it offers.

March 5 – 7

Middle English Spiritual Writings: 'The Cloud of Unknowing', Julian of Norwich, Walter Hilton, Margery Kempe and others

Fr. Robert Nixon, osb

During the later Middle Ages in England there was a rich outflowing of spiritual writings in the vernacular tongue, or Middle English. These writings reveal a deep interest in mystical experiences amongst all classes of society, and testify to a profound and pervasive piety. This piety was rooted in orthodox ecclesial tradition, but deeply influenced by the popular culture and devotions of the time, and

is often very bold and imaginative. This weekend will examine this fascinating corpus of literature, delving into some of the key primary sources.

March 19 – 21

BENEDICTINE EXPERIENCE WEEKEND (#1)

April 16 – 18

Thomas Merton as a Guide for our Inner Journey

Silvia Grevel

Thomas Merton was a 20th century Cistercian monk, whose writings inspired a world-wide renewal of interest in Christian, monastic spirituality and contemplative prayer. On this weekend the writings and spirit of Thomas Merton will be a guide to shine a light on the multiple rooms of our mind, heart and soul. The aim is to grow deeper into our personal spirituality, into deepened inner freedom. The weekend is suitable for everyone who has been put on a spiritual journey, and wants to further explore the dialogue between our inner and outer source. Following Merton's example, participants will practise self-reflection by ways of journal writing, photography and simple drawing exercises.

Please turn over

May 7 - 9

The Sacrament of Silence: Meditation Retreat

Dom Paul Forster, osb

Love of silence is a quality emphasised and affirmed in the Rule of St. Benedict, and a traditional value of monastic life. Yet the cultivation of silence is something very difficult in our modern world, and often not understood or appreciated. Drawing from Thomas Keating's foundations for centring prayer and the Christian contemplative life, this weekend will consider dimensions and stages of contemplative prayer, steps in centring prayer, St. Anthony in the tombs, and cultivating a spirituality in everyday life. Time will also be allocated for meditation sessions.

June 11 - 13

The Imitation of Christ: A Spiritual Classic Revisited

Fr. Robert Nixon, osb

It is often said that, apart from the Bible, the most influential work of literature in Christian spirituality is *The Imitation of Christ*. This small book, written by Thomas à Kempis in the 15th century, has been a treasured source of inspiration and guidance for followers of Jesus for over 500 years, and continues to be relevant, encouraging and strengthening. This weekend will examine the text, its context and its principle spiritual lessons.

June 25 - 27

The Blessings of Life's Eventide: Growing Older with God

Various monks of New Norcia

Every stage of human life presents its unique blessings, challenges and opportunities for spiritual insights and deepening of one's relationship with God. This weekend will explore these in the particular context of the experience of ageing, which is often undervalued and under-appreciated in our mainstream culture. Drawing on a rich variety of wisdom traditions, it will be seen that this stage of life can be a unique opportunity for spiritual and personal rejuvenation, filled with unexpected joys, graces and illuminations.

July 16 - 18

BENEDICTINE EXPERIENCE WEEKEND (#2)

August 6 - 8

St. Bernard of Clairvaux: A Spiritual Luminary of the Monastic Tradition

Fr. Joseph Chua, ocsb

St. Bernard of Clairvaux was a 12th century monk, of foundational importance in the Cistercian Order, a reformed form of Benedictine monasticism. Not only was he a charismatic and effective abbot, but his writings reflect profound and beautiful insights into the mystery of God, Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin. Moreover, he shows acute and penetrating insights into the human heart and soul, and the struggles and blessings of its spiritual journey towards eternity. This weekend will explore the life, person and writings of this great saint.

September 17 - 19

'Letting Go'

Sr. Lilian Bong, sjc

As we journey through life, we are in a continual process of 'letting go', in many different ways. This letting go can be the result of the loss of loved ones, of the process of ageing, of relationship changes, and families growing up, etc. On the other hand, there can be things in our hearts- anger, regret, grief, attachment- which we would like to let go of, but find it difficult to do so. Yet, in learning to 'let go', we can embrace God's plan for us more deeply, and thus come to live more fully. This retreat will provide companionship and guidance in this process.

October 15 - 17

Spiritual Biography

Dr. James Cregan, University of Notre Dame

The power of another person's life story to provide not just a template for the conduct of one's own life, but also a mirror in which to examine one's personal circumstances, values and beliefs, has been a potent dimension of all religious experience. It is, for example, not just the account of the incarnation that moves individuals towards a new way of being, but also the myriad subsequent stories of individual responses to the Christ event. The huge variation in the way these stories have been expressed, received and circulated, given the complexity and subtlety of human experience, should come as no surprise. This workshop surveys a range of spiritual biographies, predominantly but not exclusively, from the Christian tradition, analysing and reflecting on their structure, special characteristics and emphases. In doing so the course lays the foundation for participants to ask the fundamental question of all stories, including their own: "Of which narrative are we a part?"

November 5 - 7

BENEDICTINE EXPERIENCE WEEKEND (#3)

Institute for Benedictine Studies

The New Norcia Institute for Benedictine Studies seeks to broaden and deepen awareness of the monastic tradition within Christianity. It offers an environment conducive to prayer, study and reflection with excellence in teaching and research. It aims to encourage participants at all stages of life to reflect on their journey of faith with the pastoral support of rich traditions in prayer, discernment and discipleship, whether as lay people, professed religious, academics, or in ordained ministry.

Participants are asked to contribute \$250 which covers the course expenses and full board for two nights (Friday and Saturday) at the Monastery Guesthouse. It also includes entry into the Museum and Art Gallery.

Bookings are to be made via New Norcia's Webshop at: www.newnorcia.wa.edu.au

For all other queries please contact: Fr Robert Nixon, osb E:
institute@newnorcia.wa.edu.au

CUSTOM & INDIVIDUAL RETREATS

We are delighted to be able to offer 'custom' retreats, for groups of participants. These retreats, can be adapted to the particular needs and interests of the group. Please contact Fr. Robert Nixon, osb, at institute@newnorcia.wa.edu.au. And you are welcome to stay in the monastery guesthouse for an individual retreat. This may be done without direction, simply allowing the experience of prayer, silence and solitude to enrich and renew one's spirit. Alternatively, it is possible to arrange for a monk qualified in spiritual direction to meet daily with retreatants. Enquiries may be directed to guesthouse@newnorcia.wa.edu.au.



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