

News from the Abbey



May 2025

May there be an outpouring of
Prayer and Peace
over our world at this time

Welcome to News from The Abbey

As we write this edition of our newsletter, we are coming to the end of the Easter season and preparing for the great feast of Pentecost.

The past few months have been a momentous time, with the Easter liturgies, the passing of Pope Francis and election of Pope Leo XIV.

Following Easter, we at The Abbey were thankful for the chance to wind down for a while during our annual R&R period after what has been a challenging year in many ways.

We are 'back at it' now, and you will read of how we are busy filling orders for Jubilee Year candles and craft, and reaching out to new customer bases, as well as planning upcoming retreats, both in person and online.

You'll also read an update of our maintenance works program and our fundraising appeal. We hope you enjoy catching up on all the 'News from the Abbey'.

The Nuns of Jamberoo Abbey.

Alleluia! Christ Has Risen! Alleluia!

Words of joy proclaiming that Christ has risen filled our church and our hearts during the Easter Mass and liturgy at The Abbey.

The Mass started on the lawn with Fr. Wayne Stanhope O Carm, our chaplain, blessing the Easter fire at 5am. It was still dark, and the sky was filled with many stars. My mind went to the Old Testament where God asked Abraham to look up at the sky and count the stars if he could. There and then God made His promise with Abraham ...



After Fr. Wayne blessed the Paschal candle and lit it up from the Easter fire we, together with our guests, processed into the church, singing, "Christ our Light!", "Thanks be to God!" And then our church was lit up with candles.

Sr Magdalen, then solemnly chanted the Exsultet, the Easter Proclamation. These words rang out strongly: "Exult!", "Be glad!", "Rejoice!" Everyone and everything was invited to rejoice with the Risen Christ, who had conquered sin and death. "O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of

Christ! O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" God has all the power to turn everything to good, as St Paul wrote, "All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose". (Rom 8:28).

In this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis asked us to be pilgrims of hope and builders of peace. With Christ, we are journeying together in His light, “carrying in our hearts every expectation of peace and liberation, and saying: with You, O Lord, everything is new. With You, everything begins again.” (*Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis Easter Sunday 2025*).

Fr. Wayne in his homily quoted John O’Donohue, “We were sent here to search for the light of Easter in our hearts, and when we find it, we are meant to give it away generously.”

By the end of Mass, the sun had risen and filled the church with its beautiful rays of light. And so, trusting in God’s love and mercy, let us in hope pray that Christ’s light and peace may dwell in every heart that longs for peace.



The Passing of Pope Francis

We had been praying for Pope Francis since he was ill in the hospital this year. His photo was brought into our church for some days as a reminder for sending our prayers to him.

Then on Easter Monday evening we were shocked by the news of his passing. We felt sad and at the same time grateful that he did not suffer any more. He is now with God, and is praying for us.



Photo of Pope Francis in our Abbey church

Rest in peace, Pope Francis!

We thank you for your love and dedication for the whole church especially for the poor, the needy and the marginalised.

We thank you for teaching us with words and lived examples of love, hope and faith; caring for the earth, our common home; loving and mercy toward each other; peace throughout the world; the joy of living the Gospel; giving yourself totally without reserve to God and to the flock.

We give thanks to God for your life.

The Election of Pope Leo XIV

“Habemus Papam!” was heard when we were on R&R. We shared our joy together, and watched on the TV, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, Pope Leo XIV’s first greetings to the world. “Peace be with you all!”

And he then continued, “Dearest brothers and sisters, this is the first greeting of the Risen Christ, the good shepherd who gave his life for God’s flock. I too would like this greeting of peace to enter your heart, to reach your families, to all people, wherever they are, to all peoples, to the whole earth. Peace be with you!”

“We still have in our ears that weak but always courageous voice of Pope Francis who blessed Rome! The pope who blessed Rome gave his blessing to the world, to the entire world, that Easter morning.

“Allow me to follow up on that same blessing: God cares for us, God loves us all, and evil will not prevail! We are all in God’s hands. Therefore, without fear, united hand in hand with God and among ourselves, let us move forward.”

What a powerful message!

We thank God for Pope Leo XIV, and pray that God be with him always, protect him, and listen to the intention of his heart.



Pope Leo XIV (Vatican Media)

Fundraising Appeal for Re-Roofing Project – Stage 2

Last year, we made it known that our 40-year-old Abbey home was facing major structural issues and in need of significant repairs. We needed urgent and generous help to fund those repairs.

A Jamberoo Abbey Fundraising Advisory Committee was established to raise funds for the most urgent need, the reroofing project.

The Fundraising Advisory Committee is a sub-group of The Abbey's recently formed Economic Life Committee, which has appointed a Project Manager to professionally identify the works that need to be done and to prioritise for and supervise stages for the completion of those works, according to most urgent need.

Thanks to the enormous generosity of donors, we raised enough money to complete Stage 1 of the re-roofing project. This allowed for the leaking tiled roof to be replaced with Colorbond roofing over the offices, laundry, craft and community rooms at a cost of \$379,000.



We are now seeking funding to allow us to begin Stage 2 of the roofing repair in the second half of 2025 and we invite you, as a friend of The Abbey, to support us in that aim.

The second stage of the re-roofing will involve replacing the current tiled roof, which is leaking and in bad repair, with new Colorbond roofing over The Abbey library, formation room and two cell blocks (nuns' accommodation wings). See photo of leaking roof, left.

We have received formal quotes indicating the job will cost around \$280,000. At the time of writing, the fundraising tally was about \$60,000 short of the sum required to begin the work. It is hoped that if the funds are raised, this work could begin in the second half of 2025.

We came to Jamberoo with the hope that our Benedictine home would always be a place of continual prayer, of refuge for those seeking God, looking for healing, a loving heart to hear their journey, a place of restoration for those seeking to mend their lives and a place of continual nourishment where it is most needed. It has never been needed more than now in these times.

With gratitude in our hearts, and as a valued friend of The Abbey, we invite you to consider supporting us in our fundraising efforts towards the goal of reaching Stage 2 of our re-roofing project and helping build a stronger Abbey to be enjoyed by future generations.

[Make a donation to our building fund](#)



News from Abbey Candles, Gifts, Books and Cards



This year we are marketing to expand our customer base and increase our income. The first big project was securing the Logo for Pilgrimage of Hope and we are so grateful to the Diocese of Wollongong, Archdiocese of Melbourne and Sydney Catholic Schools and the many schools and parishes who have supported us. If you are headed to Rome for the Pilgrimage of Hope we still have t-shirts, journals, candles and bags. You can buy from our [Online Shop](#).

Four of us Sr Mechtild, Sr Mary Bernadette, Rachelle Hewett (from our candle staff) and Libby Denny (a volunteer and oblate) have just returned from the NSW Catholic school principals' conference at Pokolbin where we exhibited for 3 days. This was extremely successful in terms of sales, orders and new customers. To demonstrate the design options for school candles we made eight candles that were then gifted to schools in low socio-economic areas. Our beautiful creative work drew a lot of attention and we were the most visited exhibit. Lots of good energy and lots of connections were made.



News from Our Cottages



The Deep Calls to Deep retreat was held 23-25 May. Our cottages were full with retreatants eager to share in the practice of Centering Prayer, deepening the practice and resting in relationship with the Divine Indwelling.

After a week of heavy rain, the sun shone brightly on Saturday morning and continued to bless our retreat with light and warmth. The invitation to open and go deeper was responded to with generosity and a common feeling was delight - as we shared this sacred space in contemplative prayer and meditation.

Our Next Retreats:

June

Unfortunately, Sr Mechtild has needed to cancel the day retreat on 7 June, 'Wisdom as a way of life'.

July and August

Be sure to keep a place in your diary for one of our retreat offerings in the coming months.

- 4-6 July: Benedictine values – Fertile soil for integral ecology with Sr Mechtild Crawford
- 18-20 July: Lectio Divina in the Benedictine Tradition with Sr Antonia Curtis, <https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/events/2025-07-18/>
- 15-17 August Playing and Praying with Holy Wisdom with Sr Magdalen Mather.

[See all our retreat programs 2025](#)

Online Retreat

Sr Antonia is working on a new online retreat which will be available for registration soon. Her impetus for writing this retreat comes from her observation that we are all facing the unknown in one way or another at the moment, whether it is an uncertainty about where we are going to live, to whether we can put food on the table this week, to whether the world will be at war on a global scale soon, to what effect climate change will have on the planet when our children are adults.

The uncertainty could also relate to whether one will be able to find a job or how one is going to cope with a major change in their personal life, or the death of a loved one. She observes that the whole world seems to be at crisis point and none of knows how it will pan out.

In this retreat, [Bearing the Unbearable](#), she will be looking at how we can live the unbearable in a way that would be life giving and life changing. She will be looking at the reality of what the journey through the “uncertainty causing anxiety” to the “uncertainty that can be lived in faith” would entail: what it would look like and what it would require of us in order that we will not be overwhelmed, panicked and defeated but rather able to find meaning, healing and the courage to stand firm.

People are free to choose their own time to start and to space the conferences in whichever way they wish. So, it is a simple matter of going onto the our website [Online-Retreats](#), and registering. There is a choice between accessing the material via video or audio and both options are available at any time for those who register. The retreat offers four talks with each talk followed by a guided lectio divina session using a passage from scripture related to that talk, plus one final guided lectio divina to finish the retreat. These sessions are all available on video and audio.

A New Book

Sr. Antonia is also in the process of writing a book. It is part autobiographical, part instructional, using the rule of St Benedict, and partly contributions from oblates, others who are professionals working in the area she is writing about, and a couple of friends of the community. The topic of the book for now is confidential but all will be revealed in time.

A Time for Rest and Recreation

Saturday 26 April finally dawned, and we immediately went into “winding down” mode. It was the eve of R&R.

It was such a good feeling after a very challenging few months for all of us, and especially for the sisters in craft who were busy keeping up with orders for Paschal Candles. We were more than ready for a rest and a break.

As is usual for us at R&R time we had a choice of staying here at The Abbey for the full three weeks of our R&R or of going away, either for one or two weeks. We are all home for the third week together.



Sunrise at Cronulla

We were extremely blessed to have the use of three separate holiday venues owned by other religious orders at no cost to ourselves. The Sisters of Charity, the Marist Brothers and the Parramatta Mercies all provided a place for us to go to and we are very grateful to them for their kindness and generosity. A list went up on the board before R&R and we were able to choose where we wanted to go from the places allocated. As well we had the option of visiting family.



Walking on the beach at Shellharbour

We are still committed to praying the Divine Office during our R&R, but privately, apart from Vespers each day when we come together to pray.

What helps us most is time for a rest, with no pressure to be anywhere or to do anything other than meet once a day for Vespers.

Some of us enjoy some relaxed holiday reading and others like to go for a drive to beautiful places, to visit the city or to walk along the beach. One of us actually gets up very early each morning to go fishing and she usually comes home with some fish to cook for breakfast!

We share the cooking both at home and in the various holiday units and spend our time playing scrabble or cards, perhaps watching a movie or going out for lunch at a coffee shop as a treat. It's a time for being with each other differently and this too is enjoyable.



Beautiful Autumn colours at Leura

To those who have made this time possible for us we say a very sincere thank you as we prepare now to face the future with hope and a certain amount of resilience.

Please Pray for Our Sr Hildegard



Sr Hildegard had a stroke on 28 April and was taken to Wollongong Emergency. She has been in hospital for four weeks. The stroke has affected the sight in her good eye, her right arm and left leg. It has also affected her speech. Her blood sugar levels have also been very low.

At the moment, she is off all drips and trying to eat independently. She is improving daily, and we are hoping that she will soon return to Elanora Nursing Home at Shellharbour.

As you would know, our Hildegard was a musician and loved playing the organ and piano. She can no longer use these gifts. If anyone would like to write to Hildegard, please do so and send it to the abbey's address: 695 Jamberoo Mountain Road, Jamberoo NSW 2533

The Abbey is Looking for A Qualified Chef

In March our chef John retired to go travelling with his wife Ann. This has left us managing with the cooking roster as well as juggling our other work. If you know of someone who is qualified and may be interested in four days a week, 20 hours of work please be in touch. Sr Mechtild.

