News from the Abbey



2026

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

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Spring edition of *News from The Abbey*.
How beautiful it is to see all the new life around us. Living so close to nature as we do here at Jamberoo, the change of seasons becomes very much a part of our daily lives. We give thanks for the glory of God's creation as we enjoy the new blooms and colourful explosions of life across our mountain home. We were especially joined with Christians around the world in praying for 'Our Common Home' during the recent Season of Creation.

We are delighted to share that, thanks to the generosity of you, our Oblates, friends and supporters, we recently passed the $900,000 mark in our Abbey Fundraising Appeal to assist with much-needed building and grounds maintenance and repair work. Our $1 million fundraising appeal target is now in sight. We are so thankful to everyone who has supported us in this Appeal and for those who continue to support us towards our goal.

Further on in our newsletter you will read a report of the works still to be completed, including repairs to our guest cottages. As we push on together towards achieving our fundraising goal we also look forward to once again hosting a thank-you event in the New Year for everyone who supports us in so many ways. Keep an eye out in the next newsletter for details of our 'Thanks a Million' gathering.
May God bless you and keep you,
The Nuns of Jamberoo Abbey.

Jamberoo Abbey community rejoices as Sr Julian makes solemn monastic profession

The celebration of the feast day of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop took on extra joy for the Sisters of Jamberoo Abbey this year, with the solemn monastic profession of Sr Julian Grigor OSB. A former nurse from Melbourne, Sr Julian entered The Abbey in 2017 and made her temporary profession of vows in 2020.

On Saturday, August 8, Sr Julian made her lifetime monastic commitment in a centuries-old liturgy. Sr Julian made her solemn vows before the presider, Abbot Christopher Jamison osb and Prioress Sr Mary Barnes osb, and both she and Sr Mary signed the chart of profession at the altar.

She then lay prostrate before the altar during the Litany of the Saints, with two Sisters holding a pall over her, in a gesture of complete surrender to God's mercy, followed by a rising to a life 'hidden with Christ in God' (Col 3:3).



Veni Sponsa Christi – Post Communion

In accordance with monastic tradition the newly professed Sr Julian then went to the back of the church and sang the *Suscipe* three times – each time moving further down the church. The sisters in the choir repeated the *Suscipe* each time. Sung in Latin, the English translation is: "Receive me, O Lord, according to your Word and I shall live. Do not disappoint me in my hope." (Psalm 119)

Following this, she received the cowl, signifying the monastic habit and then Abbot Christopher prayed the prayer of consecration over Sr Julian, after which she was presented with the insignia of her consecration, the veil, the ring, and a copy of the Divine Office.

Earlier in the liturgy, during his homily, Abbot Christopher, who is the former Abbot of Worth Abbey in England, and recently retired President of the English Benediction Congregation, to which Jamberoo Abbey belongs, had invited Sr Julian to focus on the joy of the Benedictine vows of Stability, Conversatio Morum, and Obedience.



Homily by Abbot Christopher

"I rejoice today, Sister Julian, that you are engaging in these joyful vows, which give you a unique framework within which to live life," Abbot Christopher said.

"It is our privilege for those of us who are engaged in the Benedictine life to celebrate these vows day by day and to find in them increasing joy and, above all, increasing freedom of the children of God. So, Sister Julian, may God continue to build up in you the good work that He is beginning today."

Later, Sr Julian was joined by the sisters of Jamberoo Abbey, clergy, her friends and family, Religious, including Sisters of the Good Samaritan who share a Benedictine heritage through Archbishop John Bede Polding, and Oblates of the Abbey, for a celebratory lunch.

During the celebration, she thanked all who had accompanied her to this point of her vocational journey, especially her family and friends, the Jamberoo Abbey community and her formators.



Sr Julian and her family after the Solemn Profession

“A vocation is not a dramatic thing. It's just every little moment that we have together. So, I thank you for all of those moments,” she said to the sisters.

“But I'm also deeply aware that today only came about because of God and God's work in me. And I do know that today is not the end of my journey, but just the beginning to my much deeper yes, and I know that I am still going to need all your prayers, and I will be also praying for all of you.”

Preparing for the bushfire season

Since our last newsletter in May, we have been able to tick quite a few important maintenance jobs off our list.

The solar batteries have been replaced, and we are hopeful that this will help to considerably reduce our electricity bills. We have also completed the works required to bring our Envirocycle system into alignment with Kiama Council requirements.

The broken pipes have been replaced, key valves have been installed, and the pump and blower are now operating with timer switches. In the Community Room, the gas fireplace flue has also been replaced. This was particularly welcome during the winter months of June to August, helping to keep us warm whenever we gathered there for meetings.

Just a few weeks ago, the work to repair the leaking roof in the Church was completed. There is still work to be done, however. The Community Room roof continues to have two areas where leaks occur, and these repairs remain on our list of future works. Another significant project waiting to be addressed is the mouldy eave in the Church, which has resulted from the previous leaks. This is a more challenging job because of the height and location of the eaves.



In September, we were very blessed by the generosity of Zac Shearer and his Arborist TAFE students. Kiama Council recommended that we speak with Zac about one of our trees. At the time, he was looking for a suitable tree on which his students could gain practical experience.

When I showed him our tree and he said that it was the perfect one for his students to work on, it felt a little like winning the lottery!



Zac Shearer and the Arborist TAFE students

A big thank you to Zac and the Class of 2026 for giving their time and expertise so generously and for taking care of our tree.



We are also very grateful to have Carmelo San Gil assisting us with managing our property maintenance. He recently inspected our Retreat Cottages and provided us with a list of repairs and maintenance needs, many of which are related to the age of the buildings.

There is certainly a lot to do! We will prioritise the work according to its urgency and, of course, the resources available to us to fund these works. With more work being added to our maintenance list, our focus over the coming months will be on preparing the Abbey for the high bushfire-risk summer ahead.

We have had arborists come a number of times to prune trees and clear vegetation around the property. They have also been making sure that our bushfire sprinklers are free from blockage and ready to wet the buildings when needed. With the help of the Jamberoo Rural Fire Service (RFS), we have also completed a burn-off, and later this month we will be conducting a fire drill. There is always plenty to do in caring for a property such as ours, and we are very grateful for the many people who generously give their time, skills and resources to help us.

Once again, we thank all of you for your generous support. Your contributions enable us to attend to our property maintenance needs and help us continue to provide a safe haven for prayer, peace and hospitality.

To donate to the building fund, please click this link:
https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/donate/make-a-donation/
With gratitude, *Sr Petra.*

Abbey Crafts and Books Conference Report

In July, thank you to the support of sponsors, we were able to attend two significant education conferences. The CaSPA conference for national Catholic Principals, held in Sydney, and the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools education symposium provided us with the opportunity to showcase not only our products but also the values behind the work of our hands carried out with love and prayer.

These conferences introduced us directly to Principals, Assistant Principals and education personnel, strengthening old connections and building new ones. Having our products on display allowed schools to see the quality and crafts womenship, versatility of our skills and our ability to customise to each school's unique needs.



Sr Mechtild displays The Abbey's candles and craft at a conference

We also showcased beautiful crosses from our gift range, and our Benedictine Abbey retreat cottages. Each conference brings us new understanding of the challenges in education communities and keeps us in touch with our customers.

The financial and business outcomes continue to flow on from these conferences as the year moves on but to date the confirmed and now completed orders from the conferences were valued at $28,000, and orders in process at the moment to the value of $42,000. These are in addition to our regular orders.

We wish to thank our sponsors, and Julie King (CaSPA) and Kerrie-Anne Porreca (MACS) for their support with the exhibition.
Rachelle Hewett, Abbey Craft staff member

An invitation to volunteers

To accomplish some very big work orders in craft we have had the assistance of three volunteers over the last three months. One volunteer was Jenny Potter, on a long service break at our cottages who gave an hour to 1.5 hours every day. These few hours gave enormous support and encouragement to the Craft department workers. We have Mary, a retired teacher from Wollongong, and Adrienne from Nowra who give one day a week. Both of these women have fitted in and contribute very meaningfully to the Abbey workplace. We have room for more. If you would like to offer some time as a volunteer there is help needed in craft, in the kitchen, in the guestry, the cottages or the garden. To protect you as a volunteer we do have a volunteer policy for you to complete and each job would have a different sister as a supervisor so get in touch with us and volunteer in an area you feel you can help. Below is a reflection from Jenny on her experience of volunteering at The Abbey. *Sr Mechtild*

Jenny's volunteering story

I had asked permission to have an extended retreat at Jamberoo during my long service leave, and as part of that I was asked if I'd like to volunteer in craft while I was here. Being a creative sort of person I said, 'yes'. Good call.

The time I spent volunteering was a wonderful addition to my time here. This expression of the Benedictine values of work and prayer gave greater depth to my days. It was good to feel that I was useful to the community, and following that ancient wisdom that the hands can be active whilst the heart and mind pray.



Jenny is pictured with Sisters at morning tea at the conclusion of her retreat during which she volunteered in the craft department.

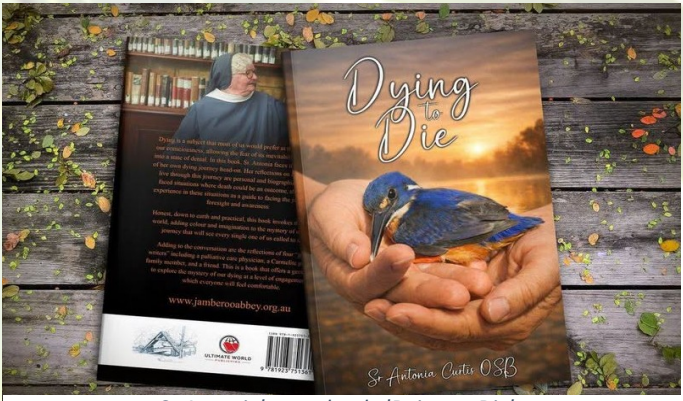
Volunteering combined with the Daily Office in the church, my own prayer, meditation and *Lectio* practice in my cottage, a good dose of rest each day, contact with amazing bird and animal life on walks, spiritual guidance and a couple of weekend retreats. It was good to feel useful on days when my attention to God was flagging, and as an outlet on those days when I needed a change of pace from reflection and inner work.

Whilst under the overall direction of Sr Mechtild, I was also instructed in the tasks by experienced lay workers who were on hand to answer questions or give new tasks when I finished the one I was working on. They are a great bunch to work alongside, welcoming and helpful. The nuns, too, kindly helped when I wasn't sure about what I was doing.
The craft space is designed as a place of silence and most tasks are done individually once instruction has been given. For much of my time I was a 'sticker': sticking and smoothing images onto candles, making sure they were consistent with other candles in the same order, straight, with no air bubbles, glue gunk or flakes of wax underneath. It was one part of a process that passed through many hands. Repetitive work gives excellent opportunity to pray and reflect.

At other times I helped individually wrap candles for transit, used the cutting machine to cut out images for sticking, on the computer to enter names for school candle orders, checking spelling and proof reading. It turns out prayer is helpful working with technology too.
I can recommend the opportunity to volunteer for something in keeping with your interests and talents. I would certainly consider it again in the future.



New book by Sr Antonia Curtis OSB launched at The Abbey



Sr Antonia's new book, 'Dying to Die'

On Saturday August 22, we held a book launch at The Abbey for Sr Antonia's new book Dying to Die. The day was perfect weather wise, and we were delighted to have 66 guests for the occasion. Our MC for the day was Julie Fisher, Publishing Coordinator for Ultimate World Publishing, who published the book. Julie had travelled from Melbourne for the launch accompanied by a friend, and we were delighted to have her with us.

The launch started with a Blessing Song followed by an Acknowledgment of Country from Dr Ed Wensing. From there Sr Mary, our Prioress, welcomed the guests and shared a few thoughts on the book and the fact that Sr Antonia did not seem to have grasped the concept of retirement. Once she retired as Novice Mistress Sr Antonia started writing and has not stopped!

Dr Sarah Thompson, Palliative Care Physician, who contributed a chapter to the book, followed with a powerfully moving reflection on dying, love, kindness, hope and the mystery of death. She noted early in her talk that her job as a palliative care physician can be challenging at times but also rich in connection and joy. Sarah noted that she relies

heavily on the prayer of our community as she navigates her way through the demands of her role.

Dr Sarah said of the book that, “Whilst Sr Antonia and the contributors do not shy away from courageous questions about loss and suffering, which need to be asked, nor from the costliness of love, we will find hope and a certain energy and life force among the pages of the book”. Sisters Magdalen and Petra then brought us to contemplate the mystery of God’s Holy Darkness with their vocal Holy Darkness accompanied by Sr Mry Bernadette on the organ. It was a stunning performance. Julie Fisher and Sr Antonia then spoke about the book followed by Sr Antonia’s sister Kerry Wensing who had contributed a chapter to the book as well.

Then once again we heard Sr Magdalen’s magnificent voice as she sang Ave Maria and this was followed with an organ voluntary, Gabriel’s Oboe, played by Sr Mary Bernadette.

The whole of the launch was saturated with beauty and joy, and everyone was uplifted by the experience of hearing such wonderful reflections on dying and living and the richly uplifting music. It was indeed a very beautiful celebration made all the more special by the fact that both Dr Sarah and Sr Antonia celebrated their birthdays that day as well.

A light lunch followed in the Abbey guestry as copies of the book were sold and Sr Antonia spent time writing a message in the books for those who asked her to autograph their copy.

Those wishing to purchase a copy of the book can do so by going to the Online Shop on our website.

Upcoming Cottage Retreats

As the year draws towards its close, we warmly invite you to one of our upcoming retreats.

Our cottage weekend Have a Heart (23–25 October) takes its inspiration from St John Henry Newman, who found that his deepest encounter with himself and with the Lord came not through reading or reflection but through prayerful, heart-to-heart dialogue with the living Christ.

In Journeying the Labyrinth (day retreat, 21 November), we will create a labyrinth together, and then explore the many ways this ancient practice can open us to contemplative prayer and spiritual insight.
In December, Contemplative Play (cottage weekend, 4–6 December) reminds us that play is not frivolous but a sacred gateway to wonder, joy and encounter with God. As George Bernard Shaw put it, "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing". Finally, our December Circle of Women (day retreat, 12 December) offers a space for conversation about what helps us to heal, exploring symbols of wholeness such as the labyrinth, the mandala and the circle.

To book a weekend retreat, please phone 02 4236 0011 (extension 114) or email cottageretreats@jamberooabbey.org.au. Day retreats can be booked online at www.jamberooabbey.org.au/cottages/retreats/.

A small collection of our NEW CARDS

Whimsical birds by Grace.

For more information email: marie.grace.ja@gmail.com

