

Retreats at Tarrawarra Abbey

2026

1. Some relevant websites:

- a. Tarrawarra Abbey: <https://www.cistercian.org.au/>
- b. Cistercians: <https://www.ocso.org>
- c. History of the Cistercian Order: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cistercians>

2. Dates for retreats:

- arrive afternoon of Monday 13th April, depart lunchtime Sunday 19th April (this retreat falls within school holidays).
- arrive afternoon of Monday 20th April, depart lunchtime Sunday 26th April (this retreat falls outside school holidays).

3. Recommended pre-reading:

‘Finding Sanctuary: Monastic Steps for Everyday Life’ by Abbot Christopher Jamison
Phoenix Books 2006

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WHERE IS TARRAWARRA?



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1 The Abbey Guesthouse



2 The Abbey Church



3 The Abbey Church



4 The Cottage



5 Entrance to the Abbey property



6 The Abbey farmlands



7 The Cottage



8 The Cottage



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IF YOU ARE FLYING

Catch the express bus (departs every 15 minutes) from Melbourne Airport to **Southern Cross Station** in the city. Transfer there to the suburban train travelling to **Lilydale**.

PLEASE CATCH THE 2:00PM SUBURBAN TRAIN TO LILYDALE, which will arrive there at 3pm (where I will pick you up). Could I suggest that you aim to get in the front carriage of the train – that way you may be able to find each other!

DIRECTIONS TO TARRAWARRA IF YOU ARE DRIVING

Continue along the Hume Highway through Victoria. Take the freeway exit to Seymour.

After a short distance take the road that leads to **Yea** (B340).

When you arrive at Yea look for the signs indicating either **Yarra Glen or Melbourne**. This is the Melba Highway (B300).

Follow the Melba Highway all the way to Yarra Glen. However you do not go into the township of Yarra Glen itself. Shortly before reaching Yarra Glen you will come to a relatively new road – the Yarra Glen Bypass. Take this bypass and follow it until you come to a T-intersection roundabout (you will pass through another roundabout before this but you are looking for the T-intersection roundabout where your options are only to go left or right).

This is the road to Tarrawarra. Turn left at the intersection (it is most likely signposted to **Healesville**)

Follow this road through the countryside for about 3 and a half kilometres. At one point you will see a locality sign on the side of the road indicating that you have reached the locality of ‘Tarrawarra’. There’s no actual township – it’s just a locality in the countryside. Keep your eyes peeled now – after certainly no more than a kilometre or so after that sign you will spot the Abbey gates on your right. The Abbey is on a farm so it’s effectively simply a farm gate. It’s marked by four large cylindrical concrete columns – a concrete sign has the words Tarrawarra Abbey engraved in it (see photo 5 on the photo page). There’s no gate as such – simply a cattle grid covered by an awning. Follow the dirt road which winds through the property until eventually as you come to a large stand of trees the road forks and you take the right hand fork which has a sign indicating that it is the way to the Abbey Church. There is a simple car park near the church and guesthouse buildings and the guesthouse is the furthest of the buildings which has a short flight of half a dozen stairs out the front.

You’ve arrived!

ARRIVAL

If you are driving please arrive by 3pm. If you are flying please follow the instructions above.

We’ll rendezvous in the guesthouse foyer and have afternoon tea at **3:30pm**. During this time we can have an initial meeting to clarify final questions/directions etc. At **6:00pm** we’ll join the monks in the Abbey Church for Vespers. This will conclude around 6:30pm. We will then have dinner and chatting together in the cottage.

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DEPARTURE

We'll leave after the 10am Sunday Mass (though you may wish to stay for the morning tea after Mass). In terms of booking a plane it would be safest not to book one before 3pm.

WHAT TO BRING

- * we're likely to have both warm and cold weather so bring layers! Definitely bring a warm jacket, scarf etc.
- * some suitable shoes for walking on farm roads should you wish to go for a walk. We may at any rate have to walk in some wet grass so some good all-weather shoes would be a good stand-by.
- * an umbrella
- * pen, paper and a Bible
- * you might like to bring one or two books for spiritual reading

THE NATURE OF THE RETREAT

The aim of the retreat is to tap into the experience of the tradition of monastic spirituality in the Church by allowing the atmosphere and the public prayer of a monastic community to 'seep' into us.

The formal parts of the retreat are twofold: joining the monks for the daily 'Offices' as per the timetable overleaf; and the various inputs for reflection each morning. The afternoons provide an opportunity for quiet reflection and perhaps a siesta. The evening is a convivial time over dinner before concluding with the Office of Compline (Night Prayer).

Silence is an important dimension of the retreat, a chance to let God speak above the noise of life. But we have a balance – we aim to keep the day times silent, including breakfast and lunch, but we have a convivial evening meal together preceded by pre-dinner drinks and nibbles.

COSTS

The Abbey doesn't set a charge but rather asks for a donation from guests (part of the Rule of St Benedict). Our suggestion is that somewhere around \$400 - \$500 per person would be appropriate - but that if that's not possible then whatever people can afford. The various contributions are collected during the retreat. If you wish to pay by cheque make it payable to "Tarrawarra Abbey".

Additionally we ask for \$60 from each person to cover the costs of providing our evening gatherings: wine and cheese, plus the evening meal of soup and bread rolls.

Finally to cover the parish costs associated with Fr Colin travelling to and from, attending and leading the retreat we ask for \$120 per person to defray the costs the parish incurs. Ideally this payment is made in advance of the retreat to the parish office. This part of the cost would be payable to the parish.

Of course we wouldn't want anyone to be excluded because of financial difficulty. If you are interested in the retreat but would find all or part of such payments difficult please contact Fr Colin.

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OUR DAILY TIMETABLE

FIRST DAY

2 – 3pm	Arrive
3:30 – 4:30pm	Afternoon tea and orientation meeting (in guest house)
6:00pm	<i>Vespers</i>
6:30pm	Dinner and conversation (cottage)

WEEKDAYS (including Saturday)

4:00am	<i>Office of Vigils</i>	<i>Optional</i>
6:00am	<i>Lauds and Mass</i>	
8:00am	<i>Terce</i>	
8:15am	Breakfast at Guesthouse (in silence)	
9:15 - 10:00am	Wed, Thurs and Sat: session on contemplative prayer (in cottage chapel)	
10:15 – 10:45am	Morning tea and input from Colin (in cottage)	
11:15am	<i>Sext</i>	
12:30pm	Lunch at Guesthouse (in silence)	
1:40pm	<i>Nones</i>	
6:00pm	<i>Vespers (except Wednesday when Vespers & Mass are combined at 5:45pm)</i>	
6:50pm	Dinner and discussion in the cottage	
7:30pm	<i>Compline</i> <i>(no Compline in Abbey Church on Wednesday or Saturday. On Saturday we will pray Compline in the Cottage chapel at 8pm after dinner on that day)</i>	

Please see over for Sunday timetable.....

SUNDAY

4:00am	<i>Office of Vigils</i>	<i>Optional</i>
6:00am	<i>Lauds</i>	
8:15am	Breakfast at Guesthouse (in silence)	
10:00am	<i>Mass</i>	

Depart after the morning tea following the Mass.

(on Saturday there is no Compline in the Abbey Church. We will have a somewhat extended time for dinner after Compline and will conclude around 8:30 – 9:00pm. We will take a little time during our pre-dinner gathering that night to share on the following three questions: * how you have found the experience of the monastic setting for the retreat? * how have you found the experience of silence? * how have you found the experience of the retreat overall?)

If at any time during the retreat you would to have a chat, seek some guidance or advice etc please feel free to let me know and I'll arrange a time during the day for us to meet.
