

## Oblates of St Gregory the Great

A retreat was held at Buckfast Abbey from 4 p.m. on Thursday 22 September, finishing after lunch on Sunday 25 September 2022. It sprung from an invitation to the St Gregory's monks to lead the Buckfast Oblates' annual retreat. The opportunity was taken to invite the St Gregory Oblates to join in. At least one of us was unavoidably absent: Richard Mills was being ordained to the diaconate at Clifton Cathedral. Thanks to livestream catch up we were able to share his momentous day – and two oblates were there in person to support him.

Three of us attending (Andrew, Duncan, and me) were made most welcome by our Buckfast colleagues and got to know them well during our stay. Accommodation was at Grangehurst Lodge, a comfortable annex to Northgate House. The hospitality was excellent, and the grounds looked magnificent in the autumn sun.

There was plenty of opportunity to join the Buckfast monastic community at the Offices and Conventual Masses. Conferences were given, first by Abbot Nicholas Wetz on listening, especially with the ear of the heart. There followed four sessions with Dom Leo Maidlow Davis: introductions and aspirations for the retreat; the oblate life; *lectio divina* with a most helpful practical session, generating deep spiritual insights into Lazarus and Dives. Dom Dominic Mansi and Dom Anselm Brumwell provided opportunities for confession and direction. The weather was sufficiently temperate to allow us to sit in the sun for further contemplation.

On Saturday afternoon Abbot Nicholas discussed the future with Duncan and me. This was followed by afternoon tea at Southgate House, where the Community of St Gregory the Great resides.

Following Mass on Sunday we were guests of the Buckfast Community at lunch in the refectory, followed by coffee in the calefactory.

We are most grateful to Abbot Nicholas and the St Gregory's monks for providing a prayerful and satisfying programme; to Abbot David and the Buckfast community for their hospitality and to the Buckfast Oblates for their kindness and company.

Timothy Chambers

SS Michael, Gabriel and Raphael 2022