

**Oblates of St Gregory the Great and St Frances of Rome**  
**Retreat at Buckfast Abbey with the Buckfast Abbey Oblates**  
**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September to Saturday 30<sup>th</sup>**

Six St Gregory's Oblates joined a good number of Buckfast Oblates for our annual retreat. Fr Gabriel, the Buckfast Oblate Maste, welcomed us warmly. Fr James, our Oblate Master, gave several conferences over the three days. We focussed on one of the historical psalms, 105, *The Ingratitude of man: the Story of Israel*. As we reflected and prayed this lengthy psalm, our minds turned to the sacrament of baptism – rising from the depths of the sea to dry and firm ground; and also the sacrament of confession, reconciliation, where we are cleansed of our sins. The psalm was a powerful reminder of the journey of life we all make, with its many ups and downs. It was good to conclude the journey on a high note, reflecting on the beauty and deep symbolism of the sacrament of baptism.

We spent time in *lectio*, praying and reflecting on the readings for Sunday from the Prophet Ezekiel and the parable of the two sons from St Matthew's gospel.

Chapter 4 of the Rule of St Benedict is entitled *The Tools of Good Works*. We were taken through this lengthy chapter and given a handout to reflect on and to assist us in an examination of conscience. On the Friday evening, Fr Michael from the St Gregory's Community, led a Healing Mass and Service in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in the Abbey Church. Several oblates took part in the mass and availed themselves of the sacrament of confession.

The three days were well structured with lectio, prayer and conferences and ample free time. We joined the Buckfast community for offices and Mass in the Abbey Church. The Oblates of St Gregory were invited to coffee on Saturday afternoon with our community in Southgate House. Richard, Anthony Andrew and Edward and the male oblates of Buckfast stayed in the monastery guesthouse. Some married couples stayed in Northgate; I was accommodated in St Petroc's, whilst Denise stayed in a nearby hotel. A few of the Buckfast oblates lived within walking distance of the Abbey Church. It was difficult to meet informally as there was no central place, but we all appreciated the beautiful and glorious Devon countryside.

*Tina Quinn*  
*Oblate*