

Buckfast quenches a spiritual thirst

Buckfast Abbey in Devon, famous for making a tonic wine not always drunk in moderation, is becoming celebrated for another reason. It is a centre for spiritual regeneration – thanks not only to its monks, who embrace an orthodox and dynamic Benedictine ethos, but also to The School of the Annunciation. This is a centre of adult education “in which the Catholic faith is joyfully ‘transmitted anew in all its beauty, depth and vigour’”.

The school is the only higher educational establishment in Britain officially dedicated to the new evangelisation – “new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression,” to quote St John Paul II, who coined the term. Now Bishop Mark O’Toole of Plymouth

has issued a canonical decree, known as a *recognitio*, recognising the school’s fidelity to the Church’s teaching. The school, founded last year with the support of Cardinal George Pell, can now use the word “Catholic” in its title. It already has a partnership with the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, which validates its MA in Catechesis and Evangelisation. This is significant, for America is home to increasing numbers of institutes of higher education that are faithful to the Magisterium.

The new status of the School of the Annunciation is not the only evidence that Catholic orthodoxy is taking wing in England and Wales: St Mary’s University, Twickenham, has embraced the New Evangelisation and is learn-

ing from the rediscovery of tradition at Buckfast Abbey. Nor is Bishop O’Toole the only bishop to respond imaginatively to St John Paul’s appeal – the combination of fresh ardour, methods and expression is found also in the dioceses of Plymouth and Shrewsbury, among others. Lay-led groups, many of them devoted to awakening liturgical tradition, are breathing new life into parishes previously trapped in the weary cultural mindset of the 1970s.

None of this would have been possible without the missionary pontificate of John Paul II. Now that he has been raised to the altars, perhaps we should offer him a prayer of thanks for a legacy that not only endures but continues to grow.