



# DEAD THEOLOGIAN SOCIETY

Saints of Yesterday Inspiring Youth Today

January / February 2014

“I am the light of the world: he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life”

John 8:12



## From the National Office

Happy New Year &  
Greetings from  
Black Earth, Wisconsin!

I want to take this opportunity to say a sincere thank you to all of you who are in any way affiliated with the DTS apostolate. Your partnership in this ministry through prayer, financial support and direct involvement in our chapters is extremely appreciated. It is hard to believe we just completed our 16<sup>th</sup> year as an apostolate. Since that first inspiration for DTS on an evening at the Church of the Annunciation in Altamonte Springs, Florida to our first official meeting at St. Francis de Sales Church in Newark, Ohio, over 11,000 young people have participated in DTS, representing close to 500 parishes throughout the United States, Canada, Africa and Ireland. Please God it is only the beginning!



DTS Antrim, N. Ireland

DTS was also represented with a booth at the Youth Ministry Congress for the Diocese of Down & Connor which was held in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast. I was grateful to also have been invited as a panelist speaker in two of the break-out sessions at the Congress. It was an amazing weekend and was attended by thousands throughout the north of Ireland. The booth next to DTS was the Venerable Matt Talbot Apostolate. What a thrill it was to see Venerable Matt’s rosary, prayer book, and other personal effects. Fr. Brian Lawless who is Vice Postulator was kind enough to let me hold Venerable Matt’s overcoat which is something I’ll never forget.

Special thanks to Fr. Alan McGuckian and Paula McKeown from the Diocese of Down & Connor for putting on such a successful and inspirational weekend and for inviting DTS to take part. Special thanks also to Joe McKeown of Youth Link in Belfast for tremendous hospitality and to Aid to the Church in Need for sponsorship of our booth and materials and their continued support of DTS in Ireland.

— Eddie Cotter, Jr.  
Founder/Director



### 2013 Highlights:

Continued growth of DTS in Ireland!

We now have Chapters in:

- Letterkenny, Donegal
- Moyross, Limerick
- Derry Cathedral & a Young Adult chapter in Derry City, N. Ireland
- Belfast, N. Ireland
- Antrim Parish, N. Ireland





Chinese Catholics at  
WYD 2013

“Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent.”

— Pope Francis at  
World Youth Day



With David, the Brazilian seminarian (in red), and his Brazilian friends at WYD 2013

## Welcome Our New DTS Chapters

- **St. Francis Xavier** – Cross Plains, WI – Diocese of Madison
- **St. Martin of Tours** – Cross Plains, WI – Diocese of Madison
- **St. Bernard’s** – Middleton, WI – Diocese of Madison
- **St. John the Baptist** – Waunakee, WI – Diocese of Madison
- **St. Thomas Aquinas** – Charlottesville, VA – Diocese of Richmond
- **Divine Mercy Parish** – Sauk City, WI – Diocese of Madison
- **Immaculate Conception** – Nashua, NH – Diocese of Manchester
- **Our Lady of Grace** – Greensboro, NC – Diocese of Charlotte
- **St. Mary of the Seven Sorrows** – Nashville, TN – Diocese of Nashville
- **Resurrection** – Jacksonville, FL – Diocese of St. Augustine
- **Our Lady of Lourdes** – Springfield, TN – Diocese of Nashville
- **Holy Spirit** – Virginia, MN – Diocese of Duluth
- **Church of the Holy Cross** – Minneapolis, MN – Diocese of Minn–St Paul
- **Mother of Mercy** – Washington, NC – Diocese of Raleigh
- **St. George** – Hartford, SD – Diocese of Sioux Falls
- **Church of the Incarnation** – Rio Rancho, NM – Diocese of Santa Fe
- **Derry City Young Adult** – Diocese of Derry, Northern Ireland
- **St. Eugene’s Cathedral** – Derry – Diocese of Derry, Northern Ireland
- **Antrim Parish** – Antrim – Diocese of Down & Connor, Northern Ireland
- **Elizabeth House** – Belfast – Diocese of Down & Connor, Northern Ireland

## World Youth Day - Rio de Janeiro

Thanks to Aid to the Church in Need – Ireland, DTS had a booth with materials at World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. DTS brochures were reproduced in English,

Spanish and Portuguese for the event and freely given out to those who visited our booth at the Aid to the Church in Need “Village”. Special thanks to the Irish band, The Kells, who played an impromptu concert at the booth.

## Fresh Face in the Office

Kalli Lochner is the new Administrative Assistant at the DTS Headquarters in Black Earth. She is a DTS Alumni from the St. Mary of Pine Bluff, WI chapter and a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota Duluth where she was a varsity

volleyball player. Kalli will help bring Eddie and the DTS office from the 17th century to the 21st century!

Keep an eye out for upcoming changes and correspondence from our new addition.



## Alive in Christ — Michelle Barrett



I first found out about the Dead Theologians Society when the founder, Eddie Cotter, came on a promotional trip to Ireland. At the moment, in Ireland, there is not a lot of outreach or support for young teenagers who are trying to develop and actively live out their faith. I was really intrigued by the whole concept of DTS. It is an extremely simple but effective youth group that manages to incorporate the essential elements of our faith. Myself and another youth leader were really excited about starting a DTS programme so when we were invited to visit a chapter in America and see first-hand how it works and how teenagers respond to it we jumped at the chance. We spent two weeks in America and were blown away by how excited young people were for the Dead Theologians Society. It is really one

of the best, most solid and fruitful youth outreaches I have had the pleasure to be involved in.

When we came back to Ireland we started our very own DTS chapter with a half-dozen teenagers and they really enjoyed the meetings. It is a fantastic experience not only for those who participate in it but also for those who run it. It is a

**“It has opened my eyes to see that through the example of the saints we should strive for holiness.”**

proven way of learning about solid doctrines, and the traditions of the Church through such inspirations as the Saints. DTS has been such a positive impact in my life because I can see the fruits of it in the young people who participate in it. It is such a joy to hear a teenager retell the story of a saint they have covered to their friends or even to see that they are proudly wearing brown scapulars and are excited to be getting their own rosary beads.

I am so thankful to have been one of the first people in Ireland to start a chapter of DTS. I noticed that DTS is not just your average youth group. It’s

really engaging, simple and clear, and it provides an atmosphere which is steeped in the truths and traditions of the Catholic Church. I cannot recommend it enough.

DTS has personally had a great influence in my life in that it has opened my eyes to see that through the example of the saints we should strive for holiness. It has also really helped

me to desire to discern my vocation and to imitate the Saints’ examples in being open to follow Jesus Christ as His disciple wherever he

may be calling me to go. I can definitely say that DTS had an important role in helping me to become more mature spiritually and stronger in my faith.

Michelle Barrett – age 23

Moyross, Limerick, Ireland



First DTS Chapter in Ireland with Brother Thomas-Franciscan Friar of the Renewal Moyross, Limerick

# Profile in Heroic Virtue

## VENERABLE MATT TALBOT

*Born: May 2, 1856 - Dublin, Ireland*

*Died: Trinity Sunday, June 7, 1925 – Dublin, Ireland*

*Commemoration: June 19*

*Patron of alcoholics & those who struggle with addictions*



### HARD-WORKING CHILD

Matt Talbot got his first job when he was twelve years old. It was the summer of 1868. In those days it wasn't unusual for a twelve-year-old child to work to help support his family. Child labor was common. Required school attendance was not in force. As the second oldest of twelve children of Charles and Elizabeth Talbot, in inner-city Dublin, Ireland, and as the son of an alcoholic who liked to drink away his money, Matthew really needed to work to help his family.

Matt only got to go to school for one year, when he was eleven. The Christian Brothers School was founded to help children like Matt. In that year, he got the basics of reading and writing, and was taught his prayers and the truths of the Catholic faith in preparation for his reception of First Communion and First Confession.

Matt's first job was with E&J Burke which was a bottling company. He was a messenger boy and helped deliver alcohol to pubs around Dublin. Like many of the young workers, Matt started sampling the alcohol. This is how it would happen. The other workers, whose job was loading crates, would sometimes find damaged crates and then would split up the merchandise. They generously shared with their preteen co-worker. Soon Matt was drinking every day at work. One night he came home drunk, and, according to his sister Mary, "Our father saw this, gave him a severe thrashing and found a new situation for him as a messenger boy in the Port and Docks Board Office. But Matt continued to drink, notwithstanding all my father did to cure him. Matt left his job after three years so as not to bring disgrace on his father, who was also employed by the Port and Docks Board. Matt then became a bricklayer's laborer, but continued his drinking habits; though he always worked very hard, all his wages went in drink."

His sister Susan said, "He told me himself that he sold his boots and shirt to get drink, and he used to get drink on credit, often having his wages spent in advance. He was quiet most of the time when drunk, but used to curse and swear; he used to come home and lie down; drunkenness (was) his only vice; he was hot-tempered and when drunk used to have rows and fights, but ordinarily he was quiet and was not cross with us at home."

Matt's three sisters never drank. Neither did his older brother, John. But, possibly because of Matt's example, all his younger brothers became alcoholics, too. One of his nieces said Matt and his brothers once stole a violin from a street fiddler and sold it for drink.

### GETTING SOBER

It took sixteen years for Matt to hit bottom. He was 28 years old. One Saturday night, after missing several days of work, he went down to the tavern where he and his friends usually drank. As they were coming out of work, instead of offering to buy Matt a drink, they ignored him. So he went home. Matt's sister Mary tells that when Matt came into the house, "Mother said, 'You're home early, Matt and you are sober!'. Matt replied, 'Yes, Moth-

er, I am.' After dinner he remained in the house, which was not usual, and finally remarked to Mother, 'I'm going to take the pledge.' She smiled and said, 'Go, in God's name, but don't take it unless you are going to keep it.' As he was going out, Mother said, 'May God give you strength to keep it.'"

What does it mean to "take the pledge"? In the 1800s an anti-alcohol movement swept through Europe, the United States and Australia. It was called the Temperance Movement. Its proponents denounced the evils of alcoholism and urged moderation in drink and especially urged complete abstinence from alcohol. In Ireland, this movement was headed by a Catholic priest, Father Theobald Mathew, who created a pledge for people to sign, saying they would no longer drink alcohol.

Matt went straight to Holy Cross College in Clonliffe, which was the seminary of the Archdiocese of Dublin, where he made his confession and took the pledge for three months. The following morning, a Sunday, Matt received the Holy Eucharist for the first time in years.

He went to Mass the next day, and the next day, and the next day. In fact, he went to Mass every day after that for the rest of his life. Matt was determined to keep his pledge and afraid that he couldn't do it on his own. Alcohol had been part of his life ever since he was twelve years old. In church he felt safe from it.

Matt also gave up his pipe and tobacco, and took a pledge against smoking. He told one of his friends that that was even harder than giving up drinking!

Matt carefully figured out ways to avoid temptation. That meant staying away from the pub and his drinking friends, so he started taking a different way home from work. He also made sure he never carried any money.

Having remained sober for three months, he took the pledge for another three months. His thumping headaches and emotional turmoil began to subside and he felt new hope. His sister Mary was convinced of his conversion because since the day he stopped drinking, he also stopped cursing.

At the end of the second three months, he took the pledge for a year and at the end of the year, he took the pledge for life.

## STAYING SOBER

Besides going to Mass on a daily basis, Matt prayed at home and at work. He began to collect books on religious topics. As a result of reading various biographies, Matt developed a great devotion to St. Teresa of Avila, St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Catherine of Siena. In one of his books, Matt wrote on the fly-leaf these thoughtful words: "Three things I cannot escape: the eye of God, the voice of conscience, the stroke of death. In company guard your tongue. In your family guard your temper. When alone guard your thoughts."

In 1891 Matt joined the Third Order of St. Francis. He also belonged to the Men's Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, the Apostleship of Prayer, the Living Rosary and the Confraternity of St. Michael the Archangel. Since his income was no longer being squandered on alcohol, he gave freely to these religious organizations, his mother, the poor and the missions.



Emblem of the  
Pioneers

He joined The Total Abstinence League of the Sacred Heart in 1890 as one of its earliest members. This organization changed its name to the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association (Pioneers) in 1898 by its founder Fr. James Cullen, SJ. Matt also did his best to get his younger brothers to stop drinking. When that failed, he moved out of the house to get away from them and their bad habit.

He wanted to do penance to make up for his sixteen years of drinking. He slept on boards with a block of wood for his pillow. He spent a long time in paying back the debts he had accumulated during the earlier years. He even spent years in searching through the poorhouses of Dublin for the fiddler whose violin he had stolen, so that he could reimburse him for the price of the instrument. When this effort was unsuccessful, Matt invested the money in Masses for the welfare of the fiddler's soul.

His usual greeting was "God be with you," and he was frequently heard singing hymns. His room was free of luxuries and was quite bare except for his plank bed, a chair, a table, a crucifix and some holy pictures. Throughout his life, Matt wore only old clothes that had been given to him. According to a friend, "There was nothing striking or impressive in Matt Talbot's appearance. To meet him on his daily rounds he was a very commonplace type of working-man, poorly clad, but clean. He was somewhat below middle height, of slight and wiry build. He walked rapidly, with long stride and loose, swinging gait. His bearing indicated recollection, rather than preoccupation."

He almost got married. In 1892 a pious Catholic girl proposed to him. She worked as a cook for a Protestant clergyman, and was very impressed with his devotional habits and his respect for women. Matt considered the proposal, but first made a novena for guidance. He later told a confidant that "the Blessed Virgin told me not to marry."

Matt's father died in March of 1899. Matt moved back home, since his hard-drinking brothers had moved elsewhere. He and one of his sisters accepted the responsibility of caring for their mother, who died in 1915.

## LAST DAYS

During the last years of his life, Matt suffered from kidney and heart ailments. Shortly before he died, Matt confided that he suffered a great deal from pain in his heart and that he frequently experienced great weakness. But he still managed to go work, doing light duty the day before he died.

At 9:45 on Trinity Sunday, June 7, 1925, while Matt was walking to Mass, he stopped and then fell to the ground. A number of people rushed to him, while one ran to summon a priest. The priest, Fr. Walsh, recited prayers for the dying right there on the sidewalk, with twenty people present.... Matt Talbot was 69 years old.

When Matt's body was being prepared for burial, the attendants found that he was wearing penitential chains. These were removed and placed beside his body in the casket. That Thursday he was buried in Glasnevin. In February of 1962, his remains were removed to the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes on Gloucester Street, the parish church of the area where Matt had lived for many years. The tomb has a glass panel which reveals the coffin and it bears a plaque inscribed, "The Servant of God, Matthew Talbot, 1856-1925."

Another plaque is situated on a wall on Granby Lane and reads, "The mark opposite this plaque indicates the spot where the Servant of God, Matt Talbot, collapsed and died on Trinity Sunday June 7, 1925. His cause of beatification and canonization was introduced in Rome May 3, 1947. Erected by the Dublin Matt Talbot Committee Nov. 5, 1972." A simple cross, chiseled into the sidewalk on Granby Lane, indicates the spot where Matt Talbot died. He was declared venerable in 1973.

## PRAYER

*Lord, in your servant Matt Talbot you have given us a wonderful example of triumph over addiction, of devotion to duty, and of lifelong reverence for the Most Holy Sacrament. May his life of prayer and penance give us courage to take up our crosses and follow in the footsteps of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

*(From "Homily for Temperance Sunday" by Fr. Tommy Lane.)*

