

This past Thursday was the **initial meeting of Saint Mary's Chapter of the Dead Theologians Society (DTS)**. More than 20 of our young people ages 14-18 joined our Youth Minister, Corey Loe, DTS member Dustin Dodge, and me for a high-energy gathering! We **began in school sharing good conversation for 30 minutes over Domino's Pizza and several healthier options!** I then gave to them an **overview of the history, format, and goals of the worldwide Dead Theologians Society**. In order to become an official member of the DTS one must attend three meetings in a row or five in the course of one year. Upon qualification for membership the person is "hooded," that is, they are given an official black DTS hoodie (or shirt) emblazoned with the DTS logo and motto – a monstrosity surrounded by "*Mortuum mundo, vivum in Christo*" (Dead to the world, alive in Christ). The new member then also receives a scapular with the DTS logo and motto, an olive wood Rosary made by Christians in Bethlehem, and a membership card with the prayer of Saint Gertrude the Great for the Holy Souls in Purgatory which the member must pray each day.

Having heard all this, we then **adjourned to the newly-established DTS Chapter Room in the basement of the rectory**. Meant to evoke the experience of the early Christians gathering in the catacombs for prayer, the Chapter Room is dark, enlightened only by numerous candles. The space is decorated with a number of religious pictures and symbols as this is a place of recollection and prayer. As the participants entered in silence, the sounds of Gregorian chant enveloped them to dispose their minds and hearts to receive the graces God would offer during the next hour. After an **opening prayer** I gave some reflections on the **saint of the evening**, Saint Augustine of Hippo. Participants offered **insights** they had learned from the life of Saint Augustine and then a number of excellent and incisive **questions** were entertained. We offered **prayers of petition** that were either vocalized or kept in the silence of the heart. To each one I distributed an **olive wood Jerusalem cross** (one central large cross surrounded by four smaller crosses) that I had purchased in Bethlehem during my recent pilgrimage. We concluded offering the prayer of **Saint Gertrude the Great** and the **Divine Praises**.

The participants returned to the school for 30 minutes of **games** to conclude the evening. Those needing to leave at the official 9:00 PM end time left while quite a few remained for almost another hour of games! Watch for the upcoming announcement of the date of the monthly meeting. Any parishioner ages 14-18 is welcome to participate when their schedule allows. DTS members are welcome and encouraged to invite peers to experience a Saint Mary's Chapter meeting. For the time being I will continue to facilitate the meeting portion but there will be opportunities for adults of the parish – whether you are a parent of a DTS member or not – to assist with the food or lead a meeting. Finally, watch for an announcement regarding the formation of a second DTS group at Saint Mary's for young adults 18 to twenty-something! Pray for God's blessings on our DTS Chapter that members might die to the world and be alive in Christ!