



# DUCHESNE HIGH SCHOOL

*shaping leaders in mind, body, and spirit*

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Hi all,

I've mentioned elsewhere in these letters that my favorite class in college was the one I took on the seventeenth century religious and metaphysical poets. The class was that perfect combination of material I loved taught by a funny, thoughtful professor who clearly adored what he was teaching. Dr. John R. Roberts, in addition to teaching the metaphysical poets, was also the first academic celebrity I encountered. He wrote the culminating essay in the Norton Critical Edition of John Donne's poetry and for a time was the definitive voice on John Donne criticism. What I remember most about professor Roberts is his commitment to the idea that the religious and the secular are constantly bumping into and shaping one another.

The intersection of the religious and the secular made sense for professor Roberts, a devout Catholic who devoted his professional life to John Donne. Donne is probably best known for his "No Man is an Island" sermon, but he also wrote some of the most shocking and lurid secular poetry of the era. Professor Roberts, when he was teaching Donne or just talking about life, insisted that these two avenues of the human experience are constantly informing one another. I am reminded of his classes around the holidays because Christmas is probably the best contemporary example of how these two fundamental aspects of our lives mesh.

Take Christmas music as just one example. Is there a more universally beloved genre? How easy is it for most people to quickly name their top five carols? I would guess that for most, their lists are a combination of secular and sacred songs. That's certainly true for me. At the top of my list is "The Fairytale of New York," by The Pogues—a song that has been particularly top of mind since the death of their frontman, Shane MacGowen. "Fairytale" is as secular as a song about Christmas can get, at times it is even vulgar, but at its core it shares with many secular Christmas songs a profound sense of hope.

Holding a strong position at number two on my list is "For Unto Us a Child is Born" from Handel's *Messiah*. Handel's oratorio is not strictly a Christmas work; it covers the life, death, Passion, and resurrection of Jesus. And its most recognizable piece, the "Hallelujah" chorus, is more of an Easter Celebration. The song that focuses on Christ's birth, however, is a great Christmas song. It perfectly embodies both the hope and joy we celebrate on Christmas. If you haven't heard it recently, its worth revisiting; its a banger!

Merry Christmas,

Dominic D'Urso



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## Announcements

December 15

**All School Mass/Reading Day:** The day will begin in Communio at 7:45. Students will have around 30 minutes to finish wrapping their Adopt-a-Family presents. We should start mass around 8:15. After mass, teachers will be in their rooms until noon. Students may leave after mass to begin studying for their finals. They can also see a teacher for individual support.

December 18

### **Final Exams 1, 2, & 3:**

Period 1 Exam: 8:00—9:05

Period 2 Exam: 9:15—10:15

Period 3 Exam: 10:25—11:25

December 19

### **Final Exams 4, 5, & 6:**

Period 4 Exam: 8:00—9:05

Period 5 Exam: 9:15—10:15

Period 6 Exam: 10:25—11:25

December 20

### **Final Exams 7 & 8**

Period 7 Exam: 8:00—9:05

Period 8 Exam: 9:15—10:15

Exam Information

Students only need to be on campus when they are taking their exams. If, for example, they do not have a period 3 exam, they are free to leave after their period 2 exam is finished. Also, if they do not have a period 1 exam, they do not need to get to class until their period 2 exam begins. If a student is off in between exams, they should report to the cafeteria and study for the third exam of the day.



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All of the exams end by 11:30. This is done intentionally to give students time to prepare for their finals the following day.

December 21

**Christmas Break Begins!**

**Winter Classic:** Join us in the North Rink of the St. Peters Rec-Plex for a scrimmage between participating 4th through 8th grade students and our current DHS Hockey team.

January 4

**THE SECOND SEMESTER BEGINS!!!:** The first day of the second semester will be an all classes meet half-day dismissing at 12:05.

January 5

**Day 1:** Friday will be a full day of classes with a 2:50 dismissal time.

