



DUCHESNE HIGH SCHOOL

shaping leaders in mind, body, and spirit

Hi all,

Last week I wrote about the secular Christmas and all of its trappings. This week, I'd like to turn my attention to "The Reason for the Season," a phrase itself enmeshed in secular traditions. Almost certainly "the season" is the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. And when "the season" is used, it is likely not used to mean Advent.

This Advent season, I've been doing my best to read a poem recommended by *Comment* magazine, W. H. Auden's Christmas oratorio "For the Time Being." The magazine describes the poem as Auden's attempt to address the "contemporary experiences of disorientation and despair amid the promise of Christmas." Disorientation and despair are evident from the opening line: "Darkness and snow descend." In the first line Auden wonderfully couples "snow" with "darkness." By having both "descend" he creates an arresting image that falls just short of hopelessness.

At the same time, Auden is aware that Advent reminds us to be hopeful in our anticipation. Halfway through the poem the most striking section is its treatment of the wise men. Each of the three in Auden's poem has his own reason for following the Star of Bethlehem. The first through self-discipline tried to master the natural world. His attempts, however, left him "disjointed," never knowing where to step. He followed the star "To discover how to be truthful." Another lives "With envy, terror, rage, regret." He argues that as humans "We anticipate or remember but never are." He follows the star to "discover how to be living now." The third lived a life of contemplation, always trying to reason out the greatest good for the greatest number, and in doing so had forgotten how to love. He says that his introspection "left no time for affection/Laughter, kisses, squeezing, smiles." He followed the star to relearn love.

Each of the wise men in Auden's poem are behaving admirably prior to the promise of Christ. These men are self-disciplined, they examine the past and attempt to predict the future, and they consistently evaluate the relationship between actions and consequences. And yet, the wise men are dissatisfied. In a sort of chorus, the three men say together that they "have only the vaguest idea why we are what we are./To discover how to be human now/Is the reason we follow this star."

The wise men forfeit their comfortable lives in the name of Truth. Each pursued independently a path they believed would unlock the mysteries of the world. And each realizes that the abandonment of ego is the only path to enlightenment. They must give over the notion that sheer will can solve all of our problems.

Advent anticipates the promise of Christmas. And hope lies in that anticipation. We can, like the wise men, recognize that we "have only the vaguest idea why we are what we are." If we join that recognition with a willingness to let go of our own self-assurance, then we can achieve that promise.

Merry Christmas,

Dominic D'Urso



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Upcoming Events

December 13

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. Everyone is invited to the all school mass. If you plan on attending, please let Mrs. Bryan know.

December 14

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 15

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 16

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 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 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 16

Home Boys Basketball

December 17

Christmas Break Begins

December 27-29

Holiday Tournament: Duchesne will host our annual Girls Basketball Holiday Tournament.

January 3

Classes Resume: Our first day back will be a half day. All classes will meet. We will dismiss at 12:05.

Musical Auditions: Those interested in performing in the musical or working crew should see Mrs. Owen for more information. This year's play is *The Little Mermaid*.

January 5

Home Girls Basketball

January 6

Home Boys Basketball

January 11

Duchesne Reads: After a brief hiatus, the Duchesne Parent Book club returns. We will finish our discussion of *The Price You Pay For College*. Please join us if you can. Even if you've missed the first two meetings, or are a little behind in the book, the discussions about college selection are worth your time. If you plan to attend, please send an rsvp email Dana Bryan.