

Merry Christmas • Happy New Year

As I sit typing this letter, my dog Karma is gnawing happily away on a rawhide chewie at the top of my basement stairs, Elvis is singing Christmas tunes on my cd player and I have a pasty heating up in the oven. If you don't know what a pasty (pronounced "pass tea") is or how to pronounce it correctly, take a few moments to enlighten yourself. If you don't get it right, you will get strange looks. Trust me. The alternative pronunciation can lead to an embarrassing line of discussion... Here are a few pasty tidbits I found in my research online:

- The easiest way to describe a pasty is a pot pie without the pot.
- The pasty is MUCH (emphasis added) more than food; it is an identifying cultural mark that gives miners and their descendants in the iron range their own identity. While it is a source of great pride to this region, the pasty itself, especially its ancient history, is shrouded in *mystery*...
- Although it was agreed that pasties must contain two things, potatoes and onions, "pasty rivalry" occurred among the many ethnic groups.
- The portability of the pasty not only made it easy to carry, but if it should get cold it was relatively easy to heat up by putting the pasty on a shovel and holding it over a headlamp candle.
- During the 1890's a pasty started a mine fire; while warming his meal on a shovel, a miner forgot about it and his pasty caught on fire due to its high lard content. The pasty flames then spread to the timber holding up the mine walls and engulfed the interior of the mine.




Karma and me with this year's tree

Enough of that. Back to me :) ha.... This year was very eventful and exciting. It was also very busy and I have not done my best job keeping in touch with my friends and relatives, thus, this holiday letter. As a way to share with you what has happened over the past year, I figured I would write some "bullet points."

- I Spent lots of time cross country skiing in all the snow we had up here. It was wonderful! Best skiing I've done in my whole life. My friend Dafne and I would go out quite often and even ski in the dark with our headlamps on some of the local trails. • I became a mentor to an 11 year old girl in Ely who lost her mom last year. We've had a lot of fun this year and I've finally gotten used to hanging out with kids!

- I was invited to be an artist in the Winter Festival Art Walk where I had some of my art hanging in a window on Ely's main street, along with other artists in Ely. This was my first real art show with my "big brush" artwork. • I traveled back to the Cities a couple of times for some events and conferences, including a Christopher West talk over Valentine's Day weekend that I attended with my parents and my brother and sister-in-law. (see www.christopherwest.com for info)

- The highlight of these 2 months was my 2 week trip to Rome and Assisi with my friend Marguerite. We left at the end of March and returned just before Easter. It was my first trip outside of the US, not including Canada, and it was unbelievable. As many of you know, we were blessed with the opportunity to personally meet the Holy Father and kiss his ring. He also gave each of us a rosary. We were able to do this because of Marguerite who had spoken to her priest, who then spoke or wrote to the bishop, who then wrote a letter to the Vatican requesting a "private audience" with the Pope. There was some further correspondence between the Vatican and Marguerite and her priest, but all we knew before we left for Rome was that we had done whatever we could do and that we would be contacted where we were staying if we were selected to meet the Pope (we packed Pope clothes just in case). We were staying at a "hotel" run by the Sisters of St. Bridget. Every morning between 8 and 9 am we would come down to our table, set especially for us, and the sisters would bring us really, really good nun coffee and steamed milk, cheese, fresh baked hard rolls, and either yogurt or a hard boiled egg. I'd say that was darn near the next best thing about my trip :) We walked and walked through Rome, and one day we calculated that we had literally walked 14 hours. We left our hotel at 8am, and didn't get home til midnight that night (partly because we kept getting lost and ending up in front of the blasted Victor Emanuel Monument) and we figured we had only spent about 2 hours sitting all day, when we were eating or drinking espresso. I could say so much more about that fabulous trip but it would take way too many pages. 



Meeting Pope John Paul II

MAY

- Mom, Dad, Daniel and Cassie came up to visit over Mother's Day weekend and I showed them an Ely without snow.
- Friends from Ely threw me a surprise birthday party and sang Happy Birthday to me in Swedish while I stood on a chair (tradition, apparently...) and they were accompanied by Eli Bisonnette on his violin. We had traditional Swedish foods including a potato sausage, some kind of yummy bean soup, rye crackers with lindenberry jam, and crepes for dessert.
- The night before my 32nd birthday, after getting a massage, I was walking my dog, fell on the asphalt and scraped 3 layers of skin off my left pinky. I have a scar.

• At the end of May, I started my summer job working as a "lodge manager" (aka: cook and housekeeper) at a lodge out on Moose Lake. At the lodge, I learned about where to fish up here, where to drive a boat and not hit rocks, and I met some interesting people. I was able to take Karma out to the lodge with me, which he loved. I think we bonded this summer. I was able to let him off his leash to run with the other 2 dogs at the lodge, and he even came back when I called! • Throughout the summer, I went on trail runs, biked, swam in the lakes, and canoed, sometimes by myself, sometimes with Karma and often with my friends Dafne and Megan, whose husbands aren't as predisposed to exercising in the outdoors. I had the opportunity to pick blueberries for the first time, which was really fun.



Fishing on Moose Lake

SUMMER

• In August, Karma and I took a 2 week road trip through Canada, Vermont, out to Cape Cod where I stayed one night with acquaintances of my parents right on the ocean, then on to Pennsylvania where I took a compressed one week theology course for graduate credit (if I finish the 10 page paper required) on Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body, taught by Christopher West. That week was life changing, educational, exhausting, and very healing. I left feeling very energized, and with about 20 lbs of reading material. The whole trip was fun and adventurous. I saw parts of Canada and the east coast I had never seen before, camped most of the time, or stayed in pet-friendly motels.

SEPTEMBER

• During September, my friends Shelly, Marie and Jenn came up to visit. • I started 2 part time jobs, one as a Youth Worker in the elementary school for an organization called Ely Community Resource, and the other as the Religious Education Coordinator for the 7th - 11th graders at my parish. • I also started teaching art and computer classes through continuing ed. Although I've since decided not to continue to teach through the community college, I will begin teaching private art lessons in my home, which I am looking forward to.



On Cape Cod

OCTOBER

• October saw my brother's 30th birthday party, and lots of yardwork, including finishing touches on my 6' high wood fence in my backyard. That made Karma and me very happy this summer/fall.

NOVEMBER...

• The highlights of November included more time spent with my family around Thanksgiving, and an art show at Northern Grounds, the best coffee shop in Ely. Also, the only one. hee...

DECEMBER

• Well, I'm sure my December is much like others' - busy with work, holiday preparations and keeping warm! We've seen some pretty cold weather up here and we have a great snow base so far. I haven't been skiing yet, but I did buy some new ski pants so I'm ready to go anytime! • I've enjoyed getting my house decorated for Christmas, putting on some new art (getting ready for the Art Walk in February - I get the Napa store window!), co-organizing religious ed activities and throwing snowballs for Karma.

*May God bless all of you and your families during this Christmas season,
and may you have a wonderful New Year!*

