

Christmas 2004

I think we've reached a new world record. Each year, Mom thinks I'm going to forget to write the Christmas letter. This year, she began her reminder calls on August 29th! I made her wait for two months, and I'm beginning it today, on Halloween. Just for the record, once the letter is finished, it also means that nothing of interest can happen to the family for the rest of the year, or I'll need to redo it. J

Where to begin? Mom, Dad, Mike, my Uncle Bill, and Grandpa Mauss took an amazing two-week pilgrimage to Spain with Mount Angel Seminary. Being Grandpa's first trip to Europe, he marveled at the lack of cows in Spain (compared to Iowa, of course). Each family member had their own spiritual experience, most notably Dad being able to travel with his father, son, and one of his brothers; and Mike, who was continuing to discern a call to the priesthood. They traveled through Fatima, Barcelona, Madrid and onto Portugal, and were blessed with safe travels in the midst of the unrest in the world.

This might lead you to ask, "Why on earth didn't you go with them, Shelley?" (I figured you might ask that) At the same time as the pilgrimage in May, I was celebrating the 20th Annual Relay For Life in Tacoma. In loving memory of a treasured colleague and friend who we lost to brain cancer earlier in the year, our Merrill "Bullish on the Cure" Lynch team won the Top Rookie Team award, raising \$30,000! I served as event co-chair of the 2004 Relay For Life, and our event raised over \$800,000 in the fight against cancer!

Once summer began, changes were right around the corner. Mike decided to take some time away from the Seminary to continue his discernment. God called him to Western Washington University, where he is now the Catholic Campus Minister at WWU and Youth Minister at Sacred Heart in Bellingham. (God only knows how he ended up BACK at school... this is what, his eighth year around a college campus?!?) He's loving the experience up there, guiding college students in their faith and planning upcoming service pilgrimages to Mexico and Calcutta, India.

As for Mom and Dad... they're getting along just fine without us at home. (I know, it's surprising!) Dad is serving as the President of the Board of the local St. Vincent de Paul Council in Pierce County and has loved the time spent serving others. Mom's work has continued to flourish at Pearl Counseling. At the annual Pearl retreat in the fall, they added a new venture to the weekend, and Dad led the group on a mini fishing trip! Instead of giving them fish, he taught them to fish... now they can go out and teach others! J Speaking of fishing, Dad spent time in Alaska over the summer, fishing for halibut and salmon, and we were more than willing to stock some of his bounty in our freezers!

No Christmas letter is complete without mention of Andy, the dog. Did anyone notice that last year, there were more photos sent out of the dog than the kids? Guess that shows our place in the family! J Andy had an uneventful year (no accidents or broken bones, as in years past) and he's loving life on the Puget Sound.

As we finish 2004 and look ahead to 2005, know that our thoughts and prayers are with you for a wonderfully blessed celebration of our Lord's birth, and a joyous (and bullish!) new year!

*With love,
Tom, Karol, Shelley and Michael Mauss*

PS – It should be noted that I jinxed myself when I mentioned that nothing else of interest could happen to the family...by the time I finished writing the letter, Mike's car was stolen while he was on a hunting trip with Dad! (Maybe God is telling us to live more simply...) Guess I should watch what I say! J