

**On July 26 I fly to Rome to begin a 4-month sabbatical. Sabbatical benefits for priests vary from one diocese to another. Here priests are eligible for a sabbatical after every 7 – 10 years of ministry. However, not all priests take advantage of one. Both Bishop Boland and Bishop Finn approved my plans for a sabbatical this year.**

**I will be staying at a residence that houses about 100 American priests. I lived in this same place 20 years ago when I was a student in Rome. I'm going back now for some additional research and study.**

**While I'm away several priests will be here to help out. My old friend, Father Aloysius Kasoma, is returning from Uganda. You kindly welcomed him here 2 years ago. He'll be arriving soon and will stay till early September. After that, we'll rent a monk from Conception Abbey on the weekends. I'll be back just before Thanksgiving, in time to celebrate Christ the King, and to watch the state high school football championships.**

**Any time a priest takes a sabbatical, people start spreading rumors. "He's not coming back. He has a drinking problem. He's found someone." You're going to hear all those rumors and more. They are false. I enjoy being a priest. Bishop Finn seems happy to have me work in Cameron and Maysville, and I'm happy to be here. This is a sabbatical. I'm going away for a while to study, but I'll be back – whether you like it or not.**

**Before I leave I want to wrap up this phase of our building project. Thank you for your support. Over 150 households have pledged over \$350,000. This week I will report our pledge figure to the diocesan finance office. Bishop Finn will establish a budget for our project based on the pledges we have received. So if you're still planning to pledge, it will help us to know within the next few days. Once the budget has been set we can begin designing the work, but we will not finalize it until I return.**

**On Monday night we will have a penance service to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation before I leave. Harcourt Religion Publishers has asked if they can film this service. They are producing a video to help parents prepare young children for their first confession. I am one of the priests speaking on the tape. They'd like to include some footage of our church. They'd like to publish pictures of us in their textbooks. I asked them, "If we do this for you, would you make a small contribution to our building fund?" And they said yes. So if you come Monday night, not only will your sins be forgiven, but you'll help us make a little money. You will not confess your sins into a microphone, and if anyone does not want to be seen on tape, I will still hear your confession. I hope this gives you enough time to commit a few sins before Monday night.**

**Through the prophet Isaiah, God compares the effectiveness of his word and work to that of the rain and snow. Precipitation makes the earth "fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one**

**who eats.” God’s word also gets results. Let us be prepared to welcome the word of God however it comes to us in the months ahead.**