

# Gatherings

**D I O C E S E**  
of NEW ULM  
Office of Religious Education  
Office of Youth Ministry

# Reflections

Dear DREs and Youth Ministers:

March 4, 2010

## From the Religious Education Office

**Bryan Reising**  
Director of Religious Education &  
Adult Faith Formation  
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### Fasting and Abstaining An Age-Old Tradition and New Traditions by Bryan Reising

**Y**ou probably know some older Catholics who had a Eucharistic fast from midnight until they received the Eucharist on Sunday morning. Perhaps these same older Catholics experienced abstinence from meat on every Friday throughout the year. Today, the Church law of fasting and abstinence are quite relaxed since those times past, but they can still have special meaning for us today.

Today, Catholics fast for an hour before receiving the Eucharist, which means taking nothing but water and prescribed medicines into the body during that time. Today, they fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, which means they can partake in one full meal during that day and two smaller meals, called collations. In addition, today, Catholics are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays during Lent, and Good Friday of Holy Week. The ages obliged to abstain from meat are ages 14 and older, and the ages for fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are from age 18 through the age of 59. In addition, adults can voluntarily choose other days to fast and/or abstain like Holy Saturday of Holy Week, Fridays throughout the year, Christmas Eve Day or December 23rd, and Wednesdays during Lent.

Throughout Scriptures and within the early Church, the tradition of fasting coincided with preparation for a mission, atonement or penance for sins, imitation of Christ, and a time of prayer and sacrifice for the needs of others.

The following Scripture passages relate to stories of fasting:

- Deuteronomy 9:7-21 - Read about Moses' fasting before he gives the Hebrews the Ten Commandments.
- 2 Samuel 12:15-25 - Read about King David's fasting because of his sinfulness.

- 2 Chronicles 20:3 – Read about King Jehoshaphat's call for fasting throughout Judah.
- Jonah 3:1-10 – Read about the people of Nineveh and their fast.
- Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13 – Read about how Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights while in the desert.
- Matthew 6:16-18 – Read about Jesus' teaching on fasting.
- Acts 9:1-19 – Read about Saul, later Paul, and his conversion and his fast for three days.

Apart from Christianity, in ancient times, there was a time of the year where food was scarce. Rationing and fasting became necessary to survive this time of late winter and early spring in some societies.

In the early Church, fasting was an important practice for the life of catechumens who were to become new members of the Church. It was during the time of Lent, when they made their immediate preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation that they practiced prayer, fasting, abstinence, and almsgiving. This eventually was extended to all Catholics.

In the West, there were times of celebration in the pagan calendar that the Church transformed into Ember Days (a Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of the same week). These Ember Days occurred in December (between the Third and Fourth Sundays of Advent), sometime during Lent,

between Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, and in September. They were a time of prayer, abstinence, and fasting.

Other times or days of fasting and/or abstinence included the Fridays and Saturdays of Advent, December 7 (the vigil of the Immaculate Conception), Christmas Eve Day, the Saturday before Pentecost, August 14 (the vigil of the Assumption), and October 31 (the vigil of All Saints).

Today, fasting can also apply to our electronic age. Fasting from television, I-Pod, internet, and even text messaging. In 2009, Most Rev. Benito Cocchi, Bishop of Modena, Italy, urged young Catholics to give up text messaging during Lent.

May this time of fasting and abstinence be a time of prayer and spiritual preparation as we renew our relationship with Christ during the seasons of Lent and Easter.



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**Mohr Catechist Formation Fund**  
**A Gift for You, Catechists, Youth Team Members,**  
**Teachers of the Religion**

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This new scholarship fund is a great gift for your catechists, teachers, youth ministry team, and many of you! You can receive scholarships for Faith Formation Day and other catechist formation opportunities, NCEA Convention, MCEA Convention, online courses through the University of Dayton's VLCFF (Virtual Learning Community of Faith Formation), and even some college courses on faith formation. An application is on our website:

<http://www.dnu.org/word/adultfaithformation/mohrscholar1-13-10.pdf>

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**VIRTUS Trainings**

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- March 20, 2010 at 9:30 a.m. Arlington
- April 12, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. Hutchinson
- May 8, 2010 at 9:30 a.m. New Ulm St. Mary

**All Catechists are required to:**

1. Have a background check before beginning to volunteer;
2. Sign Forms A & B of the diocesan sexual misconduct policy;
3. Attend VIRTUS training within 90 days of beginning to volunteer;
4. Do the on-line training as assigned.

Volunteers and catechists who are under the age of 16 are not required to attend the adult VIRTUS training. The VIRTUS training is for youth and adults ages 16 or higher. If you have a question about VIRTUS, please contact Margy Manderfeld at 507-233-5305. Please do not contact VIRTUS directly unless you need a password.

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**2010 Bishop Lucker Lecture**  
**March 11 - 7:00 p.m.**  
**St. Catherine's, Redwood Falls**

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**Fr. William Baer**, rector and president of St. John Vianney College Seminary at the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, Minnesota, will be the featured speaker at the 2010 Bishop Lucker Lecture on March, 11. Fr. Baer is in his 11th year of service at St. John Vianney. Fr. Baer was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He graduated from Georgia Tech with a degree in Architecture and worked in the profession in Baltimore for two years. He then served in Campus Ministry for 11 years in Baltimore and at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Father Baer was ordained to the priesthood in 1996 in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and is a member of the Companions of Christ, an association of priests of this archdiocese. Father Baer served as associate pastor and then as acting pastor for Nativity of Our Lord Parish in St. Paul before his assignment at the Seminary.

**The lecture will take place at the Church of St. Catherine in Redwood Falls at 7:00 pm on Thursday, March 11, 2010.**



Following the Bishop Lucker Lecture will be the presentation of our annual Diocesan Distinguished Service

Awards by Bishop John LeVoir. A reception is to follow. All adults and youth of the Diocese of New Ulm are encouraged to attend.

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**NCEA and NPCD Convention in Minneapolis**  
**April 6-8 at the Minneapolis Convention Center**

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**Keynote presenters include:**

- **Garrison Keillor**
- **John J. Findlater** (an educational consultant)
- **Sr. Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN** (an author and attorney) – she will address the internet and social networking.

**Parish Faith Formation offerings include:**

- Understanding of the Word in the Catholic Tradition with **Jim Schellman**
- Developing a Culture of Vocations with **Fr. William Baer**
- Using Technology for Catechesis with **Larry Huiras**
- Spiritual Life: A Priority for Teachers and Catechists with **Most Rev. Lee Piche, Auxiliary Bishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis**
- Called to Mission: Ritual Catechesis and Confirmation with **Steven Ellair**
- Proclaiming Our Story Through Media and Technology with **Tim Welch from the Diocese of Saint Cloud.**

**For further information and registration**, go to <http://www.ncea.org/events/conventionfees.asp>.

Parish catechetical leaders and catechists are welcome to register!

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**MCEA Convention in Duluth**  
**August 23-24, 2010**

**Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center**

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Keynote Presenter is **Valimar Jansen** (singer and story teller) and the Capstone Presenter is **Lee Nagel**, executive director of NCCL. Many pertinent workshops will be available for parish catechetical leaders and catechists. All State Catholic youth Choirs will also be featured. For further information and registration, go to <http://www.mncatholiced.org/Speakers.htm>

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**Faith Formation Day**

**September 25, 2010 - St. Catherine, Redwood Falls**

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The Eucharist and the Third Edition of the Roman Missal will be the theme. Mark your calendars!

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**Upcoming Gather for March**

**for Parish Catechetical Leaders (PCLs or DREs) and Youth Ministers**

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Our Gather in March will be **Monday, March 8, 2010 from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm at the Center of Youth Ministry**. The Gather will feature **Christine Wolar** from Frassati USA. She will be speaking on the life of one of the newest saints for youth, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. Please RSVP to Cindy Blickem at 507-233-5325 or [cblickem@dnu.org](mailto:cblickem@dnu.org) if you plan to attend.

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## University of Dayton's VLCFF

Cycle 3: April 11-May 15

(Registration: Opens March 2; Closes April 7)

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- [Catholic Beliefs](#)
- [Church History 2](#)
- [Ecclesiology: Pilgrim Church](#)
- [Evangelization and Discipleship](#)
- [Faith and Human Development](#)
- [Images of Jesus](#)
- [Introduction to Catechesis](#)
- [Introduction to Christian Morality](#)
- [Introduction to Practical Morality](#)
- [Introduction to Prayer](#)
- [Letters of Paul](#)
- [Marianist Studies: Charism](#)
- [Marianist Studies: Founders](#)
- [Marianist Studies: Leadership](#)
- [Mary in Scripture and Tradition](#)
- [Media, Faith and Values](#)
- [National Directory for Catechesis](#)
- [Parish as Learning Community](#)
- [Sacrament of Marriage: A Holy Calling](#)
- [Sacraments](#)
- [Scripture: Introduction](#)
- [Scripture: New Testament](#)
- [Scripture: Old Testament](#)
- [Scripture and Justice](#)
- [Survey of Catholic Doctrine](#)

For further information, contact Bryan Reising at 507-233-5324 and check out VLCFF's website: <http://vlc.udayton.edu/>.

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### Holy Week and Easter Resources from Diocesan Media Library

#### For Elementary Grades

- **Easter Is** by Family Films
- **Grandma's Bread** by St. Anthony Messenger Press/Franciscan Communications
- **Beginner's Bible: The Story of Easter** by Sony Wonder
- **Walk With Jesus: A Children's Way of the Cross** by Twenty-Third Publications

#### For Middle School Grades

- **Celebrating the Church Year – Holy Week** by Paulist Press

- **Molokai: The Story of Fr. Damien** by ERA Films/CVBA Damien – Jos Stelling Films (for the whole family)
- **The Ten Commandments** by Cecil B. DeMille Productions (for the whole family)

#### For High School Grades and Adults

- **The Christian Year** (Section Four – Lent and Holy Week) Cathedral Films and Video
- **Church Celebrates Lent and Easter** by St. Anthony Messenger Press
- **Come to the Water: The Adult Journey to Baptism** by Catholic Communications Campaign
- **Easter in Jerusalem: A Great and Holy Week** by CTNA
- **The Easter Triduum** by Rev. John Corapi, SOLT
- **A Family Retreat** by Archbishop Fulton Sheen (selected themes)
- **A Humble Walk: A Story of Faith Serving the Poor in Africa** by Catholic Relief Services
- **Into the Great Silence** by Zeitgeist Films (great for a retreat)
- **Liturgies of the Triduum** by the Archdiocese of Chicago, LTP
- **Jesus of Nazareth** by Franco Zeffirelli
- **Jesus in His Own Land** by Franciscan Communications
- **The Joy of Passover** by VISN
- **King of Kings** by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
- **On the Road to Jerusalem: A Preparation for Easter, #6** – by National Catholic Television, Canada and Odyssey
- **The Passion of the Christ** by Icon Productions
- **The Stations of the Cross** by ACTA Publications

These and many other resources (DVDs, videos, and audio) can be used by member parishes, schools, and individuals. Check out the Media library catalogue at <http://dnu.kdsi.net/search/search.php>

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### RCIA Seminar: Concerning the Baptized August 6-7, 2010 - St. Catherine, Redwood Falls

Save these dates! Featured speakers are Rev. Michael Clay and Sr. Gael Gensler, OSF. Fr. Michael Clay is from the Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina, and he is an author an expert on the catechumenate in rural parishes. Sr. Gael Gensler is a practitioner of the RCIA at a parish in Illinois.

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### National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) Membership

Right now, they are doing a membership drive for potential members of NCCL. **The cost of an individual membership to NCCL is only \$60.00. This is only \$5.00 a month.** For further information, check out the website: <http://www.nccl.org/>

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### Parish Catechesis Question

Are there parishioners who fast and abstain above and beyond the normal fast? Perhaps they can share with youth and adults why they fast and abstain and the importance of these spiritual practices. They can share from their personal experiences!

**From the Youth Ministry Office:**  
**Sr. Margaret McHugh, DSMP**  
*Director of Youth Ministry & Vocation Awareness*  
[mmchugh@dnv.org](mailto:mmchugh@dnv.org)

## **A Catholic Exercise Program for Lent**

### **First Kneel and Pray Then Stand and Shout**

I was so struck by the way he called the group to order, **“Place yourselves in an attitude of prayer!”** He was a black Baptist minister and he spoke in the command form. Every back stood straighter, every head bowed lower, and every folded hand clasped tighter. A deep respectful silence filled the room and thrilled our hearts.

*Have you and I heard the call to prayer this Lent?*

**Lent is a very good time to pray.** Picking a posture of prayer and placing ourselves in a mindset of worship is the first step.

**Falling to our knees** helps us to remember who is in charge and who is not. The very posture of kneeling is recognition of God’s Sovereign Authority.

Let me give you a few real life examples:

**“I dropped to my knees and prayed: ‘Lord, I give up. Whatever you want me to do, you’re the boss now.’”** -Chris Godfrey, *New York Giants offensive lineman, Super Bowl XXI Champion Team*

**“My whole adult life had been premised on the claim that I was in charge of everything. That’s what made infertility a deeply spiritual experience.”** -Jennifer Roback Morse, *research fellow Action Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty*

**This simple gesture is the richest of creeds.”**

-Scott Hahn in *Signs of Life: 40 Catholic Customs and Their Biblical Roots*

Let’s look at that same posture at another time and place: Mexico City, November 23, 1927. Fr. Miguel Pro faced death squarely in the face. His

only crime was ministering as a Catholic priest. His last request was to kneel and pray. His last act was to stand and shout, **“Long live Christ the King!”** arms open straight out in the shape of a cross. Now that’s *courage under fire!*

It was his *kneeling and praying* that enabled him to *stand and shout*. If we are able to *kneel and pray* like this saint did, we will be able to stand and shout in final Easter victory!

### **The Sign of the Cross**

**“Making the Sign of the Cross...means saying a visible and public “yes” to the One who died and rose for us, to God who in the humility and weakness of His love is the Almighty, stronger than all the power and intelligence of this world.”**  
- Pope Benedict XVI *Angelus September 11, ‘05*

The simple gesture that Catholics make thousands of times in their lives has a deeper meaning most of them don’t realize.

In an interview on November 22, 2004 published in Zenit, Bert Ghezzi, the author of *The Sign of the Cross: Recovering the Power of the Ancient Prayer*, talks about the power in the Sign of the Cross. He says, **“When you make the sign, you are professing a mini version of the Creed**—you are professing your belief in the Father, and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit. When you say the words and pray in someone’s name you are declaring their presence and coming into their presence—that’s how a name is used in Scripture.”



“Self denial is not just about giving up little things; to be a disciple you are under Christ’s leadership and you don’t belong to yourself. By doing the sign of the cross, you are saying to the Lord, ‘I want to obey you; I belong to you. You direct all my decisions. I will always be obedient to God’s law, Christ’s teachings, and the Church.’”

“When suffering comes, the sign of the cross is a sign of acceptance. It’s remembering that Jesus became a man and suffered for us and that we participate in Christ’s suffering. The sign of the cross says, ‘I am willing to embrace suffering to share in Christ’s sufferings.’”

“When you are suffering, when you’re feeling like God is not there, the sign of the cross brings him there and declares his presence whether you feel it or not. It is a way of acknowledging him at that time of trial.”

“One of the main teachings of the early Church fathers is that the sign of the cross is a declaration of defense against the devil. When you sign yourself, you are declaring to the devil ‘Hands off! I belong to Christ; he is my protection.’”

“In the book, I describe six meanings, with and without words. The sign of the cross is: a confession of faith, a renewal of baptism, a mark of discipleship, an acceptance of suffering, a defense against the devil, and a victory over self-indulgence.”

The first person who calls me or e-mails me will receive a free copy of the book *The Sign of the Cross* by Bert Ghezzi to enhance their Lenten spiritual reading. The second person will receive a free copy of Scott Hahn’s newest book, *Signs of Life: 40 Catholic Customs and Their Biblical Roots*.

**“The most basic Christian gesture in prayer is and always will be the Sign of the Cross.”**

*-Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger*

## **“...The Same Sins Over and Over Again...”**

During the annual retreat with the Diocesan Youth Council, one of the teens shared, “I keep falling into the same sins over and over again...” This honest appraisal of her struggle to avoid sin and choose goodness gave me a lot to think about. Later, in a one-on-one conversation with her, I encouraged her to review her situation and create a plan to avoid sin. Without telling me the sin she struggles with, I urged her to ask herself the following questions:

- **Who am I with** when I feel tempted to sin?
- **Where am I** when I sense the attraction of evil?
- **When** does this most frequently occur?
- Do you have any ideas about **why** this happens?

Catholic spirituality has a great name for just this kind of a human situation. It’s called, “Avoiding the Near Occasion of Sin.” When we honestly appraise the situations that lead us into temptation and sin, make a serious plan to avoid them, and intentionally choose those constructive alternatives, we can begin to make some progress.

After a talk with her mom and with the support of her best friend, the young lady I spoke about earlier was able to create an “action plan” to

1. **Stop hanging out with the wrong crowd.**
2. **Distract herself** when she felt drawn to sinful/self-destructive behaviors.
3. **Develop some of her other gifts** in constructive ways.

A prominent national group that works in addiction counseling advises clients to pay attention to the following three factors:

### **Playgrounds**

Where am I when I sense the attraction to evil? Where are you hanging out when you fall into sin?

### **Playthings**

What are the toys, sports, magazines, movies that I entertain myself with? Does a particular hobby or interest frequently include addictive behaviors?

### **Playbuddies**

Who are my genuine friends that lead me closer to God and help me to become a better person? Who are just my “drinking buddies”?

If a *teenager* can do this, we can too! *Now* is a very good time.

**“Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!” -II Cor. 6:2**

### **Diocesan Youth Council Applications**

are now posted in the Youth Ministry webpage and can be downloaded, filled out and returned by May 4.  
<http://www.dnu.org/word/youth.html>

### **NET Team Visit to our Diocese**

Please let us know if you’d like the NET Team to come to your parish or AFC next fall. As soon as we have the official dates of their visit, we’ll be sending out the necessary registration materials.

### **Diocesan Discipleship Camps**

The materials for the upcoming summer camps will be coming out soon. In the meantime, please mark your calendar with these dates:

**June 17-18**      **Young Men’s Discipleship Camp**  
**June 24-25**      **Young Women’s Discipleship Camp**

(Each camp starts at 9:30 on Thursday and goes until 5:00 p.m. on Friday)

### **Diocesan Group for Steubenville North Conference**

Registration is still open for the **July 16-18 conference in Rochester**. Please contact me if you are interested in attending as part of a diocesan group.

## Why do Catholics believe the bread and wine really become the Body and Blood of Christ at Mass? Isn't it just a *symbol*?

*This is the third of the three most commonly asked questions by non-Catholics. It's a really important question because sometimes even cradle Catholics get a little fuzzy on the answer.*

*I saved the best question for last...and for the nearness of the Easter Triduum, especially Holy Thursday!*



When we read the account of the Last Supper it's hard to see how Jesus could have been any clearer and stronger than He was in expressing this truth. He says, "Take, eat; this is my Body, which is given to you." (Mt. 26:26) and "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin." (Mt. 26:28)

The Scriptures contain several important passages that are super clear on this point. Check out both the Gospel of John 6:53-58 and I Corinthians 11:27, 11:29, 10:16 to see how this is addressed early on in the Church's history.

Jesus equates the bread with his Body on several different occasions and St. Paul follows this up in his writings. If the Eucharist was intended only as a symbol, Jesus could have cleared up the confusion as he did at other times when he was misunderstood. Instead, in John 6:53-58, he is so clear that many of his hearers found his teaching hard to accept and left him. Jesus let them leave without changing a word of his teaching.

The early Church was consistent and unanimous in believing that Jesus was truly present in the Eucharistic sacrifice. Even Martin Luther was still convinced of this truth in 1529 and almost came to blows with Zwingli. "This is my body!" Luther reportedly shouted over Zwingli, because Zwingli denied Christ's real presence in the Eucharist.

### Religious Education / Youth Ministry Calendar

Mon, Mar 8	Gather for DREs & Youth Ministers	10:00-3:00	Center for Youth Ministry
Apr 6-8	NCEA Convention		Minneapolis
Mon, Apr 12	Gather for DREs & Youth Ministers – Curriculum Day	10:00-3:00	Catholic Pastoral Center, New Ulm
Sun, Apr 25	Jr High Festival	11:00-5:00	Montevideo Public High School
Mon, May 24	DRE/YM Spring Fling	Noon-4:00	TBA
Thurs-Fri Jun 17-18	Young Women's Discipleship Camp	Thu 9:30 am-Fri 5:00 pm	Center for Youth Ministry
Thurs-Fri Jun 24-25	Young Men's Discipleship Camp	Thu 9:30 am-Fri 5:00 pm	Center for Youth Ministry

## NCYC 2011 INTEREST INDICATOR

### NATIONAL CATHOLIC YOUTH CONFERENCE - NOVEMBER 17-19, 2011 - INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

*All youth in grades 9-12 in 2011 will be able to attend with their adult leaders – 21 years of age or over*

At this point in time we would like to know how many people plan to attend from your parish. These are only estimates but please try to be as realistic as possible. We will travel to Indianapolis, Indiana, for this event. We will probably leave on Tuesday, November 15, returning late Sunday night, November 20. Cost is still to be determined.

#### Interest Indicator Form – National Catholic Youth Conference - November 17-20, 2011 Indianapolis, Indiana

Estimates: Number of Youth in Grades 9-12 in 2011 that I estimate will attend: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Adult leaders that I estimate will attend: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Name, Town \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ We plan on going on the diocesan buses.

\_\_\_\_\_ We plan on staying in the diocesan block of hotel rooms.

\_\_\_\_\_ We plan on lining up our own transportation to Indianapolis.

\_\_\_\_\_ We are lining up our own housing arrangements.

Other Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Return to Sr. Margaret or Cindy Blickem by **May 21, 2010** (cblickem@dnu.org)  
Catholic Pastoral Center, 1400 6th St. N, New Ulm, MN 56073