

On Friday the Department of Natural Resources announced that Cameron's drinking water meets all standards set by the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act and Missouri Water Quality Standards. The tests were conducted because of a large number of residents who have suffered brain tumors. We are greatly concerned about those who have taken ill in our community, and if there is a common cause, we want to know about it to help the sick and to protect other people. For these reasons, if you are aware of any unreported brain tumors in the area, the Clinton County Health Department would like to hear from you.

While we have these concerns, we don't want to panic. It's possible the tumors are unrelated. It's also possible that the proportion is not unusual at all, but that reporting has improved, diagnoses are more accurate, and we know more about illness in general now than we did in the past. I am still drinking Cameron's water, but I'm pleased that local officials took the matter seriously enough to investigate it.

Water is something we all share in common. It binds our community together just like roads, shops, sewers, power and weather. The past few months have shown Cameron has something else in common: our care for one another, especially for those who are sick.

In the Catholic Church, what we share in common is the eucharist. St. Paul notes in his first letter to the Corinthians, "Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." We share a meal together, and the food we share makes one out of the many who eat it.

For the past nine months at St. Munchin's we have been celebrating the eucharist outside of our usual building. We learned what really holds us together: our faith, our community, our love of God, our care for one another, and our devotion to the eucharist. We have been strong enough to put up with inconveniences. Every day, we have still greeted God present in our midst. Now we are ready to return to the building that symbolizes our common faith.

This Tuesday Bishop Raymond Boland will consecrate our new altar. After the scripture readings of that mass, we will sing the litany of the saints. The bishop will offer a prayer recalling many events from the bible. He will pray that the new altar may become a sign of Christ, from whose pierced side flowed blood and water. He will also pray that the altar may become a place of communion and peace, unity and friendship, praise and thanksgiving. He will anoint the entire top of the altar with chrism, the same oil we use for once-in-a-lifetime sacraments: baptism, confirmation and ordination to the priesthood. We will light incense and candles for the altar. It will be a long mass, but the ceremony is quite beautiful.

The altar is the central feature of a Catholic church. It is there where Christ comes to us in the form of bread and wine, and where we come to share the body and blood of Christ. Just as water makes us one in the city, so does the Body and Blood of Christ in the church. It is the our source of health, nourishment and salvation.