

Members of St. Munchin and of Cameron United Methodist Church have been meeting together recently. These spiritual conversations have revealed our similarities and differences. What we hold in common includes the scriptures, our belief in Christ and our desire to perform service. We have some differences in how we express our faith, especially with regard to the eucharist. Catholic participants believe that the eucharist is the body and blood of Christ, and they wanted to know what United Methodists believe. Our neighbors wanted to know why Catholics do not share communion with visitors from other faiths the way that United Methodists do.

In the Catholic Church we believe that Jesus is truly present in the eucharist, whereas some other churches hold that a communion service is a symbol of the Last Supper. At mass, I always say a prayer that goes something like this: "Send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts. Change them for us into the Body and Blood of Christ." Pastor Rick Gressman pointed out that at a United Methodist communion service, he says these words: "Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood." He then observed, "If we do not have the same faith that Catholics do, we are very close."

Catholics also believe that the eucharist is a sign of our unity as the body of Christ. Our leaders believe that other Christians truly share baptism with us, but that our unity with them is too imperfect to share communion. This makes everyone sad, because we'd all like our churches to share communion as a sign of our common faith. We hope that grassroots spiritual dialogue like the one we're having with our United Methodist neighbors will help advance that day.

Last Saturday night at the Easter Vigil, we celebrated the baptism of two men from our community who also shared their first communion at that mass. This weekend some children in Cameron and in Maysville are celebrating their first communion as well. This communion is a sign of their belief that Jesus is the Son of God and that Jesus comes to us today under the form of bread and wine. Their communion is also a sign of the unity they have with Catholics throughout the world.

On the first Easter Sunday, Jesus appeared to the disciples, but Thomas was not there. On the following Sunday, Thomas was there and he placed his faith in the resurrection. Looking on Jesus, Thomas made one of the greatest statements of faith we find in all the gospels. He said, "My Lord and my God." Christians gather on Sunday because we believe Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday. We share communion on Sunday because we believe that Jesus gives himself to us under the form of bread and wine. Sunday eucharist is the most important part of our lives. Whenever we receive communion, the minister says, "The body of Christ" and "The blood of Christ," and each time, we answer "Amen." That Amen is a sign of our faith in Jesus, the resurrection and the eucharist.