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## Preparing to Celebrate the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation in 2021

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As we enter into yet another challenging phase of learning to live with COVID 19 I wanted to address the question that many families, teachers, priests and parish staff are asking about how we will prepare to celebrate First Holy Communion and Confirmation in 2021? As I travelled around the diocese over the past few months it has been wonderful to see how well our parishes have prepared for public worship, to hear how lovely the ceremonies were, how nice it was to have smaller numbers present in the church and how important it was to have these celebrations for families. I want to address two particular groups - those awaiting to celebrate the sacraments from earlier this year (the 2020 Ceremonies) and next year's group (the 2021 Ceremonies).

**2020 CEREMONIES – THOSE STILL WAITING TO BE RESCHEDULED:** There are still some families and parishes waiting to celebrate the sacraments. Given the current level of restrictions and the uncertainty around the virus I am asking all parishes to postpone any further rescheduling of these sacraments until February/March 2021.

**2021 CEREMONIES – LOOKING AHEAD:** All across the diocese, parishes, families and schools are beginning to plan how best to prepare next year's children to celebrate sacraments in a very different context. What we do in the coming year will be different to previous years. We will have to find new ways to make and maintain connections between families, parishes and schools; we will have to find new ways to shape our celebrations but, I am confident that, together, we can do this and do it well.

I believe that we must plan as realistically as possible for next year's celebrations and try to avoid the uncertainty and rescheduling that characterised the last number of months. I have not set dates for Confirmations in 2021. I am asking parishes not to decide dates for 2021 sacraments until well into the new year. I propose that all First Communions be celebrated beginning in May and Confirmations beginning in June.

This year's experiences of First Holy Communion and Confirmation have given us a glimpse into a new way of celebrating these sacraments, a simpler and perhaps more authentic way of meeting God in these sacred moments. Resources to support the preparation for the sacraments will be periodically uploaded onto our KandLe website to support the work at home, in parish and in the classroom. It is my hope that together, we can learn from our experience and begin to experience new ways of preparing for and celebrating these key moments on our faith journey.

Every blessing,



Bishop Denis Nulty