

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE
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30 April 2021

Dear Father,

The very welcome announcement that public worship may resume from the 10th May is a source of great joy to so many who have patiently awaited the opportunity to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments. Sadly, many families carry the burden of the loss of loved ones from Covid, and of the heavy price which has had to be paid in terms of lost jobs and incomes.

As we prepare for the safe return to public worship, I am very aware of the situation of families whose children eagerly anticipate the celebration of the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. It is important that these joyful occasions are celebrated with full regard to the continuing threat posed by circulation of the virus and in full compliance with public health requirements. The public health advice is that ceremonies such as these should not take place at the time of resumption of public worship. I know that parishes and families alike will wish to prioritise public safety.

For that reason, celebrations of the sacraments may not take place and dates for celebrations should not be proposed until parishes are notified that it is appropriate to do so. I envisage that engagement with the public authorities will enable the position to be reviewed in due course.

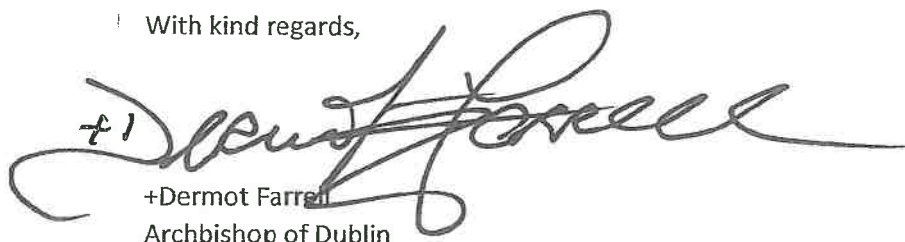
When ceremonies can be celebrated, priority will be given to First Holy Communion and Confirmation deferred from 2020. While celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation for candidates from the current year may be able to take place over the summer, I believe that, regrettably, it is appropriate and necessary that celebration of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion for 2021 candidates should be deferred until the autumn.

The Sacraments Implementation Group will shortly offer training for parish volunteers in the use of video resources which have been prepared for use by parishes in engaging with families whose children are preparing for Confirmation. I am aware that many parishes have been running programmes of accompaniment for these families.

I realise that this situation may be a cause of disappointment to many families. I trust that they will understand the rationale for this approach. I know that parishes will continue to support them so that the celebration of the sacraments will be ever more joyful. I wish to express my gratitude to our schools for the excellent work which they have done in preparing our children. It is an immensely valuable component of the partnership between family, parish and school.

Pope Francis has encouraged daily recitation of the Rosary during the month of May in light of the global risks posed by the virus. Let us commend our Archdiocese, our parishes and our families to the protection of Our Blessed Mother as we journey through the challenging months ahead.

With kind regards,

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+Dermot Farrell
Archbishop of Dublin