

Holy Family N.S. - Tubbercurry – Co. Sligo



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First Communion Class

Dear staff, parents and pupils,

The past year has been very difficult for everyone but with the announcement by the Government on Thursday 29th April there now seem to be a light at the end of the tunnel, however, we can't become too complacent as the COVID virus is still very much with us.

The numbers allowed into the church for Weddings, Funerals & public Masses is limited to 50. Wedding receptions are still limited to six inside or fifteen outside. Social gatherings are seen as the greater danger and this danger would also apply to the receptions or gatherings after the celebration of other Sacraments too.

The following is advice from the Government & the Bishops

In relation to the celebration of First Communions and Confirmation, the Government recommendation is as follows: "It is **advised** that religious ceremonies such as Communions and Confirmations **should not** take place at this time."

This is broadly in line with the guidelines sent out to parishes on the 2nd March from the Bishops of the Tuam Province, where we said: *"As of now, we have decided to defer the Sacrament of Confirmation for the 2021 class until the Autumn, and we encourage our parishes to consider doing the same in relation to First Holy Communion. Should the circumstances change for the better, this decision can be revisited in each Diocese."* Reflecting upon the current advice, I believe the safest option is to stay with the plan to defer Confirmations until the Autumn. In relation to First Holy Communions, I know some of our parishes are dealing with very small numbers of children, where 50 people can easily be accommodated in the church building. However, the potential for family/social gatherings after such occasions is where the risk resides. The decision about Communion ceremonies is ultimately up to the parish and school to decide in the light of the most recent Government advice. Should you decide to go ahead with ceremonies, it would be very important to remind people about the risks involved in gatherings after such occasions. It is important to remember that despite the easing of restrictions, Covid is still with us and the majority of the population will not be vaccinated until the end of June.

Going on the above advice the Confirmation will probably be in September. (This doesn't apply to Tubbercurry School.)

I am keeping with that advice also for the celebration of First Holy Communion.

For the celebration of First Confession - this will take place before the Summer holidays (June 3rd) - I am choosing the option with least risk involved at this time and that is to celebrate the Sacrament in the school during school hours with just the class, their teacher & the Principal present. Hopefully by September when the other Sacraments are celebrated conditions will have improved somewhat and the risk may not be as great.

Regards,
God bless & take care,
Fr Peter

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