

DIOCESE OF CORK AND ROSS

1st March 2021

A Phríomhoide is a mhúinteoirí

I hope you are well. As our schools begin to open up I want to let you know that you are firmly in my thoughts and prayers as you prepare to welcome back the pupils. I know that they have really missed their school and their friends.

The great efforts of parents and teachers in engaging with remote learning throughout these difficult weeks and months is to be commended but the return to the normal life in the classroom will be welcomed by all. I am aware that school communities have reached out in a particular way to our marginalised pupils. Every effort was made to keep these most valued pupils active and engaged and the concern shown by so many teachers demonstrates your ongoing profound commitment to their wellbeing.

Throughout these difficult weeks parents have been active in the faith formation of their children. The reopening of schools will again see teachers sharing this responsibility and we trust that the various diocesan teaching and learning resources will continue to help with this task.

I have received many enquiries in relation to the celebration of the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation in parishes this year. At the moment it is not possible to fix dates for these celebrations. To do so might only cause confusion and possible disappointment. We will be in a better position to fix dates when restrictions are eased. No dates can be set not even provisionally at this stage.

When it becomes possible to gather safely children who have yet to receive the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation from last year will be the first to do so.

In a separate letter to the First Holy Communion children and their families I have suggested that it is better not to purchase Communion 'outfits' at this time as dates cannot be fixed at the moment.

Covid 19 has certainly turned our lives upside down and will continue to present challenges into the future. I want you to know that your work, your diligence and care are really valued and we pray that everyone will remain safe and well as schools begin to open up again. While remembering with deep respect all those who have died from this virus, we now can look forward with hope to brighter days ahead.

Wishing you, your pupils and your staff a safe return to class.

Yours sincerely in Christ

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✠ Fintan Gavin
Bishop of Cork and Ross



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