

First Holy Communion 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

5 September 2020

A letter was provided last week for those families who are interested in the Confirmation programme. Much the same can be said for families interested in this year's First Holy Communion (FHC) Programme. Because of the virus and the large number of accompanying directives, the FHC programme is very different from previous years.

Firstly, this letter and timeline are intended for children in Year 3 or higher and who have been baptized and who have celebrated the Sacrament of Penance. It applies primarily to families who reside within the parishes of Camden (including St Clare's) and The Oaks (including St Joseph the Worker). However, in the event of extenuating circumstances, children from other parishes are welcome so long as they attend Mass in Camden or The Oaks during the duration of the programme.

To be part of the FHC programme, it will be necessary to be present at Mass each week from the weekend of 3/4 October to collect the programme timeline and enrolment form.

Please be mindful that to comply with the Directives relating to the Corona Virus from the NSW Department of Health - it is necessary to register in advance your place at Mass every weekend either (a) by booking on-line through the parish website or (b) by phoning 4655 8797 during parish office hours.

According to the directives, the maximum number of people who are permitted in the church at one time is 100 plus one musician, one vocalist and those who serve on the sanctuary.

MASSES: **Saturday Vigils:** 4:30 PM and 6:00 PM.
 Sundays 7:30 AM, 9:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 12 Noon and 5:00 PM

Forms and books will not be distributed to those who have not registered for Mass. Because there is a limit of 100, Masses will become full very quickly. Best to book early in the week from Tuesday mornings.

There will be no workshops this year. Parents and other family members and friends will need to assist the candidates to complete all the activity pages at home. The workbooks will need to be returned to myself or one of the attendants at Sunday Mass on 7/8 November.

If families have organized holidays and are away over any of the weekends during the programme, *from 3/4 October to 21/22 November*, then FHC will need to be celebrated in another year. This year is so much different from any other. Lots of pressures, especially in terms of sanitation. There are normally about 200 children who celebrate FHC each year. Because of so many limitations, this year's number will be capped at 160.

Participation in the programme will require from parents the qualities of sacrifice, dedication, energy and a clear mind. The programme cannot work around recreational activities and holiday bookings.

Also, if parents are seriously concerned about the virus to the extent that there is anxiety about being present at Mass, then please do not enroll this year. Best to wait for another time. Clergy, secretarial personnel and assisting parishioners will be under considerable pressure already. For this year's programme it is not possible to accommodate the extenuating circumstances of any particular family.

For each First Holy Communion Mass, the maximum number permitted for each family is five, including the candidate. With 20 families intended for each ceremony, the maximum number of 100 has been reached. Accordingly, consideration is now being undertaken to video record each Mass and uploading to the parish website. Viewing would then be available later in the week.

Families may wish to live-stream. Some ceremonies may be available for those who are interested. However, there would be an added cost of \$50 to each family for the live-streaming of "their" Mass. Enrolment forms and Timeline available at Masses on 3/4 October 2020. It's absolutely necessary to book in advance.

Sincerely

Father Michael Williams PP