

To candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Dear young friends,

I wonder how you were feeling during your preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation? Were you excited and wondering how the gifts you are to receive from the Holy Spirit would work in your life? Were you looking forward to this celebration when you would receive the final sacrament of initiation into God's Church? And now the whole journey towards the Sacrament of Confirmation has been put on hold because of the Coronavirus lockdown! I wanted to send you a message of encouragement in these difficult days. Even though the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation has been delayed because of this crisis, please know that your new Bishop is very much looking forward to meeting with you.

Try to be patient and faithful to meeting with Jesus in prayer. Ask the saint whose name you are choosing to pray for you. Pray to the Holy Spirit that you will be even more ready to receive the gifts which will be poured out on you when you are Confirmed. We will soon celebrate that Pentecost day when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon our world. And finally, please spare a prayer or two for the new Bishop! I send you these words together with my blessing for yourself and your families.

✠ David J Oakley
Bishop of Northampton

To candidates for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion

Dear boys and girls,

We have not yet met in your parish or school. I am very much looking forward to that opportunity. In the meantime, I wanted to write a few words of encouragement to you. You will have been preparing to celebrate your first Holy Communion this term. It is such wonderful moment for you and your family, and there is often a lovely party to celebrate this day when Jesus first comes to you as the Bread of Life. If we don't have food we become hungry! What we eat gives us energy for all the things we have to do in our day. When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, he gives us the spiritual energy to live as his follower in our lives. I hope and pray that this day will come for you soon when we are allowed to celebrate with you in church. May Jesus, the Bread of Life, bless you always.

✠ David J Oakley
Bishop of Northampton