

1st Communion Liturgies – some pointers from 2020

Personal and Prayerful not Production and Performance

The Covid restrictions of last year resulted in smaller, simpler first communion liturgies in many parishes. The feedback from parish personnel, school personnel and parents, was very positive. Small scale, simple, parish-organised liturgies connected people and parish much better than large scale and highly organised ones. Some key phrases used in the feedback captures their sense:

- *Less is more, simpler is stronger.*
- *Keep the ceremony details within what the parish can manage and enjoy.*
- *Avoid a 'performance' where everyone has a job.*
- *More and smaller liturgies mean more work, but it is worth it.*
- *Once parents experienced the simpler liturgy, they became ambassadors for it to other parents.*

Here are some quotes from parish personnel offering examples of what they did in 2020:

2. We incorporated First Communion into the regular weekday and weekend Masses, working with small numbers of families for each, giving them a range of dates to choose from.

1. We avoided giving any tasks to the children - even the readings were done by parents. This made for less stress on the children and a clear focus on their First Communion.

3. For the music we just had one singer with a keyboard or guitar instead of a whole choir.

4. We followed the diocesan option for postponing First Reconciliation until later in the year.

5. We invited the families to be present 15 minutes early, each forming their own 'pod'. Before the liturgy started, the priest went around to each and asked the children to introduce their families. During the liturgy we made sure to call out the name of each child.

6. We took a moment before the liturgy started to acknowledge family members who could not be present. We asked the families to wave to them on the webcam.

7. We went for simple homilies that sought to connect the Good News of the Gospel to the real-life experiences of the families at this time. We found that listening to families in advance and creating a warm welcome helped us with this. *

8. As part of the homily, we invited the children to come and sit on the sanctuary steps around the celebrant and they 'chatted'.

9. We invited volunteers from each group of parents to assist with the ceremonies including stewarding and sanitizing. We found the parents comfortable with those kinds of tasks and willing to cooperate.

*** The registration of families and the zoom preparation session offer opportunities to hear something of what First Communion means to the families. Even a couple of references to what you hear could help personalise the welcome and the homily.**