

ST FRANCIS DE SALES CATHOLIC CHURCH, HAMPTON HILL

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Dear Parents

FIRST COMMUNION 2026

When you had your child or children baptised, the priest will have said these words to you: *'You have asked to have your child baptised. In doing so, you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking? To which you answered: 'We do'.*

I invite you to think about the meaning of the words *'training them in the practice of the faith'*. An essential element of this training is regular and frequent attendance at the Sunday Mass. It is at the Mass that we are spiritually fed by God's word and the Eucharist; it is at the Mass that we worship God together as the People of God and the Body of Christ on earth. This is why the Church places an obligation on Catholics to regularly attend Sunday Mass - because it is essential to the nourishment of our Catholic faith.

As you give thought to the possibility of your child's First Communion in 2026, I stress to you the importance of **frequent and regular attendance at Sunday Mass prior to your child's acceptance into the First Communion programme**. If you are not regularly and frequently attending Sunday Mass, then that 'training' of your children 'in the practice of the faith is unlikely to be happening in the way that the Church envisages it or in the way that you promised when your child was baptised.

Commencing now, on a number of random Sundays (**always** in school term time only), I will make an announcement at the end of Mass asking any parents with a child eligible to make their First Communion in **2026** to see me as they leave the Mass that day so that they can provide me with the name of their child. **Therefore, please come and provide me with your child's name at each Sunday Mass you attend, where I make this request, not just the first time you hear me request it.**

This system will allow me to build an objective, substantiated record of your family's Sunday Mass attendance and a firm basis on which I can discern your child's readiness to begin preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Of course, as this process will not happen every weekend, it will not be expected that families have 100% attendance throughout the year, but it will, nevertheless, allow me to build up a picture of whether there is substantive evidence of the frequent and regular practice of the faith to which you committed yourself at your child's baptism. **If there are serious pastoral reasons as to why you are unable to attend Sunday Mass regularly, you should contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss the circumstances.** If you regularly attend Mass at another church as well as at St Francis de Sales, the onus is on you to provide me with substantive evidence from other sources (i.e. a letter from the priest of the parish where you visit regularly).

If, at the time of registration for the First Communion programme, there is a lack of objective evidence of frequent and regular Sunday Mass attendance, then it will likely mean that your child's First Communion will be delayed for at least a year, during which time you would be asked to make a commitment to attending Sunday Mass frequently and regularly. I wish to assure you that with regard to admittance to the sacraments, the answer is never *'no'*, but sometimes the answer is *'not yet'*.

I encourage you to think seriously about that solemn commitment which you made when you had your child baptised: to train them *'in the practice of the faith'*. If this is something which is not currently an important part of the life and practice of your family, it is not too late! There is time. I encourage you to take this commitment seriously so that your child will be ready to make their First Communion in 2026.

Yours sincerely

Fr Shaun

Fr Shaun Church
Parish Priest