



Diocese of Limerick

Overview 2023



A Lot Going On!

Appreciating the Life and Estimating the Cost

I am pleased to present to you this overview of the Diocese of Limerick for the year 2023. As you will see it's divided up into sections that correspond to the main themes of our 2016 Diocesan Synod. The purpose of this overview is threefold:

First, it provides an informative snapshot of the life of our Diocese with its parishes, religious orders and congregations, movements and associations, initiatives and agencies. As we saw at the 2016 Synod, the Diocese is very much a community of communities and, despite challenges, there's a lot going on!

Second, this overview is like an invitation to the reader to consider their place within the family of this Diocese. The Synod provided a roadmap. Everyone cannot do everything but each one has to do something! Each of us is called to do our part to ensure the life of the Gospel is nurtured and transmitted through one or other of the "highways" indicated in these pages – building up a sense of community belonging that includes social outreach; education and handing on the faith; liturgy, spirituality and life; new models of ministry involving lay people; and, last but by no means least, youth ministry.

Third, throughout the overview we provide some of the statistics of where things are at today. You'll find them also summarised at the end in an "At-a-Glance" section. I hope this information gives you a greater understanding of the profile of clergy, financial arrangements and challenges facing us in the diocese.

In publishing this overview I hope to help foster a greater appreciation of where the contribution to the monthly "Diocesan Needs" collection goes. The many valuable services provided by parish communities need in their turn to be resourced centrally in terms of good management, accounting, advice and assistance - and that costs. Many contribute generously to Church collections and this overview is an opportunity to say a big "thank you" to them.

As well as highlighting the good news of how much life there is in the Diocese and parishes, in outlining the practical facts and figures of the Diocese this overview helps us plan for the future and name some of the challenges. In doing so, two images from the Bible come to mind. The first is a story from King David (2 Samuel 24:1-17). It seems that at a certain point he organised a census of the people of Israel. He was working out

how many people there were so that he could also sort out how many possible soldiers he might be able to get together and how much money he could raise in taxes. The Bible tells us God was not at all happy with such a way of going about things. David was to trust in God rather than simply human calculations! So, certainly, we need to read these pages with a spirit of gratitude in our hearts for what God has done and is doing among us in our Diocese. We are to trust in him and not to look at the Church just as an organisation that we are running like a business employing marketing or strategic planning.

But there's another story from the Bible that reminds us not to have our heads in the clouds! This time it's from Jesus. In talking to his disciples about what it costs to be a disciple, Jesus says, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28). The invitation to "sit down and estimate the cost" comes from Jesus himself. Trusting in God, following Jesus and being guided by the Holy Spirit, we have to be practical, use our intelligence, do our calculations and go about things sensibly. And that means having courage in the coming years to recognise that certain structures and arrangements, buildings or activities that we've had for years may simply be no longer needed or just beyond what we can afford now. The voice of God is also heard through everyday facts and figures.

I hope you enjoy reading this overview. Let's remember our ancestors who handed on the faith to us down through the generations. Let's remember too that our action today reaches the future generations yet to be born but who are now present to us as we make our decisions. Above all, let's live in the "now" that the Holy Spirit wants us to face up to with courage and simplicity, detachment and generosity. In doing this, we can think of Our Lady. No one understands what the Church is and how it is to be better than she who is the Mother of the Church does. Her "yes" to God is at the heart of Church life; we echo that "yes" in our faith, hope and love. I hope you enjoy reading this overview. I am grateful to Julia Fassero and all who work on its preparation.



Brendan Leahy, Bishop of Limerick

8th September 2023
Birthday of Our Lady

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Pope John Paul II Awards

Each year, the Diocese celebrates those young people who participate in the JPII Awards. Pictured here is Bishop Brendan Leahy with 2023 Gold Award recipient David O'Brien of Scoil Pól, Kilfinane.

Community & Sense of Belonging



In this section:

Parishes as Communities of Belonging

Ways of Service

Catholic Schools & Colleges

Religious Congregations

Diocese of Limerick Heritage

Parishes as Communities of Belonging

The Church is a community - its many parts “make up one body in Christ” (*Romans 12:4-5*). The Diocese of Limerick attempts to build this community in mid-western Ireland and desires to create a sense of belonging for all.

It does this through a variety of outreaches, organisations, and predominantly through individual parishes.

“At Baptism we are all welcomed into the Christian community and confirmed in our dignity as children of God. As children loved by God ... we are called to be disciples of God's infinite love.” (*Limerick Diocesan Pastoral Plan*, 11).

“The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. ... Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community....”

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 47

By the numbers

(as of 1 July 2023)

60 parishes

2,100 km² (area of Diocese)

150,327 baptised Catholics

88 Diocesan priests

1111 founding year of the Diocese



Parishes as Communities of Belonging

Parish communities are central to the Church. It is from our parish that we meet fellow Catholics, worship together at Mass and other ceremonies, praise God as a community, and grow together in love for one another and in social outreach.

The Diocese of Limerick was established in the year 1111 at the synod of Ráth Breasail and its patron saints are St. Munchin and St. Ita. Both Munchin and Ita founded religious communities in County Limerick and fostered the Catholic faith in the area. We follow in their footsteps when we gather as parish communities in faith, hope and love.

Each year people gather in January 15th in Kileedy parish to honour and recall St. Ita. It is good to remember that the communion of saints in heaven accompany us here on earth.

“The parish is a beacon that radiates the light of the faith and so responds to the deepest and truest desires of the human heart, giving meaning and hope to the lives of individuals and families.”

Pope Benedict XVI



Ways of Service

The Diocese of Limerick is happy to work directly and associate with a range of community services and initiatives which include:

Limerick Social Service Council

Founded by Bishop Henry Murphy in 1966, the Limerick Social Service Council continues to have close links with the Diocese, particularly in the areas of Governance and Social Justice. The LSSC services include affordable childcare, services to families, community Mothers programmes, counselling services and services to older people. The LSSC has outreach services, particularly in counselling, across the Diocese of Limerick.

Chaplaincy

The Diocese is pleased to provide 17 chaplains to hospitals and nursing homes in the region, and Bishop Brendan Leahy is the Chair of St. John's Hospital. Additionally, the Diocese supports school, army, prison and third-level college chaplaincies.

Limerick Youth Service

Founded in 1973 by Sr. Joan Bowles, RSM, Limerick Youth Service has developed to be a multi-faceted organisation serving the young people of Limerick City and County. The Service reaches over 5,000 young people annually and has over 100 active volunteers.

**“Whatever happens
to the least of us,
affects all of us.”**

Fr. Pat Hogan

Some Initiatives of Service

The Diocese networks with groups and agencies already engaged with people who are marginalised with a view to concrete actions to support their work. The group includes Focus Ireland, Bedford Row Project, Simon Community, Limerick Youth Service, Community Companions of Moyross, the Travelling community, the City Centre Community Network, Prison chaplaincy, Children's Grief Project, Young People's mental health, Vincent de Paul, and Regeneration parishes.



Catholic Schools & Colleges

The Diocese recognises the importance of education for young people. It is committed to providing the best resources it can to ensure a Catholic education for every child and young adult who desires it.

To do this, the Diocesan Advisors and St. Senan's Education Office work in collaboration with teachers, school management, parish clergy, and parents and guardians to support and resource religious education in primary and secondary schools.

St. Munchin's Diocesan College was founded in 1796 by Bishop Young. The Diocese still financially supports the chaplaincy at St. Munchin's.

Mary Immaculate College, founded in 1898 by Bishop O'Dwyer and the Mercy Sisters, is home to around 5,000 students. The Bishop of Limerick serves as the Chair of the Trustees and Board of Governors. A diocesan priest, Fr. Mick Wall, serves as the chaplain.

By the numbers

102 Primary schools

816 volunteers on Boards of Management

12 Voluntary Catholic Schools

6 Designated ETB schools with Diocesan or Religious Order partnership

1 third-level College of Education and the Liberal Arts

30,000 students served by the Advisory Services

1,092 teachers & chaplains served by the Advisory Services

“Teaching is beautiful because it allows us to see the people who are entrusted to our care grow day after day. It is a great responsibility!”

Pope Francis



Emma
Fedamore N.S.

I like our Catholic school because...

“Spreading the Word of God is spreading God all over the world.”



Julia
Mary Queen of Ireland GNS Caherdavin

I like our Catholic school because...

“we are part of one big family.”

Religious Congregations

Inspired by their charisms, men and women religious are involved in a variety of ministries, but their relationship with God and lives of prayer are core components of who they are.

Some ministries include: faith formation, spiritual direction, and retreats, parish work and social justice issues, serving on councils and boards, working as chaplains, and walking with those who struggle. The Diocese knows how valuable the work and prayer of religious is and offers its support through a Vicar for Religious Life, Sr. Phyllis Moynihan.

By the numbers

16 female religious orders

8 male religious orders

212 female professed religious

70 male professed religious



Female Congregations

Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia
Faithful Companions of Jesus
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary
Little Company of Mary
Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
Poor Servants of the Mother of God
Presentation Sisters
Salesian Sisters
Sisters of Bon Secours De Troyes
Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of Mercy
Sisters of Charity of St. Paul the Apostle
Sisters of Marie Reparatrice
Sisters of Mercy
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart
Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Male Congregations

Augustinians
Christian Brothers
Dominicans
Franciscan Friars of the Renewal
Institute of Christ the King
Jesuits
Redemptorists
Salesians



**“Prayer and contemplation are core elements
of the lives of religious.”**

Sr. Phyllis Moynihan, RSM



Religious & the Life of the Church

The Diocese is proud to support 24 religious congregations with over 280 members. As well as through their prayers, these religious serve the faithful in many ways: in parishes, in schools, as chaplains, retreat leaders, and spiritual directors.

Diocese of Limerick Heritage

Pope Francis reminds us that the testimonies of the past are not only “a treasure to be jealously guarded” but a resource helping us “to walk in the present towards the future”.

The Art, Architecture and Heritage Advisory Committee has an advisory role in proposed alterations to churches.

The Archive was reconstituted by Bishop John Young in the early nineteenth century. It preserves documents, photographs, records, and correspondence related to priests, Bishops, laity, religious, and more.

By the numbers

30 researchers annually use the Archive

1800 archival boxes in the collection

1300's the *Black Book of Limerick* dates to the 1300s & is the oldest item

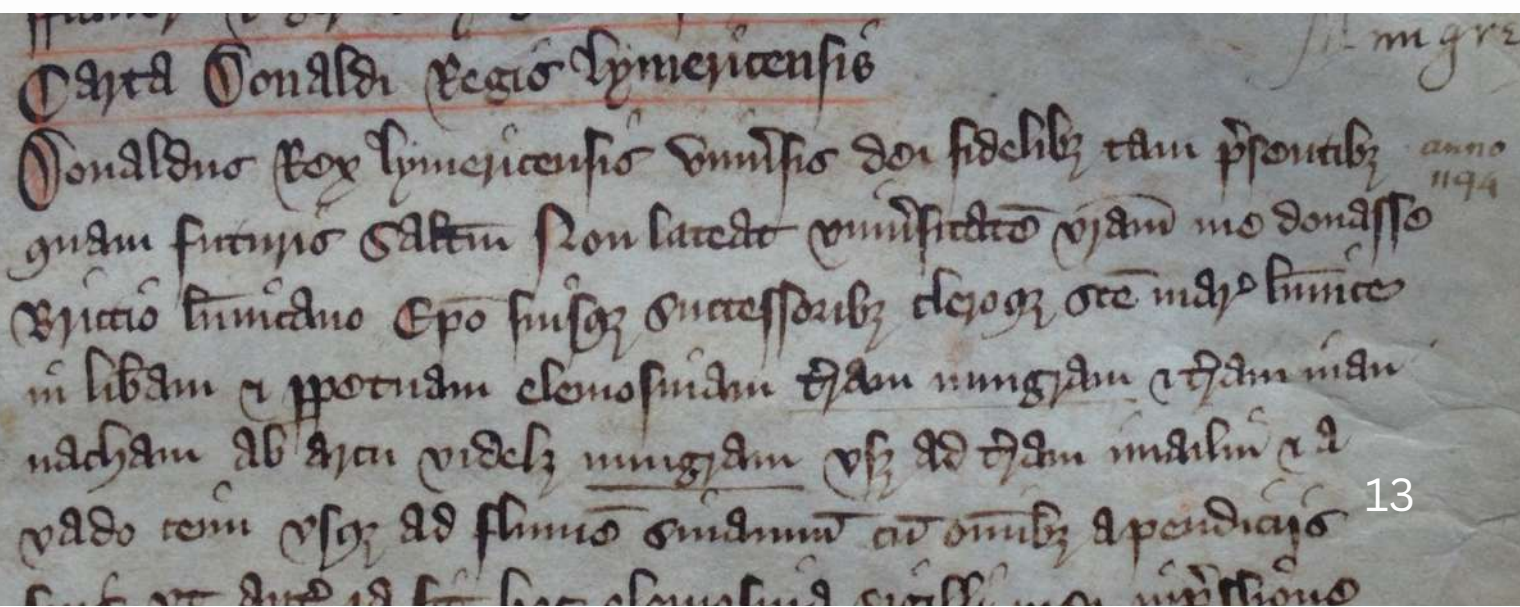
20th & 21st

century items - collections from convents, parishes, and individual priests

Did you know?

Collection highlights include:

- 1300's *Black Book of Limerick*
- 1700's *White Manuscript*
- 1700's and 1800's Irish manuscripts
- Numerous Bishops' and priests' papers
- Documents related to Irish cultural, social, and women's history



Faith Formation



In this section:



A Lifelong Process

Faith Formation Groups

Religious Education in Schools

A Lifelong Process

The Diocese strives to provide abundant opportunities for people of all ages to grow in their faith. “[F]aith formation is a lifelong process....” (*Limerick Diocesan Pastoral Plan*, 22). It does this by providing Sacramental Preparation classes for parents and students in non-Catholic schools. Additionally, a variety of events focused on faith are offered including parish Bible studies, adult faith formation classes and talks, and through pastoral letters and booklets.

A primary opportunity for catechesis takes place in the parish, and particularly the Mass. The Mass offers Scripture, prayer, catechesis, and the Eucharist - the ultimate faith formation.

In addition to these events, the Diocese maintains regular communications on religious events and significant civil events. Many faith formation links, events, and resources can be found on the Diocesan website and Facebook.

By the numbers

436 Masses each week

168 Masses each weekend

15,597 people attend Mass each weekend

7,200 monthly visitors to the Diocese website

6,400 followers of the Diocese Facebook

1,000 followers of the Diocese Instagram

“On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.”

Pope Francis





Did you know?

The Diocese promotes student involvement in: the Pope JP II Award, Trócaire, Alpha Youth, NET Ministries, Credible Catholic programme, Youth 2000, Muintearas Íosa and more!



Faith Formation Groups

The Diocese of Limerick is happy to provide and support different groups and programmes to facilitate faith formation for all ages, including these.

Alpha & Alpha Youth

Alpha is a conversation-based evangelisation group focused on introducing and discussing the essentials of Christianity.

Care of the Earth

An inter-diocesan effort centred around *Laudato Si'* puts on events, book studies, and provides resources focused on treating the earth with care.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is an approach to the religious formation of children ages 3 - 12 which allows them to experience and form a relationship with God.

Godly Play

Godly Play is a unique form of catechesis for children. It is based around storytelling as a way to introduce children to Scripture and Liturgy and its main goal is to let children explore their own faith.

Pilgrimages

Each year, Diocesan pilgrimages to Lourdes and Knock take place, as well as local pilgrimages to places like Killeedy, home of St. Ita.

Trócaire

Trócaire, meaning “compassion/mercy” is an agency of the Irish Catholic Church. “It strives to overcome the challenges of poverty and injustice in the developing world”.





Lourdes Pilgrimage

Each year, the Diocese organises a pilgrimage to Lourdes, France. Normally, several hundred attend of which around 100 are young people.



Religious Education in Schools

The Diocese of Limerick is happy to provide two advisory services to aid teachers and chaplains in promoting Religious Education in schools.

Diocesan Advisory Service to Primary Schools

The Primary Advisory Service visits all Catholic Primary Schools to support staff and encourage fidelity to Catholic ethos. The Advisors provide Religious Education and Faith Development classes for children not attending Catholic schools and host webinars for parents of First Communion and Confirmation children and schedule Confirmation. In addition, a monthly newsletter (*Creidimid*) is provided for Catholic schools.

Post Primary Diocesan Advisor

The Post Primary Diocesan Advisor facilitates meetings, offers resources through the weekly newsletter and annual in-service, and offers individual chaplains/teachers support with specific issues. Additionally, the Advisor visits the schools, liaises with principals and keeps a vibrant link between the Diocese and second-level schools.

The PPDA also provides a weekly newsletter with liturgy resources, practical ideas for projects, details of events and workshops and other information.

Michael *St. Munchin's College*

To me, a Catholic school is...

“a place where the individual can live and grow in their faith; where we can all respect each other as Catholics and also as boys from other faiths.”



Pastoral Care of the Family



In this section:



The Church is A Family

Family Resources & Groups

*Accompanying Families
Through the Sacraments*

The Church is a Family

The family, in all its challenges and varied manifestations, is central to the life of the Church. Jesus who brought the life of heaven on earth lived in a family. The Catholic family today lives with the presence of Jesus among them. Ultimately the model of family life is the life of the Trinity, the Three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who love one another.

By the numbers *(for calendar year 2022)*

365 Marriages

1,792 Baptisms

2,126 Communions for the First Time

2,190 Confirmations

“The family ... is the school of human enrichment, where everyone belongs and has a place... It is also the school of Christian belief, where faith is caught, if not always explicitly taught.” (*Limerick Diocesan Pastoral Plan*, 14) The Diocese strives to provide resources for families at the parish and Diocesan level, including events and booklets on the topic.



Family Resources & Groups

The Diocese of Limerick provides and supports different groups and programmes to aid families at all different stages. The Diocese of Limerick strives to create an environment where all who pursue Christ earnestly are welcome. To that end, it strives to minister to those who are divorced, separated, identify as LGBTQ+ or feel isolated from the Church in any way.

Accord

Accord is a Catholic organisation recognised by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. It provides Marriage Preparation courses for engaged couples, as well as Marriage & Relationship Counselling. It also offers Relationship & Sexuality Education Programmes for schools and Fertility & Wellbeing courses and resources for married couples.

Children's Grief Centre

Children's Grief Centre, established by Sr. Helen Culhane offers counselling and aid to children who are suffering bereavement, including loss of a parent as well as separation and divorce.

Family Support

Both the Limerick Social Services Council and the Limerick Youth Service provide support for families through counselling and programmes.

Support for Human Life

The Diocese of Limerick supports and advocates for the dignity of every human person from conception to natural end. A number of resources are available to those facing or affected with abortion, including: rachelsvineyard.ie, giannacare.ie, and archtrust.org.uk.

“No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love.”

Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia, 325

Accompanying Families Through the Sacraments

Throughout each family and individual's life, there are many significant moments. Many of these mark a spiritual event and are intimately linked to the Church and her ministers.

Baptism

The Diocese offers Baptism preparation classes. In Baptism, children become members of the Church family!

First Communion

The child receives his/her First Holy Communion at Mass. He/she meets Jesus, truly present in the Eucharist. A wonderful family day!

Marriage

Many men and women serve God through marriage. They are united in Christ and become one!

Care of the Sick

As we age, often we grow frail. The Anointing of the Sick strengthens our bodies and souls. Individuals often seek counsel and prayer from priests or spiritual directors.

Confession

Every day, confessions are heard and offer us a chance to experience God's infinite mercy.

Confirmation

The Bishop confirms young people, sealing them with the Holy Spirit.

Ordination

Some men are called to the priesthood; the Church welcomes them and ordains them as they spend their lives serving others.

Bereavement

When a loved one dies, a parish supports and cares for the bereaved prior to and following the priest's celebration of the Requiem Mass.



Family: The Domestic Church

“[T]he family of humanity will mirror on earth the life of the Trinity. [It] is the ultimate source of all family life that Jesus wanted to communicate: three persons who love one another, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, sharing their life with us.” - Bishop Brendan Leahy

New Models of Pastoral Leadership



In this section:

Planning for the Future

Diocesan Clergy

Pastoral Units

Parish Finances

Safeguarding, Vetting, & Data Protection

Limerick Diocesan Centre

Planning for the Future

In 2018, following the Limerick 2016 Synod, as part of planning for a future with reduced numbers of clergy, the Diocese introduced new models of leadership - including the introduction of Pastoral Unit structures. These Units group parishes together to foster greater cross-community co-operation and sharing of administrative and pastoral resources. This is paired with a Team Ministry model of pastoral unit leadership. Going forward, it will invite more laity to collaborate with priests.

The Diocese sees new models of leadership as an “affirmation of the shared baptism of all members of the church - priests, religious and laity - and a desire that the gifts of all be brought into fruitful and collaborative service of the gospel.” (*Limerick Diocesan Pastoral Plan*, 25)

The Lay Pastoral Ministry Programme was developed with Mary Immaculate College to provide formation and training for lay people to equip them to play a greater role in ministry. 21 people recently completed the two-year programme and are taking on roles throughout the Diocese.

The Diocese commissioned a working group and produced an overview on the *Role of Women in Church Leadership* in November 2020.

By the numbers

16 pastoral units

114 members of pastoral unit councils

21 people who completed the Lay Pastoral Ministry programme in 2023



Diocesan Clergy

Diocesan priests still serve as a central point of contact for many people: they embody Christ and give welcome to all who seek them out. They try to create a sense of belonging to a community for everyone. Most importantly, they bring the Sacraments to us.

In gratitude for their priestly service, the Diocese tries to care for its priests throughout their lifetime, including in retirement. The Clergy Benevolent Fund provides aid to retired priests. Additionally, the Diocese employs a nurse to care for sick and elderly priests.

“I give thanks to God for the opportunity of serving in the Limerick diocese [in so many ways] and with great companions, priests and people: their love and prayers made life worth living for the Lord.”

Fr. John O'Shea



By the numbers

(as of 1 July 2023)

88 Diocesan priests

47 Diocesan priests under 75 in active ministry

41 Over 75 or retired earlier below that age on health grounds

26 retired priests who still offer pastoral care

72 average age of a priest

9 priests from abroad

60 parishes

1 : 3,198

active priest : baptised Catholic ratio (rounded down)





In Persona Christi

In the person of Christ - the priests of the Diocese of Limerick live to bring Christ to the faithful through their own actions and through the Sacraments. Every priest is different but they all work to achieve the same goal.

Pastoral Units

Following the 2016 Diocesan Synod, parishes were grouped into Pastoral Units. These groupings serve to promote greater administrative and pastoral co-operation, providing opportunities for units to do together what parishes might not be able to manage on their own.

There are 16 Pastoral Units now and they consist of 2-5 parishes. While individual parishes still exist, each one is linked to others.

The introduction of Pastoral Units was accompanied by the development of the Team Ministry model. By utilising the skills of both laity and clergy, this model seeks to become more efficient and creative in leadership styles.

By the numbers

16 pastoral units

60 parishes

150,327 Baptised Catholics

“The Pastoral Unit is a family of families - it's refreshing to connect with faith-filled people outside of one's own parish.”

Fr. Mike Cussen





Map and Boundaries

This map shows the pastoral units of the Diocese.

(1) Cathedral Pastoral Unit:

St. John's, Monaleen, St. Patrick's/St. Brigid's, St. Michael's, Our Lady Help of Christians

(2) Croí Clann Naofa Pastoral Unit:

St. Joseph's, St. Saviour's, Our Lady of Lourdes

(3) Slí Padraig Pastoral Unit:

Donoughmore/Knockea/Roxboro, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Holy Family

(4) Thomond Pastoral Unit:

St. Munchin's/St. Lelia's, Corpus Christi, Parteen/Meelick, St. Mary's, St. Nicholas'

(5) Cill Ruis Pastoral Unit:

Christ the King, Cratloe/Sixmilebridge, Our Lady of the Rosary

(6) Pobal Neasaín Pastoral Unit:

Patrickswell/Ballybrown, Mungret/Raheen/Crecora, St. Paul's, Kildimo/Pallaskerry

(7) Maigue Pastoral Unit:

Banogue, Croom, Dromin/Athlaccra, Manister, Fedamore, Bruff/Meanus/Grange

(8) Killacolla Pastoral Unit:

Rockhill/Bruree, Castletown/Ballyagran/Colmanswell

(9) Ballyhoura Pastoral Unit:

Ardpatrick, Glenroe/Ballyorgan, Kilfinane, Bulgaden/Martinstown, Effin/Garrienderk, Kilmallock

(10) Pastoral Unit 10:

Rathkeale, Ballingarry/Granagh, Knockaderry/Cloncagh

(11) Pastoral Unit 11:

11 (a) Croagh/Kilfinny, Adare, Cappagh

11 (b) Kilcornan, Askeaton/Ballysteen

(13) Shannon West Pastoral Unit:

Shanagolden/Robertstown/Foynes, Loughill/Ballyhahill, Glin, Coolcappa/Kilcolman

(14) Pastoral Unit 14:

Abbeyfeale, Athea, Templeglantine, Tournafulla/Mountcollins

(15) Pastoral Unit 15:

Newcastle West, Mahoonagh/Feohanagh/Castlemahon, Monagea, Ardagh/Carrickerry

(16) St. Ita's Pastoral Unit:

Dromcollogher/Broadford, Killeedy/Ashford, Feenagh/Kilmeedy

Safeguarding & Vetting

The Diocese desires to create and maintain safe environments for children and vulnerable adults within the life of the Church.

The Vetting Service supports and trains lay people in parishes and the Safeguarding Service supports and trains Safeguarding Representatives in 60 parishes. Additionally, the Diocesan Safeguarding & Vetting Offices provide guidance on risk assessment and best practices. Newsletters, resources, letters, leaflets and posters all focused on Safeguarding efforts are displayed in every church.

By the numbers

1000+ individuals vetted every year

28 Designated Vetting Signatories

100 Safeguarding Representatives across 16 Pastoral Units

3 Safeguarding Trainers

270 people attended trainings in 2022

Data Protection

The Diocese of Limerick connects with a large number of people in carrying out its mission. These include clergy, employees, volunteers and others who avail of Diocesan services.

This Diocese is committed to ensuring that any personal information that it has is properly and securely managed in accordance with Canon Law obligations, general privacy requirements and Civil Law regulations.

Did you know?

The Diocesan Data Protection Officer provides support and information to parishes and individuals regarding:

- requests for information about the data the Diocese uses
- Sacramental Registers
- streaming Mass and other ceremonies
- retention/length of retention of data
- security measures to protect data
- and more!

Limerick Diocesan Centre

The Limerick Diocesan Centre is housed in the former priests' wing of St. Munchin's College. The staff offer support to every school and parish in the Diocese and facilitate a range of pastoral and youth programmes and activities.

Staff support parishes, schools, priests, and the lay faithful in a range of areas. These include Chancellery, finance and administration, safeguarding, vetting, Archives, Diocesan Advisors. Youth and lifelong faith formation initiatives, programmes and support are core elements of services to parishes.

St. Senan's Education Office works across four Dioceses to advise the Patrons (Bishops) and schools Boards of Management on behalf of the relevant Patron.

The Data Protection Office (DPO) for the seven Dioceses of the province of Cashel is also based in the Centre.

By the numbers

14 full-time staff members

8 part-time staff members

504 schools across 4 Dioceses served by St. Senan's

346 parishes across the province of Cashel served by the DPO



“It is a privilege for us to serve so many committed individuals, lay and ordained, in the complex tapestry that is the Diocese of Limerick.” Catherine Kelly, Diocesan Secretary/General Manager

Liturgy, Spirituality, & Life



In this section:

Volunteers & Service to the Church

Spirituality & Life Resources

Movements & Communities

Volunteers & Service to the Church

There is a broad range of prayer groups, resources, and associations available to the faithful in this Diocese. Central to this is Mass and other opportunities for spiritual growth.

Volunteers are a major part of each parish and are essential to the vibrant life of the Church. Across the Diocese, volunteers of all ages serve in choirs, as readers, Ministers of the Eucharist, altar servers and so much more. They serve on school boards and parish councils and willingly offer their time, talent and skills.

“There is an intimate link between life and liturgy. The church speaks of “conscious, active and full’ participation” in the Mass. (Limerick Diocesan Pastoral Plan, 19) The faithful are invited to become intimately involved in the Mass and their own spirituality, both of which are central to our Catholic faith.

By the numbers

2,547 estimated volunteers across the Diocese of Limerick

69 choirs

100 sacristans

200 attendees twice a month for Fr. Chris O'Donnell's online prayer meeting

107 estimated secondary school retreats a year

“Music ministry is both a gift and service; it is the gift we are given, and the service we give in return, which brings us closer together and closer to God.”

Bernadette Kiely



Spirituality & Life

The Diocese of Limerick is happy to provide different resources and opportunities for the faithful to delve deeper into their faith. These, and many other resources, are available on the Diocesan website.

Pastoral Letters & Booklets

Bishop Leahy frequently writes pastoral letters and booklets on pertinent topics for the faithful, putting them online and in print.

Public & Private Prayer

Parishes and Pastoral Units are encouraged to offer ways to grow in faith. These may include *Lectio Divina* groups, Bible Studies and Rosary groups, as well as support groups for a variety of needs.

Redemptorist Novena

Every June, the Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help takes place at the Redemptorist Church and thousands take part in it.

Retreats

There are a number of retreats offered in the Diocese on different topics and in varied styles. The Diocese both hosts and supports many retreat opportunities for the faithful.

Spiritual Direction & Prayer Guides

The core aim of spiritual direction is to help a person discover his or her own deepest desires and to hear the gentle voice of God in their hearts. The Diocese provides information about local spiritual directors.



Movements & Communities

The Diocese of Limerick is happy to provide and support different groups and organisations for the faithful, including the following.

Domestic Church

A lay movement for married couples, Domestic Church focuses on providing small group community and spiritual formation.

Emmanuel Community

An international Catholic Lay Community, Emmanuel focuses on adoration, compassion and evangelisation to spread God's love.

Legion of Mary

The Legion of Mary is a lay Catholic organisation whose members give service to their Church and neighbours through visits and service.

Maranatha Prayer Ministry

Maranatha offers a weekly prayer meeting with scriptural discussion and praise & worship. It also offers healing services.

Neocatechumenal Way

The Neocatechumenal Way is an instrument of the New Evangelisation, to bring up what is at the heart of Christianity: Jesus Christ rose from death so that we can be freed from our slavery to sin and receive the gift of eternal life! It is present in over 900 dioceses and has been here since 2014.

Syro-Malabar Rite

Originally from India, the Syro-Malabar Rite Community is a tradition of Catholicism which is present in the Diocese of Limerick.



Young People



In this section:



Christ Wants You to Be Alive!

Programmes for Young People

Groups for Young People

Vocations

Christ Wants You to Be Alive!

Young people are central to the heart of the Church. The hope of the Diocese is to “ensure that young people feel connected, involved and active in a multigenerational church...” (*Limerick Diocesan Pastoral Plan 17*) It strives to provide for the spiritual development of all youth and young adults through different programmes, events and retreats.

Most events are run through Muintearas Íosa, the Diocesan Youth Group which has been running for over 45 years. It focuses on three flames: Fáilte, Foghlaim, agus Guí. Members of Muintearas Íosa often continue their involvement well into young adulthood and beyond.

By the numbers

50% of Limerick's population is under 35 years old

14 Diocese-run youth events in 2022

263 young people took part in the 5 main programmes in 2023

100 young people attend the Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage

“Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!”

Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 1





Faith & Friendship

Youth ministry is about “providing experiences for young people that help them to grow in faith and in friendship while deepening their sense of belonging, community, purpose and joy.” - Fr. Chris O'Donnell



Programmes for Young People

The Diocese of Limerick desires to provide varied opportunities for young people in secondary school through young adulthood.

Anois

The Anois Leadership Programme is a residential student leadership programme offered to TY students. The intention is that students will return to their school and use what they have learned to implement a project to benefit the environment or their school community

Brú na Gráige

The whole purpose of the Brú is to offer young people a chance to experience community, friendship, faith and fun. It is formational as well, and they learn a bit more about themselves, their culture and heritage and maybe even a cúpla focal!

Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage

Annually the Diocese brings up to 100 young people. It gives them new life experiences, the opportunity to grow in faith and to support assisted pilgrims.



Pope John Paul II Awards

The JP II Award is a faith achievement award for young people ages 16 - 18, focused on involving them in practical ways with their local parish and community.

World Youth Day

World Youth Day is a world-wide gathering of young people, centred on Christ. Millions of youth come to meet with each other and the Pope for this life-changing event.





Brú na Gráige

Every summer, the Diocese takes young people to stay in the Brú na Gráige house in the Dingle peninsula. Full of fun, fellowship and faith, the programme hopes to bring them closer to each other and to God.

Groups for Young People

The Diocese of Limerick is fortunate to have many parishes and groups ministering to young people. Below are just a few examples.

Muintearas Íosa

The Diocesan youth group focuses on the importance of journeying with young people and centres around Fáilte, Foghlaim agus Guí.

Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia

Programmes, conferences and events for all ages are creatively run by the sisters, in addition to specific groups for children and young people.

Franciscan Friars of the Renewal

The friars run retreats, prayer meetings and youth clubs for children and young adults across Limerick. They are based in Moyross.

Youth 2000

Youth 2000 is a Catholic youth organisation operating across Ireland. The Limerick group meets weekly for a prayer meeting and social hour.

Askeaton Youth Council

The only such group in Limerick, the Junior Pastoral Council (formed in 2013) provides a forum for young people to voice their opinions and views on parish life.





Young Adult Events

By offering a variety of activities for young adults, the Diocese hopes to attract a new generation and offer them a way to be more active in the life of the Church whether single, married, ordained or professed religious.



Vocations

The Diocese of Limerick provides resources and guidance for young people as they explore their vocations to priesthood, religious life and marriage.

The Vocations Office runs a discernment group for young men who desire to be priests, and also sponsors events to bring together young people interested in community and faith.

Theology on Tap is a popular event run by the Vocations Office featuring a different Catholic speaker each month at a local pub. It is attended by local third-level students, young adults and more.

By the numbers

25 young adults on vocational walks

6 Theology on Tap events a year

25 attendees at Theology on Tap

1 seminarian for the Diocese

Tim Collins

Home Parish: Croagh/Kilfinny

Birthday: 25 June 1989

Studies: Pastoral Year (Fourth Configuration)

Favorite saint: St. Francis of Assisi

Favorite dessert: lemon meringue pie

Favorite sport: hurling

Favorite book: *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Vanauken

Favorite hobby: cycling



My Vocation Story

Pope Francis when speaking of vocations (priesthood, religious life, marriage) once said the following: “vocations are not the result of planning, but an encounter with God that changes your life”. My desire to become a priest came from such an encounter while studying in university. As I began to foster my relationship with God, it was then I felt a calling to priestly ministry. My journey so far has been a wonderful adventure.

Advice to A Man Considering Priesthood

Take the risk for Christ. Trust that God has a plan for you and continue to open your heart to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Diocese of Limerick

At-a-Glance:

Statistics & Finances



In this section:

Statistics & Finances

Average Mass Attendance

Clergy Overview & Outlook

Did you know?

Diocesan Contacts

Statistics & Finances

These pages provide a quick summary of the Diocese through facts and figures. They include a brief financial overview to help give an idea of the expenses required to operate the work of the Diocese.

The Diocese and its staff provide a range of services and supports to parishes and organisations, including clergy support, parish financial services, insurance and property assistance, chaplaincy and religious order support, charitable donations, trainings, programmes and more.

To offset some costs associated with the above, the Diocese generates income primarily through the Diocesan levy, rental income, its programmes and returns from its investments established with the sale of the Kilmoyle Bishop's House in 2008.

Diocesan Financial Snapshot *(as of 1 July 2023)*

€882,450	total annual income (including the Diocesan Needs Collection)
€1,917,332	total annual expenses

-€1,034,882 (offset in part by diocesan investment)

Dealing With the Deficit

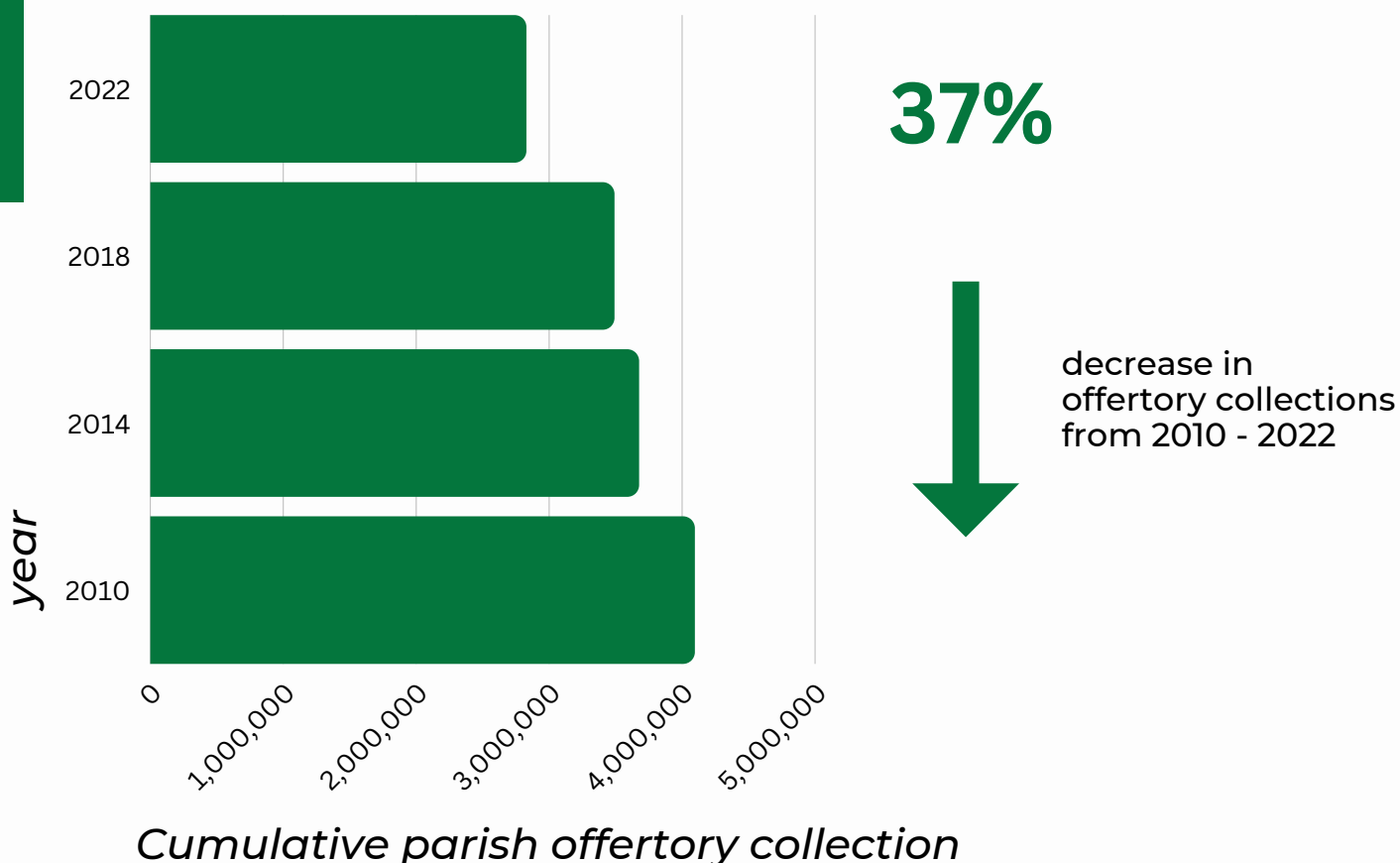
It is clear from the figures that the Diocese has a funding challenge. The Diocese has a Finance Committee that advises on investment, funding and properties.

The funding for the Maintenance and repair of church buildings comes solely from church collections and donations.

Parish Finances

Offertory Collection

The Sunday offertory collection is the traditional way parishes collect funds. This chart shows the offertory collection for every parish from 2010-2022. The collection has declined by 37% since 2010.



Annual Priest's Stipend

Priests serving in the 60 parishes receive a basic gross income from the four collections held in support of the clergy throughout the year.

In 2023 the basic income for a priest in the diocese is set at €30,000. Priests may receive additional offerings for the celebration of the sacraments and Mass intentions. This varies from parish to parish.

Where a priest does not receive the basic income, he is helped to reach the basic income through support from his fellow clergy who have received more than the basic income in their parishes.

Parish Finances

Running a parish involves so much: physical maintenance, fundraising and collections, sacraments and parish life, clergy support, scheduling and serving at Masses and other ceremonies, and so much more! Here, we have taken real financial data and statistics to help give an idea of what it costs to run a parish. While every parish is different and each has different sources of income and expenses, these will provide a peek into the costs involved.

Large Urban Parish | 4,310 Catholics

This parish is in Limerick City and is fairly standard as regards income and expenditure.

€87,980 offertory collection

€177,390 total income (including offertory collection)

€150,801 expenses (utilities, upkeep, diocesan levy, insurance, etc.)

Budget Surplus: **€26,589**

Medium Urban Parish | 3,250 Catholics

This parish is in Limerick City and is fairly standard as regards income and expenditure.

€52,740 offertory collection

€105,145 total income (including offertory collection)

€138,439 expenses (utilities, upkeep, diocesan levy, insurance, etc.)

Budget Deficit: **-€33,294**



Parish Finances

Large Rural Parish | 2,507 Catholics

This parish is located in Limerick County and in addition to normal income and expenditure, is a popular wedding venue.

€80,408 offertory collection

€213,705 total income (including offertory collection)

€200,448 expenses (utilities, upkeep, diocesan levy, insurance, etc.)

Budget Surplus: **€13,257**

Small Rural Parish | 905 Catholics

This parish is located in Limerick County and is fairly standard as regards income and expenditure.

€38,841 offertory collection

€67,072 total income (including offertory collection)

€69,505 expenses (utilities, upkeep, diocesan levy, insurance, etc.)

Budget Deficit: **-€2,433**

Did you know?

Every parish has different methods of collecting money, including standard offertory collections, clergy collections, online donation methods, funds from shrines, tax refunds, donations, weddings, draws, etc. These vary from parish to parish, but the traditional source of funding is the offertory collection. Increasingly, a variety of new forms of financial support of parishes will become available - standing orders, on-line donations, QR-code contributions and tap. Likewise, every parish has different expenditures. These are more standard, however, and include utilities and maintenance, repairs, diocesan levy, clergy costs, insurance, administration, etc. The amount for all of these varies greatly from parish to parish. While no two parishes are alike, this information will give you an idea of just how much goes into operating your parish.

Average Mass Attendance

These figures were calculated from counts done over three weekends in March 2023. They are the total average Mass attendance at a parish per weekend. It is acknowledged that people who do not or cannot come each week come a few times a month so that would need to be taken into account in reviewing these figures.

Pastoral Unit 1

St. Michael's	116
St. Michael's (Polish)	256
Our Lady Help of Christians	563
Monaleen	285
St. John's Cathedral	768
St. Patrick's	81
St. Brigid's	261

Pastoral Unit 2

St. Saviour's	134
St. Joseph's	302
Our Lady of Lourdes	166

Pastoral Unit 3

Holy Family	80
Our Lady Queen of Peace	205
Donoughmore	125
Knockea	139

Pastoral Unit 4

St. Nicholas'	300
St. Mary's	363
St. Lelia's	174
St. Munchin's	230
Parteen	170
Corpus Christi	113
Meelick	81

Pastoral Unit 5

Cratloe	148
Sixmilebridge	67
Holy Rosary	518
Christ the King	413

Pastoral Unit 7

Manister	197
Croom	150
Banogue	77
Dromin	50
Athlacca	52
Bruff	368
Fedamore	97
Grange	48
Meanus	51

Pastoral Unit 8

Rockhill	80
Ballyagran	64
Colmanswell	53
Bruree	109

Pastoral Unit 9

Ardpatrick	71
Kilfinane	290
Glenroe	73
Ballyorgan	55
Garrienderk	63
Effin	93
Kilmallock	378
Ballingaddy	42
Bulgaden	54
Martinstown	60

Pastoral Unit 6

St. Paul's	418
Patrickswell	232
Ballybrown	196
Raheen	795
Crecora	87
Mungret	90
Kildimo	144
Pallaskenry	97

Pastoral Unit 10

Ballingarry	100
Granagh	128
Rathkeale	517
Knockaderry	108
Cloncagh	73

Pastoral Unit 13

Shanagolden/Robertstown/ Foynes	259
Coolcappa/Kilcolman	74
Loughill/Ballyhahill Glin	124 264

Pastoral Unit 11

Adare	509
Kilfinny	43
Croagh	96
Cappagh	119
Askeaton	214
Kilcornan	119
Ballysteen	70

Pastoral Unit 14

Templeglantine	190
Tournafulla	134
Mountcollins	120
Abbeyfeale	683
Athea	174

Pastoral Unit 16

Dromcollogher	114
Broadford	99
Kilmeedy	60
Killeedy/Ashford	156

Pastoral Unit 15

Ardagh	107
Carrickerry	53
Feohanagh	96
Castlemahon	119
Newcastle West	882
Monagea	109

Clergy Overview & Outlook

Often, we speak about a “clergy crisis” and its effects on the future. But what exactly is it - and what does the future of the Diocese of Limerick and her clergy look like?

The Diocese is faced with a steady decrease in priests due to age coupled with almost no new vocations.

We are delighted to have one seminarian in formation and the

Diocese is actively working to encourage more young men to pursue the priesthood. The Bishop invites all Catholics in the Diocese of Limerick to support our current priests and to pray for more priests to serve us in the coming years.

We are delighted to have nine priests from abroad who have come to minister in the Diocese from Africa, Poland and India.

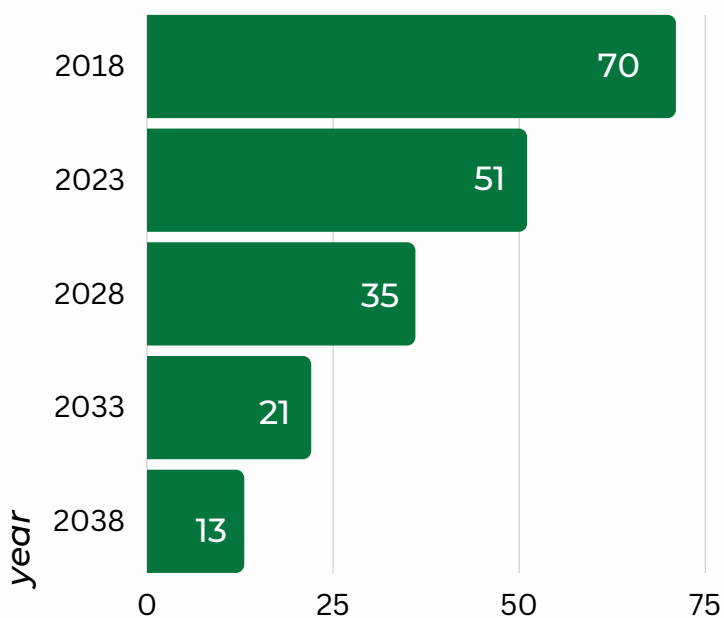
By the numbers *(as of 1 July 2023)*

88 Diocesan priests, including 41 either over 75 or retired

47 Diocesan priests under 75 in active ministry

72 average age of a priest

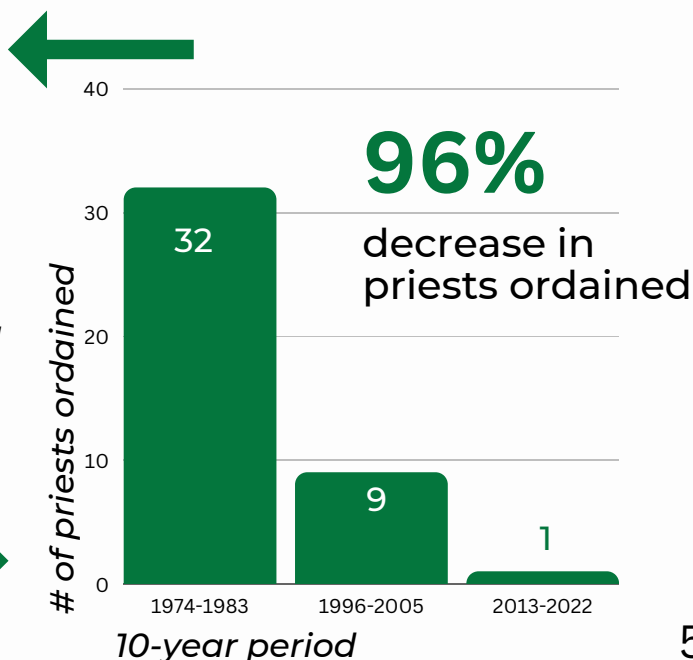
1 Diocesan seminarian



estimated # of priests under 75 years old

Over the past 50 years, the number of priests ordained for the Diocese has dropped rapidly. Here is a sampling of 10-year periods.

The official retirement age for a priest in the Diocese of Limerick is 75. However, many priests continue serving past 75. This graph gives a forecast of priests under 75 years (not accounting for those who retire early for illness) between 2018 - 2038.



Did You Know?

Nationally the percentage of the population who identified as Catholic fell from 79% in 2016 to 69% in 2022. Catholics in the Diocese of Limerick are grateful for their contacts with members of other churches and faith traditions.

764 readers at Mass across the Diocese

The Ministers of Eucharist total approximately **745**

52 organists provide music for Mass

37

secondary school students received Pope John Paul II Awards in 2023

Fr. Éamonn Fitzgibbon of the Diocese of Limerick was one of four delegates attending in Prague at the European Continental Phase of the Universal Synodal Process

The Diocese of Limerick began its own synod process in 2014 and held it in 2016. At that time:
all 60 parishes participated along with 25 groups for educators, the Travelling Community, migrants, youth ministry, etc.
5,500 people were involved
101 proposals were brought forth
400 delegates voted on them

Éamonn Fitzgibbon and Karen Kiely, *Limerick Diocesan Synod of 2016: A camino of Hope in the Spirit of Truth* (Dublin:Veritas 2023).

111

altar servers in 14 parishes

The Diocese of Limerick – An Illustrated History Book

edited by

David Bracken in 2013

92

Churches in the Diocese

Diocesan Contacts

Bishop's Office

Bishop Brendan Leahy

Ms. Catherine Kelly, General Manager / Diocesan Secretary

Ms. Patricia Quirke, Finance Manager

St. Senan's Education Office

Ms. Aoife Foley, Acting Director

Mr. Kevin Kelly, Assistant Director

Essential Contacts

Mr. Ger Crowley, Director of Safeguarding (DLP)

ger.crowley@limerickdiocese.org

087 3233564

Ms. Michelle O'Riordan, Data Protection Officer

dpo@cashel-emly.ie



Charity Numbers

CRA: 20014728

CHY: 7140

Connect With Us!

www.limerickdiocese.org

www.limerickdioceseheritage.org

www.limerickdiocesef safeguarding.com

www.stsenansed.ie

Facebook: Diocese of Limerick

Instagram: @muintearasiosal

Contact Details

+353 61 350000

Limerick Diocesan Centre

St. Munchin's, Corbally, Limerick, V94 925C

office@limerickdiocese.org





diocese
of limerick
our catholic community

“Come and see
the works of God,
tremendous his
deeds among us.”

Psalm 66 (65): 5

