



Diocese of Pembroke

Diocese of Pembroke: Summary Report (2025)

The Diocese of Pembroke's 55 parishes face converging crises requiring immediate strategic response, yet they also possess significant strengths. The diocese can seek deeper renewal, not just survive, but only with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to grant us a clear vision as we make hard choices and engage together in unified action.

Critical Challenges

Severe Priest Shortage: Currently, 24 active priests serve 55 parishes, dropping to 19-21 by June 2026 due to retirements. This unsustainable ratio demands difficult decisions about consolidation and shared ministry, and lay leadership.

Aging Demographics: Over 90% of attendees in some parishes are over 60. Long-serving volunteers are exhausted, with few younger members to replace them. Mass attendance is declining steadily.

Financial Crisis: We have 2/3 of the parishes that operate with structural deficits. Several carry debts, some exceeding \$100,000. Rising costs and aging buildings need major repairs (roofs, heating, accessibility) that current revenues cannot cover. The current diocesan operating deficit limits the support available.

Significant Strengths

Rich Spiritual Heritage: Religious orders built foundational Catholic institutions. Vibrant liturgical life continues with daily Mass and adoration in many parishes. The CWL and Knights of Columbus remain organizationally strong.

Key Catholic Presence: Madonna House in Combermere provides prayerful witness and priestly assistance. Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College fosters vocations and Catholic formation. Various ecclesial movements nourish faith.

Growing Collaboration: Inter-parish partnerships are increasing—shared staff, bulletins, sacramental prep, and digital outreach demonstrate adaptive success.

The Path Forward

The diocese must develop a transparent pastoral plan that honestly assesses resources, prioritizes mission over maintenance, and focuses energy where ministry bears fruit. Strategic consolidation, enhanced collaboration, and intentional evangelization—especially welcoming newcomers and engaging young families—are essential. With deep faith and committed laity, renewal is possible, but requires difficult decisions made through prayerful discernment and honest dialogue.