

Bishop Michael Burbidge (00:00):

This is Bishop Michael Burbidge, and you are listening to the Walk Humbly podcast.

Billy Atwell (00:07):

Podcasting from the St. Clare Studios here in the Diocese of Arlington, welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast. My name is Billy Atwell. I'm the Chief Communications Officer for the Diocese and your co-host.

(00:18):

We want to thank, especially during this Lenten season, those who have given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal, both this year as well as in the past year. You make all the ministries of the Diocese possible, including the Communications Office here that's hosting the podcast. So thank you for all that you have done, all of your generosity.

(00:35):

If you haven't yet, please make sure you rate this podcast or write a review wherever you're listening. And if you're listening through YouTube, we encourage you to subscribe to our channel and ring that notifications bell. Sign up for our e-newsletter at [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org) and follow Bishop Burbidge on Twitter @BishopBurbidge. Every day, he provides a short Gospel reflection for that day.

(00:55):

Make sure you're following the Diocese on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. If you have a question for Bishop Burbidge, send it to [info@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:info@arlingtondiocese.org) or just send us a message on social media.

(01:06):

Before we get started, the Men's and Women's Conferences. You can still register. The Men's Conference is on March 4th. It's at St. Joseph's Parish in Herndon. We've got a great slate of speakers, and Mass will be available, those kinds of things. Tim Staples, a well-known expert in apologetics and theology, will be speaking.

(01:23):

And the Women's Conference is on March 11th, also at St. Joseph Parish in Herndon. And a convert from Islam will be the main speaker. Very interesting topic, so make sure you go check that out at [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org).

(01:36):

I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how you doing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (01:38):

Billy, I am doing well. Thanks for mentioning those conferences. It's always a great privilege for me to celebrate Mass on that day for all who gather and to join everyone for lunch and then participate in the question and answer with the panel there.

(01:52):

So I add words of encouragement for anyone who has not yet signed up to attend the conferences. It is a day, as you said, that gifted speakers will be presenting. But it's a wonderful day to be together. Seeing so many women of faith in one gathering and also the men at the Men's Conference. It is really an uplifting and inspiring day.

(02:16):

And also, when we give a day like that to the Lord saying, "It's a Saturday, but Lord, I'm going to give this day to you," we know he will work some special blessings in our lives and speak a message that perhaps he wants us to hear.

[\(02:29\)](#):

So I thank all in our diocese who organize the conferences and everyone at St. Joseph's, including our pastor, Father Tom Bourque, for welcoming us both weekends. It's great generosity on the part of the parish. So thanks to all of them as well.

Billy Atwell [\(02:44\)](#):

It's hard to give up a Saturday at any parish, and he's given up back to back Saturdays so-

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(02:47\)](#):

He's very generous.

Billy Atwell [\(02:47\)](#):

... he's getting the extra graces this Lent. So Bishop, we've had two serious situations involving bishops. I want to go through one at a time here.

[\(02:56\)](#):

First, people are pretty well aware now, but Bishop David O'Connell, an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, he was murdered in his home last week. Police are still investigating it, but the husband of the housekeeper apparently has been arrested and identified as the suspect. This has been widespread in the media, but I was wondering if you would offer your comments and your thoughts in addition to the statement that you offered.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(03:16\)](#):

Oh, sure. Just filled, as everyone is, with grave sadness at the death of such a wonderful bishop in such a horrific way. I asked everyone in the Diocese to join me in praying for Archbishop Gomez, the Archbishop of Los Angeles, and all the faithful in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in their time of grief, as well as for the repose of Bishop O'Connell's soul and for his family, and many friends.

[\(03:43\)](#):

I did not know Bishop O'Connell well, but I certainly am aware of his reputation and whenever he spoke at the Conference of Bishops. He is very much known for his witness to the sanctity of all human life, his care for the poor, for the immigrants, for the most vulnerable, a lot of work with gang violence, trying to bring the community together and to bring peace. So as you have heard in so many statements, just beloved by the community.

[\(04:11\)](#):

So this is a very, very tragic situation. It brings us face to face with the problem of evil, the mystery of evil in our world. How can this happen? But it happens at a time when we are celebrating, uniting our sufferings, our crosses to the Lord, knowing that as we are united with his Passion, he's the one who has conquered the power of evil and has transformed suffering to glory and death to life.

[\(04:42\)](#):

So it is in that faith, it is in that Lenten faith, that we entrust Bishop O'Connell to God's love and mercy, and we know that the best way we can honor him is to continue his work of being promoters of the Gospel of Life and servants of the poor and the most vulnerable, and those in need.

Billy Atwell ([05:00](#)):

Absolutely. There's another really upsetting situation in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan Bishop Rolando Álvarez was sentenced to 26 years in prison on February 10th for, quote, "treason, undermining national integrity and spreading false news." He was also stripped of his citizenship and fined an enormous sum of money.

([05:20](#)):

He's been a vocal critic of President Daniel Ortega there, who has been repressing the Catholic faith for years and really targeted Catholics, particularly clerics. A large group of Nicaraguan clerics have recently fled as refugees to America and have been resettling around the country because of the fear of violence and retaliation from the government. He stayed, and he's paying this price.

([05:44](#)):

It's hard to believe that we're in times where that kind of repression can take place. You feel like that's a movie from times of old where this kind of anti-Catholic repression can happen, especially on such a widespread scale. What message do you have for parishioners here, especially the Nicaraguan community here in the Diocese?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:00](#)):

Well, Billy, like you said, it is hard, in a sense, to believe how this kind of repression takes place in our day and age, but it does. And it does throughout the entire world. And so we have many, many martyrs, people who are offering and paying the ultimate price, being imprisoned, being tortured, being killed for their faith and for staying strong in integrity.

([06:27](#)):

So we are very much united in prayer with Bishop Álvarez and rejoice in the example he gives us of heroic witness to the faith. But this is a reality. So many times, we ask the faithful in our diocese to pray for the protection of religious liberty. And sometimes, that can just seem like a casual prayer, but it's not.

([06:53](#)):

And situations like this remind us of this: Religious liberty, even in our own country, but in far more severe ways, throughout the world, is under attack. And we can see what degree some governments and some political leaders will attack that religious freedom.

Billy Atwell ([07:11](#)):

Absolutely, yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([07:12](#)):

And again, our hearts go out to all the immigrant and Nicaraguan community, and we certainly keep you in prayer and want to support you in your time of need and pray God that those who are living in our midst and community will be able to celebrate their faith and live their faith without this kind of fear.

([07:34](#)):

Also, I pray to God that the U.S. government continues to work to liberate Catholics in Nicaragua from this tyranny. It's so important. And I know certainly our leaders at the Conference of Bishops will also work together and collaborate in any way possible.

(07:54):

But battles for religious liberty, I cannot say this enough, still exist in our world. We need to pray daily for those who suffer religious discrimination, and we also must pray that our own country will fight to protect, to defend religious rights. It is truly a battle. And we're seeing that play out in many ways, but not to this extreme. And again, thoughts and prayers with the bishop and all those in the Nicaraguan community.

Billy Atwell (08:19):

Absolutely. Thank you for that. We saw recently the news of an FBI office in Richmond apparently drafted a memo available to other FBI offices about possible connections or alleged connections between communities in the Catholic Church devoted to the Traditional Latin Mass with extremist groups and even white supremacy.

(08:39):

The FBI has taken a tremendous amount of heat for this from Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Then they've removed the memo. They issued a statement saying that the memo didn't meet their standards, but they didn't say that the connection was ludicrous-

Bishop Michael Burbidge (08:51):

Right.

Billy Atwell (08:51):

Which I think some of us were waiting for.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (08:53):

Yeah, exactly.

Billy Atwell (08:54):

What are your thoughts on that? Because it somewhat connects almost to this last story of, what are the steps toward repression? And this is a really obnoxious connection that was made.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (09:03):

Well, it certainly is, and it should be troubling and offensive to all communities of faith as well as to all Americans. Again, I was very alarmed to read the reports written last week in that memo and also surprised to learn the mention of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, a religious order which celebrates the traditional form of the Catholic mass. And that order has served with devotion for many years within parishes of the Catholic community.

(09:39):

And to the faithful of our diocese who appreciate this form of the Catholic Mass to be linked in any way because of the way you worship or the way you live or practice your faith and to be labeled as extremist or as a threat to society... It is, just as you said, just outrageous. Absolutely outrageous.

[\(10:03\)](#):

And just a few minutes ago, we spoke about tyranny, a tyranny that labeled, discriminated against, took punitive action towards Catholics in Nicaragua. So we must be careful here in the United States. Here's another warning. Another warning-

Billy Atwell [\(10:18\)](#):

It begins with this labeling.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(10:18\)](#):

Yeah.

Billy Atwell [\(10:19\)](#):

It begins with the name-calling.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(10:21\)](#):

So yeah, we do not allow our government to label us as political extremists or racist because we hold traditional views and beliefs, strong beliefs and moral convictions. Because it's true. Regarding marriage, human sexuality, the dignity of the human person. And that should never be equated with extremism.

[\(10:45\)](#):

And so it's very, very disturbing, and it was good to see the FBI correct the error by removing the memo, but I think they should have gone much further and apologized. And I hope that this was a lone agent's grievous error in judgment and not evidence of what a larger group in the Justice Department thinks of Catholics. I mean, so-

Billy Atwell [\(11:03\)](#):

and double down on that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(11:04\)](#):

... I pray to God that that reality... Yes.

Billy Atwell [\(11:06\)](#):

Absolutely. Absolutely. How about a more positive story?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(11:10\)](#):

Okay, let's go to-

Billy Atwell [\(11:10\)](#):

We've got to do a couple rough ones [inaudible 00:11:13]. There's a really interesting story that developed out of Asbury University in Kentucky. They held a worship service that essentially evolved, for lack of a better term, into a 24-hour service that lasted for 13 days. People from around the country started pouring into this town in Kentucky.

[\(11:28\)](#):

And it was completely spontaneous. This was not something planned by the university, which I'm sure gave them a little bit of stress as to how do you accommodate all these people. But what do you make of this? It was really kind of a wild event.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([11:40](#)):

Well, like you said, this is extraordinarily good news. And to see people united in prayer and worship and filled with joy and together in communion as we're meant, as God created us to be. But I think it's also a sign with Pope Francis. All he says is, "The Holy Spirit is alive and at work. And he works spontaneously sometimes." And this was spontaneous. This was innovative. It was grassroots. It wasn't something that was anticipated, in a sense.

([12:11](#)):

And so it was just students who together felt the need to pray for companionship, for faith. And everything that Jesus tells us to do, even as we begin this sacred season of Lent, "Persevere in prayer. Pray together. Pray for each other. Pray with one another." And I just think it's just a beautiful sign, and I hope it catches on within our own church and within communities throughout the world. It's what the world needs more than ever right now.

([12:48](#)):

It's not only our willingness to witness to our faith and to live our faith but also praying. And praying that the hearts of elected officials and the hearts of all people will be transformed to live the commands and the ways of God. Even in our readings today, the Lord says, "I put out before you death or life. Choose life." And you choose life by following the Gospel, by following God's commands.

([13:15](#)):

And this revival here... I pray that's what it is. I pray it's a revival of faith in all of our communities, lifting up our hearts and our voices in prayer, joining together peacefully. What a wonderful sight. Isn't it great to see people together in such a prayerful, wonderful, joyful spirit?

Billy Atwell ([13:36](#)):

And it shows us what we're meant to be. I actually thought about your pastoral letter on communications when I was seeing this because it brought together the fact that we are meant to be in-person with the sacraments. You can't receive Confession on the phone. That we're meant to be in communion with one another, to worship God and to love God, and to express that.

([13:54](#)):

But it was digital media that connected people to the event. They knew about it because of social media. So yes, virtual learning is good, social communications are good, but that can't be a replacement for the real interaction. It has to be a supplement or driving people to it. And so you've used communications regularly. We use them here to let people know about events. This podcast is an example of that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:12](#)):

Right.

Billy Atwell ([14:13](#)):

But I thought of your pastoral letter actually, because this is the fulfillment of what you were saying you hoped would occur post-Covid, that-

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:19](#)):

Yeah.

Billy Atwell ([14:20](#)):

... we would use these communications in the right way.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:22](#)):

Well, as you said, the communications, the social media, technology, they're not ends in themselves. They're just a tool. They're a tool to bring people in communion to teach the faith, to share the good news and information. And you're right, this was a tool that was very effective. It brought people-

Billy Atwell ([14:44](#)):

50,000 people showed up.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:45](#)):

... together.

([14:45](#)):

Exactly. Exactly.

Billy Atwell ([14:46](#)):

That doesn't happen easily. Bishop, yesterday was Ash Wednesday, so we're now in the midst of the Lenten season. I thought you might want to take an opportunity to share your thoughts about how you would hope people would enter this season since we're on the front end of it but also continue through it as the weeks go on.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:01](#)):

Yeah. Well, we're in our second year of preparation for our diocesan Golden Jubilee. Everyone knows that, I hope. With the theme "Rejoice." And in the Gospel on Ash Wednesday, that's exactly what Jesus tells us, "Do not be gloomy. Do not be gloomy."

([15:17](#)):

And we can think of the Lenten season as a time to rejoice. Because why? It's an invitation that we all receive. It's a personal invitation, an intimate one to draw closer to Christ these 40 days, kind of go out in the desert with the Lord, leave behind the old way of living so that we can become a new creation in Christ and prepare ourselves to celebrate that new life in the Risen Lord.

([15:44](#)):

And so I hope everyone really takes an opportunity to say, "You know, I'm going to make this Lent the best one ever. I'm going to make this the best one ever." And we don't have to go far for the tools we need. They're time-tested. And they were mentioned in the Gospel yesterday. Prayer and fasting and almsgiving.

([16:03](#)):

So prayer. Just slow down, maybe, this Lent, slow down a little bit. Simply, instead of constantly doing, just say, "Well, how about this Lent? How much time am I going to spend each day, even just for a few moments being with the Lord?"

[\(16:18\)](#):

Fasting. Why do we give up things? We give up things to remind us that we have to create greater space in our lives, in our hearts, for God and others. So whenever we give up or fast, God's not going to let there be a void there. He's going to fill that space with his graces, his blessings.

Billy Atwell [\(16:37\)](#):

That's a great point.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(16:40\)](#):

And then almsgiving is... In this diocese, I'm so thankful to the faithful of this diocese and all our parishes and communities for the many ways throughout the year, our Catholic Charities and those who support Catholic Charities and our Bishop's Appeal, to let us give thanks to God by serving our brothers and sisters in most need. Even needing the basic necessities of life as well as spiritual and pastoral, emotional care.

[\(17:08\)](#):

But maybe there is a ministry out there in your parish that maybe you could volunteer with this Lent or maybe lend some support or something like that. But find a way, a special way, this Lent to show your thanks to God for your blessings by giving of yourself to others.

[\(17:24\)](#):

These are time-tested principles. All the saints talk about them as well because they come from the Lord himself. So I do pray that God will bless all of our faithful throughout our diocese with his love and mercy and that this will be your best Lent ever.

Billy Atwell [\(17:40\)](#):

And just a reminder for folks that our... I've been blessed to visit a lot of dioceses, and I don't know of one that's more generous in offering Confession than our diocese. Our priests are in the confessional. The light is on. It's waiting for you. Check out the confession times at your parish. There's going to be a time that matches your schedule, I promise. And if you have to sacrifice your time a little bit, it's well worth it. And there's no better season to avail yourself of that sacrament than right now.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(18:05\)](#):

Well, you're right. The generosity of our priests as confessors is just extraordinary. And I know that all of our parishes increase that time of confession during Lent. Every Wednesday night, for example, is also an opportunity.

[\(18:21\)](#):

And I always suggest that... In my own life, and maybe is a guide to others, is I don't think you have to wait till the week before Easter to go to Confession. I think you should do so at the beginning of Lent.

[\(18:36\)](#):

Because Lent, as we heard yesterday, is a call to "return to the Lord your God with all your heart." So what a beautiful way to say, "Okay, I'm returning to the Lord." That means, "Lord, I'm going to celebrate your mercy. I'm going to hand over to you everything in my life that's not of you. I want to get rid of that. I want you to forgive me because I really do want to return to you."

[\(19:00\)](#):



And then to hear those beautiful words. Because no sin is greater than God's mercy when we seek to return to him. To hear those words that, "You are now made clean. Though your sins were scarlet red, now they're white as snow."

[\(19:14\)](#):

That's how God forgives us just without condition, infinite, divine mercy. What a beautiful way now to make this journey, having been freed from our sins. So I do encourage maybe consideration of celebrating that beautiful sacrament at the beginning of the season.

Billy Atwell [\(19:28\)](#):

Excellent. Bishop, any final thoughts before you send us off?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:31\)](#):

No. But Billy, again, as we know, I'm sure that all of us have made promises this Lent of how we are going to do better. And it's really good to have that determination and to have that willpower that, "I am going to do these things." But don't forget, we cannot do it without the grace of God. We are completely dependent on the grace of God. So at the beginning of Lent, let's also renew our promise to walk humbly with God.

[\(20:03\)](#):

Thank you for listening to the Walk Humbly podcast. Make sure you check out more episodes on iTunes, Google Play, Stitcher and Spotify. You can follow me on Twitter @BishopBurbidge, where I offer Gospel reflections each morning and share photos and updates of what is going on in the Diocese of Arlington. Stay up-to-date with news, event information and inspirational content by subscribing to our e-newsletter at [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org).