

Bishop Michael Burbidge (00:00):

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

Billy Atwell (00:07):

We are podcasting from St. Clare Studios in the Diocese of Arlington, welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, the Diocese's Chief Communications Officer and your co-host. If you're listening to this podcast, you're benefiting from the generosity of those who have given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal as well as the Catholic Communications Campaign, which took place this last weekend. You can still give to that through Faith Direct if you would like. But the BLA and the Catholic Communications Campaign, they support a lot of different ministries.

(00:34):

The BLA supports our Vocations Office, Catholic schools, pro-life ministry, youth ministry, but communications as well. So we're so grateful to those who have made all this possible. Sign up for our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org. You can follow Bishop Burbidge on Twitter @bishopburbidge, where every day you can read a short Gospel reflection of that day. He's also on Instagram, so check him out there where you can see a lot of quotes and recaps from different homilies, things that you don't necessarily get to see on other platforms. You can follow the Diocese on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

(01:06):

If you have a question for Bishop Burbidge, send it to info@arlingtondiocese.org or you can send us a message on social media. A couple important events before we get started here. On Saturday, June 3rd, at Holy Trinity Parish in Gainesville, one of the most beautiful Masses of the year, it's a priestly ordination. It starts at 11:00 AM, it will be live-streamed, but we encourage people to come and attend in person if you're able to. We also have our Diocesan Family Festival coming up Saturday, June 10th, at the Warren County Fairgrounds. It is a lot of fun. It starts with Mass, but it's also got games and food and fun. It is a wonderful family atmosphere. Bring the whole family. It starts at 4:00 PM. Again, that's Saturday, June 10th at 4:00 PM at the Warren County Fairgrounds. All of our events are on our website at arlingtondiocese.org. I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you doing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (01:56):

Billy, I'm doing great. Thank you for highlighting what an exciting time of year this is. Confirmations, First Holy Communion, graduations, ordinations. So we're in that second year of our theme for our Golden Jubilee: rejoice, and there are so many reasons to rejoice, as you just mentioned, some of these exciting events, beautiful events coming up. And thanks for highlighting the Diocesan Family Festival, because that's really what it is. It's a family festival. We know the importance of family life, the gift family life is to the Church. We love to highlight that beautiful gift and bring people from all around the Diocese together. I love seeing so many children there and families together. Like you said, we have Mass, but then there's so much opportunity for just to have some fun and to enjoy each other's company. So I hope to see a great turnout.

Billy Atwell (02:45):

It's a true festival.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (02:46):

It really is.

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

We started two years ago just to see if it would work and boy, it's been a smash hit. Before we jump in, I wanted to ask you a question, if you had seen this story about a Sister Wilhelmina Lancaster, she founded the Benedictine Sisters of Mary, Queen of the Apostles. Have you seen that story?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:01](#)):

I have. I just saw it yesterday actually, in Catholic News Agency.

Billy Atwell ([03:05](#)):

Isn't that wild? I'll give a recap for people who haven't seen anything about it yet. But Sister Wilhelmina died at the age of 95. This is in 2019. She published a very popular Gregorian chant and classic Catholic hymn album in 1995. So that's how she's gained some notoriety. But anyway, her body was being moved to a final resting place, this is four years later. And the sisters, when they unearthed, realized that the coffin was cracked open and moisture and water had seeped inside. But then they realized that her body was completely intact. So she's what they call an incorrupt body, which is really fascinating. I don't know if I've seen a modern example of this. We have historical examples of this, but this was something else. I was curious your reaction to it.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:48](#)):

And Mother Cecilia, the prioress says, "I believe Sister Wilhelmina is the first incorrupt African American."

Billy Atwell ([03:53](#)):

I've never heard of one, so it's very possible.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:56](#)):

No, there's a great story in Catholic News Agency if our listeners want to review to that. But Mother Cecilia, in commenting on what you just described as really a miracle, she said this, "Not only was Sister's body in a remarkable preserved condition, her crown and bouquet of flowers were dried in place. The profession candle with the ribbon, her crucifix and rosary were all intact." So she stressed that the preservation of Sister's habit is a large part of what she sees as miraculous, because the habit is a beautiful sign that life here on Earth is not all there is.

([04:38](#)):

And I like the way Mother Cecilia closed the article. She says, "God protected Sister's body, perhaps, and the habit to enkindle our faith, to rekindle it, to bring people back to the faith." And I think that's a beautiful line, and it's really reflective of why God, our Lord Jesus performed miracles in the Gospel. Not to wow people, "Wow. Look how powerful I am," but it's a sign of - look of the life to come. And so the Lord continues to work miracles in all of our lives and all around us. But this is a pretty profound miracle that we're seeing here. And we just rejoice in the Lord continuing to show us signs of his miraculous power of the life he wishes us all to share in.

Billy Atwell ([05:31](#)):

And it's been drawing a huge crowd, hundreds apparently have been going.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (05:34):

Missouri, right?

Billy Atwell (05:34):

Yeah, rural Missouri. And I'm sure that monastery is not used to hundreds of visitors. So they're accommodating as best they can.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (05:40):

Well, we know that miracles are not limited to geographical areas.

Billy Atwell (05:44):

No, that is very true. Earlier this month, you issued a statement for Mental Health Awareness Month. And in it, you said this in part, "Following the COVID-19 pandemic, I spoke with many young people who have lingering anxiety or depression and have struggled to get back to normal. The greatest gift we can give any person struggling with mental illness is to listen without judgment and with compassion." I was wondering if you could share more about some of the conversations you've had, because I know you've said before that it wasn't just young people, but a lot of individuals, adults as well, and young children. But what prompted you to want to issue a statement on this topic, and what were those conversations like?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (06:20):

Well, yes, Billy. I think as I travel around the Diocese, I hear from many of our pastors, the stress, the anxiety, the depression that many of their parishioners are experiencing for many reasons. Again, the lingering impact of the COVID pandemic, also the pressures and demands of daily life these days, and the turmoil all around us. And pastors tell me that many of the reasons, probably the most prominent reason they refer people to Catholic Charities is for counseling to help people with mental health issues. When I traveled to our schools, our great schools, but including our high schools and our Catholic campus ministry programs, I learned the same thing. That our counselors in our schools are seeing an increase in the number of students who want and who need to speak with them like never before. And so mental health is a primary issue of our day.

(07:24):

And we should, God willing, get over any negative connotation of talking about mental health. We're human beings. We're body, we're soul, we're spirit, we're fragile. And to talk about emotional distress or a dark period that we're going through, or just simply being overwhelmed in life is a healthy thing to acknowledge. It's acknowledging that we're human. It's acknowledging that help is available and there is help available. And that's what I wanted to stress in my statement. First of all, God does not abandon us. God is with us in our time of need to share his healing love with us. And God is so good. He loves us so much that he sends us his instruments to help us. So I look upon counselors and psychologists and psychiatrists all as God's instruments. These are people with expertise who are there to be instruments of God's healing, knowing that it's a process.

(08:28):

It's not overnight. There's not a magical pill that we can take. It's a process, and we have to walk together helping each other to do so. And I did stress, and I do stress to our parents that when we choose a counselor for our young people or for ourselves, we should scrutinize that choice as much as we would for our doctor of primary care or a specialist for our heart condition or whatever it may be.

We should have that same scrutiny because we want a counselor who we understand believes in the same faith, convictions, moral convictions, that we share. Because unfortunately, I have heard parents spending a lot of money sending their children to a counselor only for them to be steered in the wrong way. And so that's why I really consider a priority in our diocese to really do our part, to encourage people who, with faith, pursue degrees in counseling. We need them more than ever. We have that treasure, Divine Mercy University...

Billy Atwell ([09:36](#)):

I was just going to mention that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([09:37](#)):

... In our diocese, and I'm always steering people there. We need good counselors rooted in faith because both are necessary. Good psychology, good counseling, but root it in faith. And so I just encourage everyone to be mindful of that and not to be afraid to ask for help. I say that at every confirmation homily. I tell our young people... They want so much to do good. They want to be good people, but they have so many temptations and so many pressures and demands around them. I said, "First of all, you can't keep these promises. You're making a confirmation by yourself. You got to stay close to God number one, but you got to let God help you through these special people he puts in your life, whether they - first of all your parents, but also your teachers and your counselors and all these people want to help you. Don't be afraid to ask for help."

([10:36](#)):

So hopefully Mental Health Awareness Month reminds all of us that this is not foreign to any family. I am sure every family, everyone listening today, probably someone very close to them in the family or themselves are dealing with this issue. It's a real issue in today's day and age, but God is in our midst.

Billy Atwell ([10:56](#)):

That's right. And a lot of times people don't know where to begin when they're looking for a counselor like you were saying. Vet them, but they're like, "I don't even know where to begin." There's two things you can do: one, you can call Catholic Charities, they have counselors on staff, and it's a sliding scale pay model. So it's proportional to your income. This is not just a service for the rich, this is for everybody and they make it accessible to anyone. That's part of their mission. They also have counselors they can refer to that they know are rooted in Catholic teaching and are experts in their field. They're very, very good, capable counselors.

([11:26](#)):

Also, Divine Mercy University has counseling on site there, and they can refer as well. Because again, they're graduating these students that are going across the country. They can tell you where there are good counselors both in our region, but also in others. So ccda.net to contact Catholic Charities or just Google Divine Mercy University. Again, like Bishop Burbidge said, they're a treasure in our diocese and they've got wonderful resources to help you if you need it.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([11:50](#)):

And Billy the thing also, just like with our physical condition, so often we make the mistake of, we see signs that something's just not right and we wait too long, and by the time we ask for help, wow, it could have been such an easier path if we reached out earlier. It's the same thing with mental health.

Billy Atwell ([12:10](#)):

Exactly.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([12:11](#)):

We see those signs if we're overwhelmed, if we're distressed, if we lost consistently that sense of joy that we once had. They could be signs that now's the time to reach out and to ask for help, not to wait until it's too late. And I was just reading an article the other day too, that with young people, the big warning, I know our parents are aware of this, I know they hear this all the time, but it's so true, is one of the things that we can be vigilant about with our young people is that social media. That addiction. I mean, I've read statistics today, the addiction to social media is often a factor that leads to mental health issues because it leads to isolation and it leads to comparison to other people, "I'm not good enough," or whatever.

([13:00](#)):

It leads to untruths filling their heads. So for all of us, we have to be very, very vigilant with our use of that social media. But also I'm sure as those responsible for young people, especially parents, to know that that's something that needs to be monitored. At least that's what the experts are telling us.

Billy Atwell ([13:19](#)):

And if you teach some of those boundaries at an early age, that's a gift you've given them for life because they're going to need boundaries in all areas of life. And if they don't have those early on, they're going to suffer.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:30](#)):

That's right.

Billy Atwell ([13:30](#)):

So, yeah, it's a gift to do that for them. Bishop, we're in the midst of graduation season, especially at our high schools. All kids are graduating to the next grade. But it's particularly potent in our high schools where you have kids going off to college and families are seeing one open bedroom in the house they're figuring out what to do with. But for the students that you're not going to be able to speak to directly, those in public schools or otherwise, what is your message as we send them off to different universities and colleges?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:57](#)):

Well, first of all, I want to say congratulations and not to take that lightly. Our schools, all of our schools that our students attend, have high standards. And to receive that diploma is an accomplishment, and they should be proud of it. So be proud. Your diploma that you receive is a reflection that you completed a lot of requirements. You persevered. You had some hard work, so congratulations, but you didn't do it alone. So be mindful of the people that you need to thank; God most especially, for the gifts and abilities he has given to you, your parents and your teachers who have played a special role in your life. So first of all, well done and congratulations to our graduates. I just attended a graduation ceremony. I have four coming up in our Catholic high schools. And it is, it's always inspiring.

([14:51](#)):

You hear, and this is a good thing, you hear the zeal, the enthusiasm in the speeches and in the comments that I hear as I walk around talking to graduates and they're on fire and they're going to change the world. They're going to change the world, and that's great. You want to see that zeal and that optimism and energy. But we have to remember, we're not going to change the world unless we do it through Christ and through Gospel values. We can have all the desires we want. But it's only to the extent that we bring our faith, our deeply held moral convictions, into that next stage, wherever God brings us.

[\(15:34\)](#):

And so I always encourage, "Don't lose that optimism. Don't lose that zeal and joy, but be grounded. Be rooted in that which will sustain you," and it's your faith...

Billy Atwell [\(15:45\)](#):

Absolutely.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(15:46\)](#):

... And so hold dear to it. I knew you were going to ask me about the graduation, so I did do a little research about our four Catholic high schools...

Billy Atwell [\(15:53\)](#):

Excellent.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(15:53\)](#):

... If you don't mind me to share that with you.

Billy Atwell [\(15:55\)](#):

Please do.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(15:56\)](#):

So, St. John Paul the Great has 125 graduates, Ireton has 194, Paul VI, 260, and O'Connell, 296. So with our Catholic high school students, and thanks to our parents for supporting Catholic education and the sacrifices you make, but more than \$85.1 million in college scholarships as of May 18.

Billy Atwell [\(16:19\)](#):

Isn't that unreal?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(16:20\)](#):

From four schools?

Billy Atwell [\(16:21\)](#):

\$85 million.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(16:23\)](#):

So it's an amount they also expect it to increase once the final numbers come in. So that is pretty incredible. Really, really, really good. And 96 student athletes have committed to play sports in college. Two students are applying to enter college seminary.

Billy Atwell ([16:42](#)):

That's wonderful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:43](#)):

Really, really wonderful young men. 100% graduation rate, 100% college acceptance rate.

Billy Atwell ([16:50](#)):

That's wonderful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:50](#)):

Isn't that wonderful?

Billy Atwell ([16:51](#)):

Do people ask you, "Is Catholic high school worth it?" Cost wise. Because it is an investment. These are the numbers that demonstrate you're front-loading some of your costs because especially they get scholarships. You're reducing college costs, but you're spending it at this level, but also the acceptance rates and so on. It's really amazing.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:07](#)):

And 12 will attend service academies and 14 have ROTC scholarships.

Billy Atwell ([17:12](#)):

That's wonderful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:12](#)):

So I'm very, very proud of our Catholic schools. I'm also very proud of our students who have attended other schools in our various communities. I know they have high standards as well. And I know our students have worked very hard, I'm sure they can share similar statistics. So I'm proud of all of our students graduating from the various public schools, private academies, Catholic schools outside this diocese, but also I'm going to take special pride in our four Catholic high schools here in the Diocese of Arlington as well.

Billy Atwell ([17:48](#)):

Perfect. So we got a couple questions for you as we wrap up here. The first was, "How do we talk our brothers and sisters back to church who have been victims of sexual abuse by priests and still live with the pain as they have seen church leaders at the highest levels turn a blind eye?"

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:06](#)):

That's a very powerful question. And I guess I would refer my answer to comments that I often hear from the victims of sexual abuse with whom I meet three or four times a year. In fact, next week I'll have

some prayer with such individuals. So I guess I should share what I hear from them, because they are the victims, and there they are, coming to gather in a Catholic community. And many of whom are active in a church and others are desiring to get back. And what they say is, "This is a horrific thing that has happened to me," the people I meet with are not all victims by clergy, but some are, "But this is a horrific thing that happened to me. There is no explanation of how that could have happened. It's just so horrible. And they've robbed me of so much innocence, of joy and life and things, but I'm not going to let them rob me from being with the Lord and his Church."

Billy Atwell ([19:20](#)):

Oh, wow. That's powerful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:21](#)):

"I'm not going to let them take that from me."

Billy Atwell ([19:23](#)):

Wow. That's powerful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:23](#)):

And that's coming from many of the victims with whom I meet. "Now, for me to get to that point," they say, "I need lots of help. I need support from the Church. I need support from loved ones and family, but I'm not going to let them rob me of that." And I so much admire that courage, that faith and pray God, just do anything we can to make sure that's a reality in a person's life, but it's a process.

Billy Atwell ([19:58](#)):

Yeah. I'd imagine it would be. If anyone wants to learn about our child protection policy, also our Victim Assistance Office, we have experts that assist people in this process. Go to arlingtondiocese.org and you'll find that there on the menu. All right, the second question is, "What is the policy and process for a priest's retirement? How does that occur?"

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:20](#)):

So most dioceses, and it varies from one diocese to another, have different protocols on what the age of retirement is. So in our diocese, it's the age 75, which is very young these days. It gets younger and younger. So it's 75.

Billy Atwell ([20:37](#)):

Okay.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:37](#)):

So at that time, the priest submits a letter and it's accepted at the age of 75. Now, someone may ask to stay an extra year for one reason or another. Maybe he just started a project or may be celebrating a significant anniversary of priesthood or something. Could be something like that and that's always at the discretion of the bishop. Sometimes priests can ask to retire earlier. And many times that would be for health reasons. And so if that's what is the best interest of the priest, then certainly. So 75 in our diocese is the number, but of course there's always exceptions either way. But it's usually in consultation with the priest.

[\(21:23\)](#):

But at 75, the priest is encouraged to retire. Many times, after many years of not only priestly ministry, but heavy administrative responsibility. But when they retire, they don't retire from being a priest. They don't retire from priestly ministry. So often, and what is happening right now in our diocese, all of our retired priests, Bishop Loverde and our other retired priests are extremely active in priestly ministry. Covering for priests who are on vacation, who maybe are by themselves and say, "Well, I'll cover your parish for you so you can get away or in time of need." And so our priests, although they may retire from administrative responsibilities, very rarely they retire, unless it's for health reasons, from active priestly ministry.

Billy Atwell [\(22:10\)](#):

I would imagine that's a huge resource for the younger priests too, who are maybe a parochial vicar or they just got their first parish and they're learning the ropes. And there's a priest there who's maybe done that for 40 years or more and how invaluable that is.

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

No, exactly.

Billy Atwell [\(22:24\)](#):

That's wonderful.

[\(22:25\)](#):

Bishop, any final thoughts? And then, if you would, send us off with your blessing.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(22:28\)](#):

No, Billy, just the fact that as we mentioned at the beginning of the podcast, it is our year of rejoicing and we have many reasons to rejoice as a diocese. I thank all the faithful for your witness, your example, the many ways you support so many pastoral ministries that help so many people, both in your parish and as a diocese. And thank you for that. Most grateful to you. And in your own life, just take that moment to rejoice and the blessings that so often we can just simply take for granted. This is a year we focus on our Blessed Mother. This is the month of Mary that we honor her in a special way. So please stay close to Mary. She's the one the Lord gave to us as our mother. He gave Mary to us as our mother from the cross. And she's there to accompany us, to guide us and to protect us. And I pray that she will watch every you always so that with her help together, we will walk humbly with our God.

[\(23:26\)](#):

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](#).