

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 Studio in the Diocese of Arlington, welcome to The Walk Humbly podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, chief communications officer for the Diocese and your co-host. If you have a question for Bishop Burbidge, send it to [info@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:info@arlingtondiocese.org), and you can also send your message on social media.

(00:23):

A quick plug, on Saturday, March 9th, the diocesan Peace and Justice Commission's going to be holding a conference on entrepreneurship and the dignity of work. It's going to be held at Nativity Parish in Burke, and the Office of Catholic Schools will be facilitating their annual teacher job fair at St. Bernadette Parish in Springfield. Go to [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org) to check out both of those events, as well as a lot of other events that are coming up. Now, welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (00:48):

Billy, I'm doing well. I hope all of our listeners are having a fruitful and holy Lent as we continue this journey walking with Jesus to Jerusalem, awaiting the glory that awaits us as we celebrate his victory at Easter. Also praying in a special way for all of our elect who are preparing for the sacraments of initiation. So they're very much in our thoughts and prayers as well.

Billy Atwell (01:16):

Absolutely. I just got some news last night and it's been published by the Associated Press now, but I wanted to bring this up on the podcast last second here, that the Assisted Suicide Bill we've been talking about was basically tabled for this year, and so essentially it means it fails. It doesn't progress. It wasn't voted down, but it means it's not going to be progressing this year. This is great news. I just wanted to see if you had any response.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (01:35):

It is great news. We know the danger of that bill and the destruction that would be caused and how it would be against everything we believe as reflected in the Gospel of Life. Again, I thank our listeners, our parishioners who took the initiative to let their voices be heard. I think this is a sign. Our voices were heard, because this bill was getting some momentum.

Billy Atwell (02:03):

It absolutely was.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (02:04):

People of goodwill, people who believe in the Gospel of Life -- that it's sacred at every moment until natural death spoke up. This is good news. The battle's not over, as you mentioned. But for now, we can thank God for this victory.

Billy Atwell (02:19):

Absolutely. Before we get to main topics, I wanted to ask you about this. In a couple of days, you're going to have the opportunity to be what's called a co-consecrator for the Rite of Ordination in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for three auxiliary bishops there. Pope Francis has named Father Keith, I think it's

Chylinski, Father Christopher Cooke, and Father Efren Esmilla as new auxiliary bishops of Philadelphia. You were an auxiliary in Philadelphia, so you've been through this process, but I was also wondering if you could talk a little bit about what a co-consecrator is, because I've never heard of that really before.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:51](#)):

When I was at ordained an auxiliary bishop in Philadelphia, I was the only one. That's a lot. That's a little bit too much.

Billy Atwell ([02:56](#)):

That's a lot of pressure.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:57](#)):

A lot of pressure, so I'm glad there's three of them. But first of all, when I heard the announcement of these three new auxiliary bishops in my home diocese, I just rejoice and thank God. The Lord gives us many, many signs that he's always going to take care of his church. He's going to provide shepherds after his own heart. These are three, all very, very good friends of mine. Three wonderful, holy, good, faithful priests who are going to be tremendous bishops. I served as rector for Bishop Chylinski. Bishop Esmilla and I have been friends for a long time. We bonded in a trip that we made together with the Archbishop to Manila. He's Filipino, from the Filipino community and Bishop Cooke and I are dear friends as well. And to be a co-consecrator is a formality in the life of the church. The Archbishop ordains, but the church has a liturgical norm that there has to be at least three bishops to ordain.

([04:05](#)):

So a co-consecrator kind of assures that. But I don't think there's going to be any worry on Thursday. There's going to be at least 50 other bishops there, but I get a good seat at least. And it's truly an honor. It's an honor when you participate in the ordination of any bishop, but having such a deep friendship with them in serving in this role. So I ask all the faithful, because bishops are given to the church, not just to a local church. From now on their lives are available to serve wherever God sends. So please pray for these men as they prepare for this joyful day in their lives.

Billy Atwell ([04:40](#)):

It's a beautiful thing to be Catholic. 'Cause so many of the things that we believe and the things that we do have ancient roots. I was asking Father Weston about the co-consecrator, and he said that it was... That there's writings about it from the Council of Carthage in 394, they specify the three people... I said, "Wow, it is a beautiful thing to be part of an ancient faith where you can look back to the year 300 and something and talk about, we're still doing that today."

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:04](#)):

Yeah, isn't that true? That what it really means to be Catholic? It's played out in so many ways. This is just another example: new successors to the Apostles.

Billy Atwell ([05:14](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. It's a beautiful thing. Bishop, last week you signed a letter with your brother bishops to implore U.S. senators to oppose something called the Access to Family Building Act. It was Senate Bill 3612. Essentially, the bill was an attempt to override state efforts to restrict in vitro fertilization treatments, often called IVF. This comes on the heels of the Alabama Supreme Court decision that recognized embryos as children under state law, meaning that couples whose embryos, also children were accidentally destroyed during or after IVF treatments could actually sue. This made a lot of news

internationally actually. Share with us why you signed this letter, and for those who are not as familiar with the issue, why does the church oppose IVF? It's for couples who have trouble conceiving, and so I think there's sometimes a difficulty feeling sad for their situation, but they know also what the church is teaching us here.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (06:06):

No, again, it's a very sensitive, it's very important, it's very timely issue. But just as we began the letter with my fellow bishops who co-signed the letter, I want to start by saying that I completely understand why a married couple who desires children would want to go to great lengths to bring that precious gift into their lives. In fact, as a diocese, we pray, we devote a certain time each year praying specifically for such couples. There are many types of fertility treatments that are perfectly moral and within the teachings of our church. There are, however, and we try to make this clear in the letter, improper ways to go about seeking the good of children and one of those is IVF. The reason is simple. Life begins at conception, and conception is the moment a woman's egg is fertilized. So an embryo is a child in its earliest stage, and there are other concerns such as the fact that the child is not created through the procreative act.

(07:11):

The "marital act," as we sometimes call it. A cold medical process is not how God designed a child to be brought into the world. But this bill goes even further than just violating the moral truth about embryos and God's design for conception. It also, Billy, poses serious concerns regarding religious freedom. Here's what I mean by that. It would be the first law ever passed to exempt itself from the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. It would prevent, for example, private organizations from limiting or interfering with the new so-called, "right" to IVF and similar reproductive technologies. So that would mean a Catholic hospital could be expected to provide IVF treatments. That's what we mean about going against the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. So basically, and I encourage people, everyone to read the letter, and there's going to be an article in our upcoming Herald on this: Enshrining IVF as a legal right is not pro-life and it's not pro-child, nor is it pro-religious freedom.

Billy Atwell (08:21):

Absolutely. Yeah. If you want to take a look at the letter, go to [ArlingtonDiocese.org](http://ArlingtonDiocese.org), but also the USCCB has their own sign-up. So we talked about the Virginia Catholic Conference, [VAcatholic.org](http://VAcatholic.org), where you can get state alerts, but on a lot of these national issues, it's important to sign up. If you go to [usccb.org/take-action](http://usccb.org/take-action), you can be a part of their action alerts as well. They send very timely alerts about things like this where you can see the statements from the bishops and be able to contact your legislators. So Bishop, thank you for signing that letter. Thank you for putting your voice to this. This is a difficult one, but the church deals with difficult issues. Thank you for being on the front lines there.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (08:56):

That's right, Billy.

Billy Atwell (08:59):

Bishop you've spoken to several groups lately, including priests during a priest retreat, seminarians during a visit to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, where you were on staff and also the staff for our Chancery Day of Prayer just yesterday. So as we continue through this sacred season, it's also a bit of a solemn season. What are some of the messages that you've been sharing with these groups, these pastoral messages?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (09:21):

Yeah. First of all, I visit our seminarians every year and just conduct, as you mentioned, a visit to our men who are at St. Charles Seminary. Again, leaving a visit like that, I want the faithful to rejoice in this news with me. I left, as I always do, energized, inspired, saying, "Yes, Lord, your promise is true. You're providing for your church." I assure the faithful, if you could see the men right now in formation, not just from our diocese, there's other dioceses that send men to St. Charles Seminary and Mount St. Mary's. If you see these men, we have every reason to be so hopeful for the church. These are really... They're not saints, none of us are, but they're trying hard to become saints. I guess to answer your question, that's the message that I've been sharing with any opportunity I have -- recently at the Men's Conference and the other groups you mentioned, that's our call.

(10:20):

Whatever our vocation in life is, through baptism, and Lent highlights that call. It's basically about the call to holiness of returning to the Lord with all our heart and taking seriously that path to sanctification. Our job is to get to heaven and to help others to get to heaven. So Lent reminds us -- a powerful way that we do that, besides prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We have to take up our cross, Jesus said that. We shouldn't be surprised. Crosses come our way. Take up your cross. Follow me many, many times. Rarely is it the cross we decide for ourselves. Rarely is it the cross we desire or expect, but in God's divine plan, it's the cross that's going to lead us to holiness and sanctification. If it's united to his, there's no cross too heavy. If it's united to his, then glory awaits us. So basically that's the message I was sharing.

Billy Atwell (11:16):

That's a beautiful message. Thank you for sharing that. That's wonderful. Kind of in that same spirit, on March 1st, you had asked the faithful of the Diocese to join you in abstaining from technology, a digital fast. We called it the diocesan "Day of Unplugging" to match with the "World Day of Unplugging." I was curious, how did it go for you and do you want us to do it again?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (11:34):

Oh, yes. Can we do it every day? I tell you, it was nice having fewer emails because we made it clear it was only essential, but it's a reminder. I mean, there were a couple times during that day, as our listeners know, I like sports. I was reminded on the Day of Unplugging how many times I go to my favorite sports apps to get an update or to check on something or whatever, and to be caught in your tracks, oh no, I'm not doing that today.

Billy Atwell (12:11):

You're breaking the rules.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (12:12):

Then I'm like, okay, so now I have an opportunity to be quiet or to pray or to say a little prayer or something. It is my hope that this day is a reminder to all of us of that need daily to create some space in silence for ourselves and not to allow the constant checking of social media and utilizing it in such a way that it begins to control us, because that can happen. But really, I'd be anxious to see what you and your team have learned too about what feedback you got.

(12:45):

But it was really, for me, it was wonderful to hear the excitement about people preparing for it, especially from our young people. Parents are saying, "Oh, my child keeps reminding me, we're 'unplugging' on Friday," and a number of families I know prayed instead of watching TV that night and things like that. But it's just that reminder. And all the saints write about this, right? We all know. Silence is just so important in our lives. Because that's where God... There's not a void when we make room for silence

because God fills it. Hopefully that was a blessing that our people heard. Have you heard from the faithfuls bit?

Billy Atwell ([13:27](#)):

A bit, we got a lot of thanks for doing it even before it happened. I think people sometimes feel they need license to check out of technology. You feel responsible to respond to messages on social media or to text messages and to be checking emails constantly. I think people need permission sometimes in a sense to step back. We've got a lot of gratitude for that, but I definitely think people liked it this first time we've done it. I think we're going to get an even better response next time because they heard other people doing it.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:55](#)):

That's great. Maybe I should have done that too.

Billy Atwell ([13:57](#)):

You could always do a day of unplugging anytime you want.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:00](#)):

Anyone can do that.

Billy Atwell ([14:01](#)):

But to do it in unity, I think was really nice.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:03](#)):

To do with others is helpful.

Billy Atwell ([14:04](#)):

Yeah, very much so. Bishop, in this country, March is known as Women's History Month, and we have a long history in the church, beginning with our Blessed Mother, but also through the long line of women saints, including doctors of the church, that we can use as role models and remember them and the lives that they lived and use that as a guide for living our own life. March 8th is International Women's Day, Angel Studios, the same studio that released the movie "Sound of Freedom" is going to be releasing a movie called "Cabrini," a film about Mother Francis Cabrini. I'm curious if you had any thoughts about this movie or the kind of growing trend of movies that feature the lives of saints and very religious topics. This is a trend that's continuing.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:47](#)):

Yeah, I'm hearing great things about the Mother Francis Cabrini movie. I'm looking forward to that. In fact, when we were together at the Bishops meeting in November, they had a showing of it. But unfortunately I was at a meeting that whole night. But I heard from my brother Bishops who were able to see it, and they were very inspired by it. So I'm very much looking forward to seeing it. It tells a story of a saintly woman who had great courage and vision and passion and very much is an example for us. It's important to always remember that saints are part of every element of history. When we celebrate, for example, Black Americans during Black History month in February, we should think of Saint Josephine Bakhita, when it's Women's History Month, we should call attention to women who live with profound virtue and trust.

([15:36](#)):

There are particularly important lessons for children who need to see the relevance of the church in everyday life. We all are blessed to have women who have inspired us, who had saintly influence, maybe not canonized officially, but maybe many of us are blessed to have mothers and grandmothers and aunts or saintly examples, and we hold them up as well. But regarding the movie, again, I think... I just love the fact that we're beginning to see that such movies are being produced. It's so hard sometimes for an entire family with children of various ages to watch a movie everyone can watch, but you can watch movies about the lives of the saints. So seeing this and other movies that are getting really good reviews and are popular is to me a sign, I hope Hollywood, listens, that we're looking for some good movies out there.

Billy Atwell ([16:38](#)):

It shows there's a market, and we are in a market-driven culture. So "The Passion of Christ" kicked off the proof of concept, so to speak, that major productions of a religious theme are desired. There is a market for this, and I love seeing more and more movies come down the line that talk about Christian marriage or talk about the saints or whatever it might be. You're right, as a dad, I can tell you, it is very hard to find media that we can all watch. Either we're watching cartoons or something they shouldn't watch. There's nothing in between. But these do offer something in between.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:09](#)):

Even the popularity of "The Chosen." Exactly. Why is that taking off? Because it's something a family can sit about together and watch. They may even talk about it afterwards. Even in the secular world. It was funny, I was away for a few days on an annual trip with some priest friends. A long tradition we have, and one of the things we like doing during the week is to go to movies. I don't get a chance to do that during the year. It was almost impossible to find three good movies to go to. We went to a couple and the theater's empty. No one's there, it just wasn't good. But then we went to see one day, "The Boys in the Boat" movie and the books even better. It's a story of pride in our nation, perseverance at the Olympics, and people rowing together, working together, making each other better, all the themes that we need to inspire us.

([18:07](#)):

The theater was packed, and I'm thinking, "Why won't producers say this is what we want?"

Billy Atwell ([18:15](#)):

Yeah, that's a good question.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:17](#)):

It used to be a great thing to be able to do. Sadly, Hollywood is just going off tracks. But parents, God bless you. I know you have to be so vigilant and watching, being careful what your children are seeing, what movies they're going to, what TV shows they're watching, what music they're listening to. In this day and age, very vigilant. But thank God we have Mother Francis Cabrini movie coming out.

Billy Atwell ([18:41](#)):

I think it's a growing trend. You see someone wins an Oscar for a movie and you're like, I didn't even know that movie existed. I've never heard of this before. So I think Hollywood's going to have to adjust if they want to survive.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:49](#)):

Well, when I was driving to Philly to visit the seminarians last week, there are billboards all over the place, about Mother Frances Cabrini. I'm like, wow. That in itself is evangelizing.

Billy Atwell ([18:59](#)):

You're right. You're absolutely right. Listen, if you are listening to this podcast, you are benefiting from the generosity of those who've given to the Bishop's, Lenten Appeal. We're in the Lenten season, obviously you're hearing about the BLA. We want to first say thank you to those who have given to the BLA in the past. You have made the most fundamental and critical ministries of this diocese possible. To those giving this year, we renew our thanks and say thank you. We've got a great year ahead where those funds will be put to extraordinarily good use serving the church's corporal works of mercy and spiritual works of mercy as well.

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

Billy, allow me to add my thanks to the generosity of the faithful in this diocese. It is inspiring, and I know why they're generous. They love the Lord, they love the church, and they love the opportunity to help other people. So I'm extremely, extremely grateful to the faithful that allow us to carry out these ministries and especially to our pastors, who take such a great leadership role in inviting people to participate in this work of the church.

Billy Atwell ([19:59](#)):

You're absolutely right. If you haven't yet, sign up for our e-newsletter at [Arlingtondiocese.org](http://Arlingtondiocese.org). You can follow Bishop Burbidge on X, which is formerly known as Twitter @BishopBurbidge, where every day he provides a short Gospel reflection for that day. We also post a lot of clips from Bishop Burbidge, from homilies and statements and messages that he's delivering around the Diocese and beyond on his Instagram account, @BishopMichaelBurbidge. You can follow the Diocese on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as well. Bishop, we have a couple questions from the social media-verse here. So the first one that says, how do you manage to run a diocese as large as this without any auxiliary bishops? This is going back to auxiliary bishops.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:36](#)):

Yeah, right.

Billy Atwell ([20:36](#)):

It's a good question.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:42](#)):

Well, yeah, it's a great question. Auxiliary bishops are assigned to a diocese usually based on the size of the diocese. I guess we could maybe... We keep growing, so I might be able to make a case for that one of these days. But recently, in the Office of Readings for priests that we do every day, the Book of Exodus is what we're reading these days. I think it was last week, where the great story about God even telling Moses, "You can't do it all. You can't do it all. You have to appoint delegates to help you, to hold your hands up. You're not going to be able to hold your hands up this long doing this work by yourself." So that's God's advice. So you're right. This is a large diocese and vibrant diocese and parishes and schools and communities and finances and buildings, it's a lot.

([21:35](#)):

I don't of course have expertise in all those areas, but I am truly blessed to have great people who help me, who support me, who share their wisdom, their expertise, who help to hold up my hands and keep me standing and I can rely on. I'm very blessed to have that kind of support. Without it, you could never... No bishop could run a diocese without the great support. As I often say, and most, almost 95% of these delegates are lay people, who are giving their service, their talents, expertise in service to the church.

They could be making more money elsewhere, all those kind of things. But they are giving it to the service of the church. That's what we mean with the laity, taking these leadership roles in your own office here, in the Communications Office, to have such a great team helping me to get the word out. It goes through every office in the chancery. So very grateful to all. Of course, ultimately the answer to the question is only by the grace of God.

Billy Atwell ([22:42](#)):

Right. Exactly. My last question is, how to be a "Mary" in a "Martha's" world? Our team particularly liked this one.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:51](#)):

Yeah, Yeah, me too. Because it is a great lesson. It's one of my favorite Gospel passages, Martha and Mary. It is a story of being and doing, right? It's being and doing. I don't think... We should never stop trying to improve in that area of getting that right balance between "being" and "doing." I don't think we'll get it to perfection until we're in heaven because it's hard. It's hard to get that balance. I understand that we have so many responsibilities, so many tasks, my own life included. I strive for that balance. Don't get it right every day. But Martha and Mary is that great lesson where Jesus said to Mary, "By being with me, sitting at my feet, you have chosen the better part." You've chosen the better part. But he didn't tell Martha to stop the doing, right? So it's important to remember that He didn't say, "Stop Martha, stop."

([23:47](#)):

There's a meal to be prepared. There's hospitality -- he didn't say, "Stop doing that." So in our own lives, Jesus is not telling us to stop doing. We have to do the tasks and the duties and the obligations that are entrusted to us as bishop or priest or husband, or father or mother, whatever. We have to do our job. But you find the strength for doing the job only when you spend that time being at the feet of Jesus. Again, as we were talking about earlier, a rhythm to your day that begins with prayer and ends with prayer, at least that, but at least a moment as well of silence at some part of the day. That "being," it will provide the strength for the "doing." So, it's not either/or. We're called to be both a Martha and a Mary.

Billy Atwell ([24:35](#)):

What a perfect way to end a Lenten podcast.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([24:37](#)):

What are we going to do now?

Billy Atwell ([24:39](#)):

Exactly right. Well, I'll tell you. Could you send us off with a blessing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([24:45](#)):

I will. Thank you so much, Billy. Thanks to everyone listening to our podcast. Let's stay united in prayer, praying for each other, lifting up each other, encouraging each other in faith, especially in this sacred season of Lent. Know that my thoughts and prayers are with you, asking God to give all of us the grace, the strength that we need, so that we may take up our cross, walk with him to Jerusalem and to walk humbly with our God. Thank you for listening to the Walk Humbly Podcast. Make sure you check out more episodes in all the podcasts our diocese offers on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and our diocesan website, [ArlingtonDiocese.org](http://ArlingtonDiocese.org). You can also follow me on X, formerly Twitter, [!@BishopBurbidge](#), where I provide a short Gospel reflection each morning and on Instagram [@BishopMichaelBurbidge](#).



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