

Bishop Burbidge (00:00):

This is Bishop Michael Burbidge. And you are listening to The Walk Humbly Podcast.

Billy Atwell (00:07):

Welcome to The Walk Humbly Podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, chief communications officer for the diocese and your cohost. If you haven't already, make sure you rate this podcast and write a review on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher or Overcast. And sign up for our eNewsletter at [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org). You can follow Bishop Burbidge on Twitter at Bishop Burbidge. Every day, he provides a short reflection on the gospel of that day. So go to [twitter.com/bishopburbidge](https://twitter.com/bishopburbidge) to check that out. You can also follow the diocese on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. And if you have a question for Bishop Burbidge, send it to [info@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:info@arlingtondiocese.org). I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you doing?

Bishop Burbidge (00:43):

I'm doing well, Billy. Thank you. Great to be with you and our listeners today.

Billy Atwell (00:47):

Absolutely. Before we get into our main topics, there's been an issue in the news that I want to raise with you and kind of a summary for folks who are listening. There have been demonstrations and violent protests that have broken out in cities throughout the country now following a police involved death of George Floyd, who was only 46 years old and a Minneapolis security guard. A bystander's video shows the then police officer holding Floyd in a prolonged and what we're finding out is a hold that's not part of the company, department policy and so on, kneeling on the man's neck. And he said, "I can't breathe," until he passed away. Since then law enforcement leaders nationwide have denounced it as excessive use of force and inappropriate.

Billy Atwell (01:29):

Activists are outraged and calling it an abuse of power. We've even seen the Department of Justice and the FBI say that they're launching an investigation. Initially peaceful protests developed into riots and looting and Saint Paul and Minneapolis. And a police precinct was actually set on fire last night. The mayor has called the National Guard. I know you've seen this. We've talked about that. But share what are your initial thoughts as you're seeing these news reports happen? What was going through your mind as a bishop, but also as a person?

Bishop Burbidge (01:58):

Well, certainly it's evident from the video that excessive force was used. And I'm sure like all of our listeners, it is an extremely difficult video to even view, to see another human being, being treated with such force and violence, and tragic, very, very tragic. And so we do pray. And that's the first thing we pray for Mr. Floyd, for the victim, and for his family. I cannot even begin to imagine the grief and the sorrow that they are experiencing at this time. So there is no way such excessive force could be considered anything but tragic. And as you said, others have denounced, rightfully so. Law enforcement experts, who seem to unanimously agree on that point.

Bishop Burbidge (03:02):

But we also know that no injustice should be responded with injustice. And right now, we always have a right to protest and to call for justice and in a swift way, of course. But looting and vandalism and more

violence only will make a terrible and tragic situation much worse. And so that's sad to see. So as a nation of laws, we must expect justice and justice for all. But we also allow the justice system to be carried out, which it is moving in that direction. We understand this matter is being given the attention from the justice system that is necessary. And it is absolutely a priority at this point. So we pray that for Mr. Floyd, his family, and for the end of the violence that has resulted.

Billy Atwell ([04:05](#)):

Absolutely. Moving onto a happier topic, our highest web traffic day of the entire year is when priest assignments are announced. That's probably not a surprise to you because I know you get a lot of feedback from people. This year was no different. What is the response that you've gotten from the faithful after that lengthy list of assignments, retirements was announced?

Bishop Burbidge ([04:24](#)):

I always feel like a general manager when we do the personnel changes. But all the personnel changes, there's a priority to them. The first priority is the needs of the diocese. What are the pastoral needs of the diocese? And obviously, then we want to try to match those needs with a priest whose gifts and personality and talents would best be able to respond, and to put the priest in a good situation to be happy in his ministry. But once one domino, someone retires, or once one domino falls, now there's multiple changes. I do not make the changes alone. First of all, we believe the Holy Spirit is leading, guiding us. I'm advised by a personnel board that assists me, who also know the priest and give their recommendations. So it's not just one person making those changes. And often, it involves a conversation with the priest too.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:35](#)):

And so we do, I always say that most of my transfers throughout the years as a priest were ones I never would have asked for, or even expected. But I've come to learn that God puts you where he needs you, and it's his plan. And our priests are so wonderful and accepting in the assignment. Bishop, where do you need me? Where does the church need me? The generosity of our priests is so good. So I do get letters. Bishop, how could you have transferred my priest? But that means they love their priest and so that's okay.

Billy Atwell ([06:18](#)):

That is a good sign. Very good. We're going to be returning to mass here shortly. Some of the diocese already has. But this phase one is now going to be throughout the diocese, which is certainly something to rejoice. And so for the past two weeks, 20 parishes of the diocese have been in phase one. And now the rest of the diocese, 50 of them, 50 new other parishes will be in phase one. What kind of feedback have you gotten from pastors that you've spoken to that have already opened for that 50% capacity, social distancing mass setting? What is the response you've gotten from them?

Bishop Burbidge ([06:49](#)):

Yeah. So we did a Zoom conference call with the parishes that have already opened, just to get feedback. What did you learn? So we can share with the other priests. And we had a good conference call. And basically, what the priests who have already had that opportunity said, "We have good protocols in place, good guidelines for the health and wellbeing of the community." And the priests said, "We follow them. And there was order. The parishioners were very respectful of what was being asked of them, even though it's radically different." Coming to mass now is going to be radically different. But

there was great cooperation. And with that cooperation allow for the beautiful celebration of the mass. Reopening means, at this time in phase one, 50% of maximum capacity, which means also the social distancing that is necessary. The faithful are expected to wear face masks unless they have a health condition that prevents them from doing so, or if they're under the age of 10. And parishes must maintain strict cleaning schedules, so allow proper time in between masses for the cleaning, disinfecting that may be, that will be necessary.

Bishop Burbidge ([08:06](#)):

And also, it's important for our listeners to hear is that this dispensation is still in place. If you, for health reasons, or even just you're not comfortable right now in going to out in public or to in church with other people there, you are dispensed from that obligation. We will continue to livestream our masses, and you'll be able to make the spiritual communion. This is an exciting time that we can begin across the diocese, the reopening.

Billy Atwell ([08:41](#)):

That's a good clarification on the dispensation because we've gotten a lot of questions from people asking. Is it a conditional dispensation? Do I have to fit into the age category of 60 or 65 and older? Or do I have to have ... And the answer is no, you don't have to have this. If you feel uncomfortable, you don't have to go. But for those who are comfortable going, there is at least a certain capacity. And certainly contact your parish if you want to know maybe certain particular procedures. Some parishes are putting out videos or resources to help you be aware of what's coming and what it'll look like when you get there. And the diocese has produced a video in English and Spanish, helping you understand some of the general guidelines for receiving communion and those kinds. Hopefully make you feel more comfortable, so that if you do want to come, you know what you might see and expect.

Bishop Burbidge ([09:21](#)):

Right. I think that's good. Thank you for making that clarification about the dispensation because I want everyone to be at peace with his or her decision. And the video that the diocese is posting today is very well done. It's just kind of a reminder of how, especially during this pandemic, how to receive Holy Communion and how to outstretch your hands to give the priest the best opportunity not to have to make contact. And even if ... And certainly, that's encouraged. And if someone, if those who choose to receive on the tongue, there's also a demonstration of that, so we can do so as safely as possible.

Billy Atwell ([10:05](#)):

Absolutely. I'm thinking back about what you were saying a minute ago about the priest assignments. And one of the most inspiring parts of that list are the to be ordained, those who are scheduled to be ordained on June 6th, how lucky we are as a local church to have five men ready to be ordained. I'm sure any minute now, if you called them today and said, "Would you want to do it today?" I think they'd say yes. But it's a joy for the whole church. How will this year's ordination be different maybe than previous years?

Bishop Burbidge ([10:32](#)):

Yeah. It is so wonderful. Like so many people whose lives have been altered significantly, I think of our graduates and those planning weddings and special celebrations, our newly ordained, or soon to be newly ordained have been going through the same thing. Will they be ordained on June the 6th or not?

Because until we want to make sure that we could at least have some sort of community together, not just ... We couldn't do it if we were still at the phase of no more than 10 people. Right?

Billy Atwell ([11:04](#)):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge ([11:05](#)):

So they've been holding out. They were good. They were like, "It's God's call, and so it's God's time, whatever he wants."

Billy Atwell ([11:14](#)):

That's a good final test before you become a priest. Start trusting in God. That's going to come up again.

Bishop Burbidge ([11:20](#)):

Exactly. Exactly, right. But you're right, we are so blessed to be able to ordain five new wonderful, these men are just very, very well prepared, and they're going to do a great job. And it's an opportunity for me to thank our listeners and parishioners throughout the diocese because we're blessed here with the number of men studying to become priests, 49. And that's because the faithful of this diocese have done their part. They pray for vocations.

Billy Atwell ([11:52](#)):

That's true.

Bishop Burbidge ([11:53](#)):

In our parishes, in our schools, in our homes and families. And those prayers, God has heard those prayers. He's answered those prayers. And generosity, we've mentioned this before, to educate a priest, to form a priest, there's a cost to that, and it's significant. It's a formation. How could we do that without the generosity of our people to the bishop's Lenten appeal and seminary vocations endowment? We're just so grateful. These are your priests, but you're helping us to be able to form them to be good and holy and faithful priests. And I know you'll be very proud.

Bishop Burbidge ([12:38](#)):

So this ordination's going to be very different in a sense because if we do 50% maximum of the cathedral with the proper social distancing, it comes down to about 325 people instead of 1100 that we would be able to see. So the guest list, we want to be generous in making sure the five being ordained have the most opportunity to invite guests. So this year, there's only going to be a representative number of priests representing all the clergy. And a lot of our groups and organizations and all who are part of ordinations usually just will not be able to be present. But we will be live streaming the ordination, which will be a beautiful experience. I encourage families to watch together and be praying for these young men. So on June the 6th, please watch the live streaming of our ordination, and we know you'll be with us in prayer and in spirit.

Billy Atwell ([13:40](#)):

Absolutely, yeah. So if you want to watch the livestream, follow us on YouTube. You can go to the Arlington Diocese YouTube channel. And if you subscribe there and you ring the bell, you'll get an alert.

You get an email that tells you, "Hey, they've started the livestream." You can also subscribe to our eNewsletter. Go to [arlingtondiocese.org/email](http://arlingtondiocese.org/email) and we'll send out a reminder email about that. And also, you can check us out on Facebook. We'll be live streaming it to Facebook as well. So it's a wonderful day. It's a day of joy, and how lucky we are. I'm sure a lot of bishops would love to be ordaining five men in the next week.

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

I'm very blessed.

Billy Atwell ([14:12](#)):

Bishop, any final thoughts before we conclude? And if you would send us off with your blessing as well.

Bishop Burbidge ([14:16](#)):

Again, some of our parishes will be receiving newly ordained. It's always a joy to tell the newly ordained their first assignment because you never forget your assignment.

Billy Atwell ([14:27](#)):

That's true. Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([14:28](#)):

There is something very special. I'm still in contact with friends from my first assignment who had such an influence in my life.

Billy Atwell ([14:34](#)):

That's wonderful.

Bishop Burbidge ([14:34](#)):

Still in contact with them. It's funny though. It does remind me of the story when I received my first assignment as a priest. The cardinal of the archdiocese, who was a very, very good man, and had a beautiful heart, but he was somewhat stern. And we were all afraid of him in a good way, in a respectful way. So the way he did it, he called us into the boardroom, there was eight of us. And he had the envelopes with the assignments in them. And he was a bit of a character too. He liked playing a little bit. So we see him and the eight envelopes. Of course, as a newly ordained, you just can't wait. Where am I going? Where's my first assignment? And he kind of was playing with the envelopes and then talked to us for about an hour and 15 minutes on human secularism and things like that. And we're like, "Please, just open. Tell us our assignments."

Billy Atwell ([15:41](#)):

That is so funny.

Bishop Burbidge ([15:41](#)):

So when he gave me my assignment, he said, he had a little comment for each person. So he said, "Father Burbidge," he says, "I am sending you to Saint Bernard Parish in Philadelphia. Father, if there is a problem at the parish, it is not the pastor." So I kind of laid the line right down the middle there.

Billy Atwell ([16:08](#)):

So he was teaching you patience and having a good sense of humor.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:10](#)):

He was, yeah. But again, I always believe the Lord, it's the Holy Spirit involved. The Lord sends us where he needs us. And it's the same for all of our listeners. Wherever you are now, what God has you doing in your life right now, it's not by coincidence. It's not by chance. It's God's plan for you. And the only thing that he asks is that you renew that yes to do his will how he wills and when he wills. If we do that, Billy, we always find our peace and our serenity and joy. So an opportunity for all of us as we pray for those men soon to be ordained, to renew our own vocations and our yes to God.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:51](#)):

There's a beautiful gospel story today is the Lord asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Why? Because Peter denied Jesus three times, so Jesus gave Peter that opportunity to reaffirm his love. And always think that's the Lord's way of telling us, "Yes, I know there are times you fail me. There are times you deny me. There are times you don't do my will. But I'll never give up on you." And every day he asks us and he gives us the opportunity to respond to that question. Do you love me? And so let's pray that we all give that yes by not only our words, but by the way we live our lives, and as together we walk humbly with our God.

Bishop Burbidge ([17:35](#)):

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