

Bishop Burbidge (00:00):

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

Billy Atwell (00:08):

Welcome to the walk humbly podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, chief communications officer for the diocese and your cohost. It is BLA season and if you're listening to this podcast then you're benefiting from the generosity of those who have given in the past to the Bishop's Linton Appeal, the BLA supports many ministries throughout the diocese, including the communications' office. So for those who made this possible, we want to say thank you. If you haven't already, please make sure you rate this podcast or write a review on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, wherever you're listening. And if you're on YouTube, please subscribe and hit that notification bell. You can sign up for our E-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org. You can follow Bishop Burbidge on Twitter at BishopBurbidge, where every day you can read a short reflection on the gospel of that day. Make sure you follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Send your questions to Bishop Burbidge, to info@arlingtondiocese.org. I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge, Bishop, how are you?

Bishop Burbidge (01:03):

Doing well, Billy. Hope all of our listeners are doing well also and staying safe and healthy. We're actually recording on the feast of the presentation of the Lord. What a beautiful day to remind us that even in the midst of the darkness, we are experiencing the light of Christ shines. The one who's conquered the darkness and his glory awaits us. And also a reminder today that in our own example in deeds and words, we are to radiate the light of Christ to those who so desperately are longing to see him. So we are called to be those instruments. I suggested in my tweet today that maybe at home families could light a candle just to remind us of those truths. Christ shining in our midst and for us to radiate that presence to others. So, thanks.

Billy Atwell (01:54):

That's wonderful. All right, Bishop we're in the midst of Catholic schools' week here in the United States, obviously, and we've also got a pandemic and snow going on. So are you able to make it to the schools like you usually do?

Bishop Burbidge (02:05):

Yeah, I always try to get out to the schools throughout the semester and try to visit at least a few each semester, as well as our high schools. And I was supposed to be at St. Luke's on Monday and I was disappointed actually, because snow closed the school but then I realized a little bit later, you're never too old for a snow day. But that's one of my greatest joys is getting out to our schools. And as you mentioned, Billy, this is Catholic schools' week. And we celebrate Catholic schools' week every year as we should. The great gift our schools are to our church, to our families, to our diocese, but more than ever this year, I think we need to celebrate Catholic schools' week. Because our schools have been shining even since last March with the pandemic. And we found a way through our dedicated, heroic Catholic educators to keep our schools open.

And we recognize the importance of students being part of a community and with students in a healthy learning environment. And the priority has been all along, keep our schools open, keep our school safe and then keep them thriving and indeed they are. And it is owed so much to our Catholic school educators. I express deep, deep gratitude to all of them and our parents who make so many

sacrifices to allow their children to receive a Catholic education where five days a week they're learning about their faith. They're able to pray in class. They can stop school and go to mass. They see religious symbols all around them, and so grateful to our parents for their sacrifices and our students, that's why our schools exist. And they have been stellar throughout this pandemic. These protocols and wearing masks and all these things that have to be part of keeping schools open.

It requires perseverance, and I hear from our teachers and principals, our students have just been so great with all of this because we love one another and we want to keep these environments healthy. So very, very grateful. Sometimes I, just to let our listeners know that here in our diocese, there's 37 power schools, four power Catholic schools, four Catholic high schools, three freestanding preschools, and five independent Catholic schools representing over 17,000 students in our diocese.

Billy Atwell ([04:32](#)):

It is easy to forget how big it is.

Bishop Burbidge ([04:33](#)):

Yeah. So a great gift to our diocese and happy Catholic schools' week everyone.

Billy Atwell ([04:38](#)):

And one of the beautiful things and how they've adapted throughout the pandemic is that at each level we would have certain basic principles that have to be met, CDC guidelines and so on. But at each level, at each school, they were able to assess what can we do and how can we do it? So that's why some are doing hybrid models. Some are doing fully in class learning, they're reacting within each environment. And I know that's been with the support of pastors and you've talked so many times about the role that pastors play both spiritually, but practically and supporting the principals at the different schools.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:06](#)):

And that's where our Catholic schools are very effective, where there's a great relationship between pastors and principals. And thanks to all of them.

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

Very good. There are a lot of different issues going on with the Virginia General Assembly. Jeff Crusoe is the executive director of the Virginia Catholic Conference has been notifying the Action Network regularly. And unfortunately, many of them have been words of warning about what might be coming. One of the issues that will directly and literally impact our ability to continue some ministries within Catholic charities is a bill that would ban Catholic charities from participating in adoption services. That because they would go by the teachings of our faith and they wouldn't place children in a home to a same sex couple that they would be excluded from the opportunity continue in that ministry. The bill cleared the house, and it's almost definitely heading to the Senate. It's something that's developing as we literally, but obviously you're concerned about this, but what would you want to point out for people?

Bishop Burbidge ([06:02](#)):

Yeah, no, this is a highly concerning issue for a couple of reasons. First is that it's saying that Catholic agencies are second class because we follow our faith almost.

Billy Atwell (06:14):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge (06:15):

It says that our teaching on marriage makes us unfit to take out risk children and find good loving homes with parents who welcome them and it's very insulting to who we are and to the faith that we profess. The second is that this is not the time to limit the number of agencies placing children in healthy homes. By eliminating the number of agencies that can help in adoption servicing only kids and families suffer by doing that. And it's very alarming that this has gone this far and is progressing along. COVID has increased the number of calls we have received for adoption services almost by double.

Billy Atwell (07:05):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bishop Burbidge (07:06):

And we are working around the clock to help these children and the legislature is telling us that even now we are unwanted in this critical work is a grave, grave mistake. And I pray that this is heads in the right direction, but it's very, very alarming right now. And it's almost impossible to believe that this is being promoted.

Billy Atwell (07:33):

Yeah. And for those listening, there is an opportunity in a day or two when the session hear these things and it goes through a committee and so on, but you need to sign up for the Virginia Catholic Conference Action Alert System. You go to vacatholic.org and how it works as Jeff sends out an email, a blast email saying, "Hey, we need your action now." And it usually takes you about two minutes to do what he needs or to make a phone call it might take a couple more, but it makes an enormous difference. And we've said this every time we talk about the VCC, every email does matter because they know that represents a lot more than just one person in their district.

Bishop Burbidge (08:05):

That's right.

Billy Atwell (08:05):

It's really critical. So again, vacatholic.org, and you'll get those emails. Last week, Bishop, the House of Delegates and the Senate made the tragic decision here in Virginia to expand drastically abortion coverage in Virginia's health benefits exchange. So what happens is this legislation would permit participation in the exchange to cover abortion for any reason funded in significant part by Virginia tax dollars. So essentially, we're all paying for this. Taxes pay for managing the exchange and for subsidizing health plans for tens of thousands of low and middle income Virginians using the exchange, but no one thought or at least hope that would not get to where we're participating in something we disagree with.

Bishop Burbidge (08:49):

No, again, another serious, serious issue demanding our attention. And for clarity, going off what you said, Billy, create a pursuant to the Federal Affordable Care Act. The Health Exchange is a virtual

marketplace, we'll say, for those shopping for health insurance. The Exchange used to prohibit taxpayer funding of abortion, similar to the Hyde Amendment.

Billy Atwell ([09:17](#)):

And people support this. I mean, polling has shown that people don't want their tax dollars going to pay for abortions.

Bishop Burbidge ([09:22](#)):

Right. Over and over again we saw that. So replacing the current life saving restrictions on abortion with a policy of abortion coverage in our State exchange is drastic.

Billy Atwell ([09:33](#)):

It is. It's a big move.

Bishop Burbidge ([09:34](#)):

This is a drastic move, dangerous and will result and this is the sad part, in the tragic end to more on unborn lives. And additionally, as you mentioned, poll after poll, citizens do not want their tax dollars going toward abortion.

Billy Atwell ([09:50](#)):

That's right.

Bishop Burbidge ([09:51](#)):

And I often say nothing about abortion is healthcare. True healthcare heals, but abortion ends a life of the most innocent and vulnerable among us and we should not be forced to pay for it.

Billy Atwell ([10:07](#)):

That's true. It is that clear. It is that simple. And so, again, please sign up for those action alerts to help fight against this kind of thing in the legislature right now. Bishop, the Virginia Department of Education, this has been big news in some circles, recently posted it's model policies for the treatment of transgender students in Virginia's public schools. Bishop, this has not made the news that it should, but in certain circles, especially amongst Catholics on social media, it's been circulated. What should people know about this document?

Bishop Burbidge ([10:35](#)):

Yeah, and this is again a another very, very important issue that calls all of us to be informed and to be prepared to act. This is a document that is intended by the Department of Education in Virginia, to serve as, they say, a blueprint. A blueprint for school divisions throughout the State in addressing transgender issues. This will impact hundreds of thousands of public school students. Many, many of our students attend public schools.

And unfortunately, Billy, this policy is founded on the falsehood that we are whoever we want to be rather than who God made us to be. So the issue of transgenderism is complicated, but it is also challenging since we want to speak the truth. But also as we always say, we speak the truth in love and we always are respectful of all persons, but let's look at this policy. This policy would force students to

use one's preferred pronoun and can be punished for not doing so. It helps students make "decisions" about their gender without parental involvement.

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

Which is appalling, that's wild.

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

Students could use whichever changing facility or overnight accommodation they choose based on the gender they identify with, staff could not question a student entering a restroom. School staff may need to report parents if students are seen as abused, neglected, or at risk of abuse or neglected, if their parents are going to be non-supportive of a child's gender transition. So we're not talking, of course, all physical, emotional abuse has to be reported, but what we're saying here, a lack of support for a child's gender transition by a parent could be considered abusive.

Billy Atwell ([11:53](#)):

Abusive.

Bishop Burbidge ([12:36](#)):

That has to be reported. So the public comment period is closed on this issue, but I still encourage everyone listening to contact the Department of Education here in Virginia and tell them how you feel about this issue. Our voices have to, have to be heard.

Billy Atwell ([12:53](#)):

It would be bad enough if this was just a suggestion that some committee within the Department of Education, but the fact that this is being put out there as the blueprint of their protocol for how all schools should operate is really, really terrifying. One question that we've gotten on this from time to time on social media is whether or not this policy could or would be forced on Catholic schools'. The policy was written for public schools, but we see the writing on the wall, that eventually this might come to us.

Bishop Burbidge ([13:19](#)):

My obligation, Bishop Billy is to proclaim and teach the truth. And it's an honor to do that and I could not ever allow our schools to teach something that is untrue and offensive of the truth that God has given us. So, no, we will not in any way, shape or form be incorporating this policy into our schools. We have a rich teaching about the dignity of the human person. God makes no mistakes, he makes us who we are. To teach we decide for ourselves something as personal and biologically connected as gender is dangerous, and it is deeply, deeply flawed. I recommend those listening to read an article by father Paul Scalia in the Arlington Catholic Herald. A tremendous article by father Scalia, Truth, Sex and Gender in which he lays out the foundational truths that inform our teaching. So foundational truths that inform our teaching on gender and transgenderism. And I know we also have some searching for more podcasts that talks about this topic as well, and we'll continue to do so because this issue is going to stay in front of us.

Billy Atwell ([14:31](#)):

I think you're right. Yeah, one of those podcasts is with father Scalia, but we also have Dr. Michael Horn and Dr. Frank Monter who are both experts in their field of clinical psychology and they know this issue well. And we have some podcasts from a while back with them, you can just search through our YouTube channel for those.

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

And I do recommend again, that article by father Scalia and these podcasts, and we'll continue because our parents, we know that you're facing these issues with questions you receive, and we want to be here to help you and we're going to stay in front of this topic.

Billy Atwell ([15:00](#)):

Very good. Bishop, we're seeing a pretty aggressive anti-life agenda unfold under the newly inaugurated by the administration. The USCCB has decried some of the actions to promote abortion overseas, which would be through rescinding what's called the Mexico city policy and has pledged to work and repeal the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits federal funds for abortion. That's a long standing amendment that's been used. It's bad enough to enshrine in law the ability to get an abortion, but it's quite another to force taxpayers to fund it. What are your thoughts as you're seeing this? And you had an initial statement about the inauguration [inaudible 00:15:36], but going through this, where [crosstalk 00:15:38]?

Bishop Burbidge ([15:37](#)):

Yeah. It's hard for our listeners, I'm sure listening to this podcast today, these are such heavy, heavy issues weighing upon us, but we have to speak about reality. And unfortunately, this is the reality with which we're dealing, but we have the truth and that gives us our confidence and our serenity. But what we're seeing from President Biden is tragic and dangerous for the unborn children who will be victimized by these policies and proposals. That's who we have to keep in mind, right?

Billy Atwell ([16:12](#)):

That's right.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:13](#)):

I'm proud that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has been actively fighting against these initiatives. And I hope as a professed Catholic that President Biden will at least listen to the voice of his church on these issues. On this issue he is not serving the people of this great nation in a manner consistent with his professed faith. And Archbishop Gomez, who is the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, courageously stated in his statement just after President Biden's inauguration, is that we extended our congratulations to the President.

We assured him of our prayers. We asked people all goodwill to pray for him and his safety and wellbeing and wisdom. And we acknowledged that we hope to be able to work together and share our perspective on various issues. Archbishop Gomez recognized that President Biden does not align with his own faith, however, on some fundamental matters, but there was a foundation laid upon, which we hope for dialogue and discussion where we can have that. But the end, our goal is to work productively with President Biden, for the good of all people.

Billy Atwell ([17:25](#)):

And that's really where it has to begin. It's like any relationship there has to be a dialogue and a discussion, it can't just be speaking through statements. It has to be an openness on his part to listen to the voice of the bishops on [crosstalk 00:17:36].

Bishop Burbidge ([17:36](#)):

Right, exactly. And we were just talking about the transgender issue, and we know that the President also signed an executive order that interprets sex discrimination in federal law to include sexual orientation and gender identity. So this will impact school sports, privacy of single-sex bathrooms, faith based organizations operation with federal grants, and whether employees might face retaliation for the religious beliefs about gender. So again, here the alarms are sounding.

Billy Atwell ([18:07](#)):

Yeah. And there's another action network that you all can sign up for. The Virginia Catholic Conference focuses on Virginia issues. If you are looking at some of these federal issues and are like, "I want to be able to speak out," the USCCB has an action alert system also. You go to usccb.org/take-action. So it's take-action.

Bishop Burbidge ([18:27](#)):

Yeah, and just to pause here Billy, because again, this is not all good news. We're talking about today regarding issues that are so important and dear to us. And yet, we began the podcast by saying that the light has conquered the darkness. All right. And that's Christ his teachings, his truth, his commands has conquered the darkness. Our goal is to walk in that light and to radiate that light. So, although this is a heavy podcast today, but there's no reason for us to despair or to feel defeated. The light of Christ has conquered the darkness. Let's walk together in that light.

Billy Atwell ([19:09](#)):

That's right. Before we go to a couple of questions and I promise the questions are a little easier today because the topics are so heavy, but some may recall back in November, we recognized National Black Catholic History Month. Well, this month is Black History Month, and we see it throughout the nation, people celebrating it in different ways. Bishop, first, are there any updates may be on the advisory council on racism that you've been convening?

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

Yeah, so a wonderful group of leaders from around our diocese who's helping me to address on a local level too of how we combat the evil of racism, which requires acknowledging where it does exist and how it is we can improve and how to implement the Bishop's document in a concrete, practical way.

Billy Atwell ([19:53](#)):

That's right.

Bishop Burbidge ([19:53](#)):

I want the document to open wide our hearts, and we do have a conference coming up on March, the 20th in Nativity Catholic Church with a mass, keynote speech, panel discussion or two, so that is going to be a really big important event for us. And our last meeting went very well and we hope to keep moving forward in this area.

Billy Atwell ([20:23](#)):

I'm going to encourage everyone listening to pray for those individuals. It's a lot of work there, it's important work. And I've read we put in the Arlington Catholic Herald, some individuals from the Black community throughout our history who have become Saints, father Augustus Tolton is an example. He grew up a slave in the 1800s and then became the first Black American priest in the United States. Sister Bowman who fought prejudice in the mid 20th century. There's lots of wonderful examples that we were able to point to in November and we'll be calling out on social media certainly this month. Oh, and servant of God, Julia Greeley. So there's great examples here in the United States that don't get highlighted and they're part of our history, both as Americans and as a church.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:06](#)):

Yeah, and we'll continue to do so this month also, right?

Billy Atwell ([21:07](#)):

Absolutely.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:08](#)):

So that's great.

Billy Atwell ([21:09](#)):

Absolutely. Okay, a couple of questions from the faithful. First one is from Kathleen, "What's your favorite hymn?" These are both personal questions.

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

Oh, that's good.

Billy Atwell ([21:20](#)):

What's your favorite hymn?

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

It's a little lighter topic.

Billy Atwell ([21:22](#)):

I took it easy on you.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:23](#)):

Thank you. I always love remembering those who have gone before us and whose example we're called to imitate and one day God willing, share the same home that they do. So I love Faith Of Our Fathers.

Billy Atwell ([21:41](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:41](#)):

That's one of my favorites and For All The Saints.

Billy Atwell ([21:44](#)):

Oh, okay.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:44](#)):

I love For All The Saints. On a personal note, there's a beautiful hymn that in my former diocese in honor of the holy name of Jesus that we had commissioned by a local talent there, and it's called, I Will Praise Your Name Forever.

Billy Atwell ([21:44](#)):

It's a beautiful one.

Bishop Burbidge ([22:03](#)):

It's a beautiful hymn. And recently, and I've preached about this at our prison mass and things like that. There was a beautiful hymn that I came across actually at a bishops' installation, but I really have come to love it. It's called Jesus Hope Of The World. And if you listen to that hymn and what we're experiencing right now with these issues that we talked about today in our podcast, in the midst of the pandemic, Jesus Hope Of The World, it's really a beautiful hymn.

Billy Atwell ([22:32](#)):

That's very good. And the composer for I Will Praise Your Name Forever is Dr. Michael Acurso for anyone who wants to look that one up. The next question is "How did you know you were not called to be a priest of a religious order?"

Bishop Burbidge ([22:45](#)):

Yeah, that's a good question. When I was discerning priesthood, at that point, I really did not know much about religious orders because I was always taught by and served in my parishes of diocesan priest. So I think there was a part of me that was like, "Well, that's what you do."

Billy Atwell ([23:02](#)):

Right, right, right.

Bishop Burbidge ([23:04](#)):

And then you certainly learn as I continue my formation the great contributions of religious orders and communities throughout the church and the unique charisms that they had. But I think that the call to a religious community is a big desire to live in community life, a big attraction to whatever specifically that particular charism, or the founder of that order had. But my inspiration came from diocesan priests. And so, I really never discerned beyond that actually.

But when you become even a diocesan priest, that meant for me at the time that I would serve the rest of my life in my home archdiocese, but when you become a diocesan priest even as you do with a religious order, when you prostrate the day, you're ordained and you're like, "Here I am, Lord send me." So I never thought as a diocesan priest, I would be sent to North Carolina and then to Virginia, that wasn't part of my plan, but this is what God has planned for me. And as I always say, I'm so grateful for

where he's allowed me and blessed me to serve, especially right now here in this beautiful diocese. And we always know that it's saying yes to his will, rather than insisting on my will, that we will find that peace for which we all long.

Billy Atwell ([24:33](#)):

And even separate from being ordained a Bishop, priests are sent to serve like father Dalarontay whose serving in Rome, military chaplains. I know the UN has priest advisors for different things. So you never know where you might end up, it doesn't mean you'll be in your hometown, right?

Bishop Burbidge ([24:49](#)):

That's right.

Billy Atwell ([24:50](#)):

So Bishop, any final thoughts, and if you would send us off with [crosstalk 00:24:53].

Bishop Burbidge ([24:52](#)):

No, just continue prayers and blessings for everyone as we persevere through the pandemic that God gives you that grace that you need to keep you safe and healthy. Thanks so much everyone for your faithful witness and more than ever, let's continue to pray for one another and walk in the light of Christ and walk humbly with our God. 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 at 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.