

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 today. If you're listening to this podcast and you're benefiting from the past and current generosity of those who have given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal, as many we know we're in that Bishop's Lenten Appeal season right now. The BLA supports many ministries throughout the diocese, including the Communications Office. We want to thank those who have contributed to the BLA because you've made this possible.

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Bishop Burbidge (01:12):

I'm doing well, Billy. Thank you. Yeah, that's off to a good start. Hope it is for everyone who is listening. It's, we say in a very beginning line, it's a sacred season. It's also a joyful season. Sometimes people don't think of Lent as joyful, but the call to repentance, the call to be transformed, to be renewed in prayer and fasting, almsgiving helps to make us a new creation, which is what God is asking of us, especially as we prepare to celebrate Easter. So I hope and pray everyone's having a good Lent. I said in my tweet this morning, reflecting on our readings, we all start Lent with really good intentions. We want to repent, seek the Lord's forgiveness. We want to practice those time test disciplines, prayer, fasting, alms giving, and I hope we've all promised to give up something for Lent.

I always think that's a really good thing to do. It helps us in addition to doing more, especially in service of others, but we can't do that alone. We have to do it with God's grace. So I suggest that, and I do suggest to our listeners, there's a beautiful few words in Psalm 51, our Psalm for today, it's a prayer I say every day in Lent because we can't do this alone. We need help. So the beautiful words are, create a clean heart in me oh Lord, put a steadfast spirit within me. Just say that every day, make your Lenten journey, not just think of it as a day to day journey asking God for that steadfast spirit.

Billy Atwell (02:54):

Wonderful. Well, you mentioned joy and it certainly is for this local church and the six new deacons that you ordained this past weekend. Talk a little bit about that experience. What was like being with them and their wives?

Bishop Burbidge (03:04):

Yeah. So we ordained four, six new permanent deacons.

Billy Atwell (03:09):

That's wonderful.

Bishop Burbidge (03:10):

Who go through a very rigorous program of formation. Our deacons come out very well prepared. We have a great program here supported of course by their spouses, their children, and family members and friends. So thanks to all of them. Our deacons are ordained for service, as I reminded them in a homily, yes, they are called to baptize, to preach the gospel. But at the heart of the ministry of the deacon is charity, to imitate Christ.

I told them ordination is not a step upward or a step forward. It's a step downward in a sense descending as Jesus did when he washed the feet of his disciples, descending in service. And I suggested that in this day and age where our beliefs and especially the gospel of life are being aggressively attacked. As we're seeing and proposed legislation, I said, bow in service more than ever in service of the gospel of life. And I'm very confident with these deacons, their parishes who will be receiving them. St. Ambrose, St. John, the Baptist, St. Theresa in Ashburn, Sacred Heart Winchester, Precious Blood in Culpeper, and St. Jude in Fredericksburg are all very blessed to get these new deacons.

Billy Atwell (04:38):

They're papered all over the diocese they will get to go to siege.

Bishop Burbidge (04:39):

They are [crosstalk 00:04:40] spread them out.

Billy Atwell (04:41):

So if you attend one of those parishes and you see your new deacon run around, be sure you go say hello and congratulate them. Bishop as you're aware, there's been some really sad news out of Texas. They've had a tough week and a half here with millions losing power and water many have died actually from the conditions in the cold. President Biden issued an emergency declaration, which extends federal support to Texas. Being from Philly, you're familiar with harsh weather, but Philly's prepared for it. They build the homes for it, and everyone knows it's coming. Texas it's so rarely gets us. What were you thinking as you saw the news and progressively get worse?

Bishop Burbidge (05:14):

Yeah, sure. Billy I'm sure like all of our listeners, it was heartbreaking. I mean, it really was so heartbreaking to see the conditions that they were facing. And when you hear no heat, no water. I was at a meeting with Zoom in and the other day with Cardinal DiNardo. And he was able to, he's down there and in Galveston Houston, and he was able to really speak firsthand about what it was like and it was truly heartbreaking. So with all of our listeners, our prayers go out to all those who are still suffering in Texas, because they're still recovering from this as a long recovery. It seems like conditions are improving. Thank God. But we know that not many grocery stores, for example, are still struggling to stock shelves and keep up with the demand.

But at least we see people have power back, pipes are starting to unfreeze. And as a church, I think it's the time for us to pause, to think about the specific situations when we see circumstances like this, the things that we can so easily take for granted every day or that sense, the comforts that are ours, but it helps our prayer life to think of the mother and father of a newborn baby struggling in the cold to keep their little one comfortable or the elderly home by themselves. Can you imagine their fear and the poor without the clothing. And circumstances like this remind us that every day, not just an extreme conditions like this, but every day, there are people right in our midst, in our community who

are lacking the basic necessities of life. And that's why I'm so grateful to the faithful in our diocese who are so generous in reaching out and helping us to support those in most need.

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

My sister lives in Texas and she mentioned that the homes are built there in a way so that they will actually inject heat from the home because they're so used to the intense, brutal summers. So I think that's part of it perpetuated, but we'll certainly keep them in our prayers. Bishop in the last podcast, you walked us through some very concerning legislation and executive actions, particularly in the Department of Education here in the Commonwealth, you took us through what's going on. The outlook is still fairly grim in some regard, but there was one victory that we should discuss the abolition of the death penalty. It's really a remarkable day, but talk about why was this such an important victory here for the Catholic church in Virginia?

Bishop Burbidge ([07:43](#)):

Sure. And there are several reasons Billy, but the most important is that it helps us align with our Holy Fathers or less Pope, John Paul, for example, John Paul, the second, Pope Benedict, Pope Francis are our Holy Father, who've been very outspoken against the death penalty, making a point that in today's day and age, we have the ability to protect ourselves from the most violent and damaged criminals. Technology has made incredible improvement. For example, in this area to protect the public as well as prison guards. And one reason to which I come back is that our advocacy against abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide looks confusing to some. When we say there is an inherent right to life and that we believe that life is formed it's sacred from conception to natural death, which is of course the heart of what we believe. Except if you commit a really grievous crime.

Billy Atwell ([08:44](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([08:44](#)):

You see that lack of inconsistency there to partition one category of people as no longer having the right to life. In my opinion is confusing at best. We need to be consistent and we are, we are consistent. And we say that there's inherent of right to life for all people. And we need to really mean what we say.

Billy Atwell ([09:06](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([09:07](#)):

I do want to express some thanks to my predecessors, Bishop Loverde and who fought this fight for many years before I got here and the late Bishop DiLorenzo from the Diocese of Richmond. Virginia Catholic Conference was created in 2004 to advocate for just such policies here in Virginia. So if it wasn't for our past leadership, from our bishops, as well as for a dedicated service of the Virginia Catholic Conference, especially Jeff Caruso, I don't think we would have really ever gotten to this point, but we give credit to where credit's due for all who played a role, including our elected officials to make this very, very positive step forward on behalf of the gospel life.

And we should keep charging forward for all those other areas you mentioned earlier to make sure that our legislators understand clearly that all life is sacred and especially the life of the unborn and

most vulnerable. Though we did talk about this a little bit our last podcast, but I really do think it's important to repeat as long as that we're on this topic and abolishing the death penalty may bring pain. I know to some victims and victim's families. I mean, that's the thing, I mean, many people are in death row are there because they've committed horrific crime even killed another human being. So we cannot allow ourselves to think only of those who are on death row, but also equal attention paid to those who have suffered the incredible pain due to the actions of those who are ended up on death row.

And we must walk with those suffering, the scars, the wounds that they have. And I'm asking our listeners too, to make sure that we pray for them. And because something like this, even just the words I just said may stir up emotions because people have experienced great devastation in their lives. And we have a wonderful prison ministry in our diocese that also works and love our deacons are very much part of it. So many lay people working with those in prison to pray that with the grace of God, no matter what evil they did to understand that with God's grace and mercy, their hearts can be transformed.

Billy Atwell ([11:37](#)):

If anyone listening is feels called to maybe consider participating in prison ministry. I know they're always looking for volunteers. You just go to arlingtondiocese.org and search in the search box for prison ministry, and you'll find what you need there. Bishop, I want to go back actually for a bit at you at the very beginning, talked about the joy of penance, I know that was the topic of a talk you gave at the Institute of Catholic Culture. And I think for some of that is a paradox we think of as penitential. Would you mind sharing some of the key points from that talk as we've received such positive feedback about it?

Bishop Burbidge ([12:10](#)):

That's good to hear. Yeah. The Institute Catholic Culture is a really great operates out of our, it's not a diocesan entity, but operates out of our diocese that is doing some really great work on educating the faithful and very great speakers. I was invited just to speak about the joy of penance, the joy of this sacred season. And I think the joy comes from acknowledging and understanding better penance has helps us to do this who we are, right? So always I pray for humility, especially in this Season of Lent, the humility that allows us to be reaffirmed in our belief that we truly are God's beloved. We are God's chosen one. That's part of humility, understanding ourselves as we are in God's sight. And yet the other part of humility allows us to acknowledge that we who are loved by God are also flawed. We are also a sinner. We are also in need of forgiveness.

And then when we recognize that and are able to say, Lord make me clean, make me whole again, and realize that we have a God who longs to embrace us in mercy and love to extend that forgiveness, to give us the grace to begin a new, what better joy can there be? Like, you're allowing me Lord to become a new creation, even though I'm flawed, even though I've failed and you accept my desire, you accept my sorrow because that's what penance is, right? We have to knowledge that we're sorry for what we have done, we have to promise not with the best of our ability with God's grace, not to do it again, to amend our lives. But the fact that you allow me Lord to begin again, what a great opportunity.

I had a couple of weeks ago visiting with my grand niece. And everyone's so excited because we all watched her take her first steps, right? So there was mom and dad there, you know this, I mean three children, right? And the little one starts taking those small steps and falls, and then gets picked up and then eventually reaches mom and dad and then going to be embraced. It may sound little bit silly, but it reminds us of us as God's children. The Lord asks us to take small steps each day, just try our best, try to

take those small steps. You may fall, I'm there to pick you up, but guess who's waiting at the other end, a God who is going to embrace you and love and mercy. And then we get stronger every time we do that. And those steps become easier and easier. So I just like people to remember Lent, don't think, don't get overwhelmed there's big picture in 40 days and all the day by day, just take those small steps. If you fail, God is going to pick you up and allow you to begin a new.

Billy Atwell ([15:39](#)):

That's wonderful. Thank you for sharing that. I see why we got such good feedback.

Bishop Burbidge ([15:43](#)):

Yeah. Okay.

Billy Atwell ([15:44](#)):

One more topic and it's an important one before we have questions from the faithful. Federally, the Equality Act was introduced and is causing a lot of concern. In fact, Jeff Caruso over the Virginia Catholic Conference, I spoke with him on the phone yesterday. He described the bill as deeply concerning, essentially the bill would include sexual orientation and gender identity and the category of sex and sexual discrimination, the USC to be said, that's what open wide the doors of religious discrimination. Also Bishop two related questions here is, why should we be concerned about this and oppose this act and how should the faithful respond to it?

Bishop Burbidge ([16:18](#)):

Yeah, the conference bishops have put out a good action alert that is very informative. And maybe to answer your question, just highlight some of that. Billy, as we always say every podcast, just about what we believe, everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.

Billy Atwell ([16:18](#)):

Yeah. Absolutely.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:39](#)):

We recognize every single person is a child of God create, everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. The Equality Act, as you mentioned, is being voted on soon does the opposite in many ways. I'm saying clearly it needs to be opposed.

Billy Atwell ([16:55](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:56](#)):

I want to be strong in saying that. Instead of respecting differences, the conference Bishop reminds us in beliefs about marriage and sexuality. This act would discriminate against people of faith. It would punish faith based organizations, such as charities and schools who serve everyone in their community, simply because of their beliefs, forced girls and women to compete against boys and men for limited opportunities in sports to share locker rooms and shower spaces with biological males who are identified as women, risk mandating taxpayers to fund abortions, force people in everyday life and

especially healthcare workers to support gender transition, and expands what the government considers a public place forcing every, even parish halls to host functions that conflict with our Catholic beliefs.

So this is an action alert rightfully called by the conference of bishops highlighting where this can lead to. And so what can the faithful do? Call and email your US representative in the House and your state's US Senator. They need to hear your voice today, share your voice on this issue on social media, we cannot be silent. We must be courageous and stand against every grave injustice. In no way people may say, oh, if you do that, you're not respecting, no that's not true. Don't allow anyone to label you. We're Christians, we believe that in Christ, every person is to be respect and dignity, but there are certain acts and behaviors and patterns of living that are not acceptable to what it means to live as Christ taught and nor should we be forced to reflect our core beliefs. So this is serious and there's definitely a need of an action alert.

Billy Atwell ([18:54](#)):

So if you would like to contact your member of the house or your Senator, we're going to make it easy on you. Just go to usccb.org/take-action. So it's usccb.org/take-action. You can get signed up there for their action alerts, the Virginia Catholic Conference, largely focused on state issues. So you're going to get actual alerts from them on state issues. If you want national alerts, usccb.org/take-action. Go there today.

Before we go to our questions, just a couple of quick plugs. The mass for Respect Life is coming up on February 27th, just a few days away at St. James parish and Philip's church is going to be at 8:30 AM. Our very own Bishop Burbidge will be the celebrant and the homeless there. And then don't forget The Light Is On, is going on right now. Bishop, maybe you'd like to speak to this too, the importance of confession as part of our penance during the sacred season in making yourself right with God, parishes have extra confession times available, you go to thelightison.org to find a parish near you, confession times, and also resources for how to give a good confession.

Bishop Burbidge ([19:57](#)):

Yeah. I mean our parishes are so generous in their availability for your confessions, but The Light Is On originally started with a focus on Wednesday evenings between 6:30 and eight. I'll be at one of our parishes tonight, hearing confessions. I try to do that every Wednesday during Lent. And I said in the beginning, I suggest don't wait to the week before Easter to go to confession. Why not start at the beginning of Lent, get yourself in good space, get those graces of the sacrament, get your soul nice and clean, and then let the Lenten experience strengthen that.

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

Again, so if you want to find that, so again, Wednesday evenings, but also you can go to thelightison.org to find the parish near you. Bishop, we've got a couple questions from the faithful here. The first one is, do you have any plans to open new Catholic schools or to increase the size of current ones?

Bishop Burbidge ([20:54](#)):

Right now, one of the things that we are finding out in light of our schools who provided such great leadership throughout this pandemic is many of our schools now have waiting lists.

Billy Atwell ([21:05](#)):

That's right.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:05](#)):

Why? Because our Catholic schools had been opened safe and thriving. And so many of our schools are seeing that expansion. There was no plans in the immediate future to build or open a new school. We were blessed to open up Paul the sixth, the new Paul the sixth this year, but no plans, but what our plans are, Billy. And this is a very high priority for me moving forward in our diocese. I would like, and I think it's going to be part of our strategic planning, of course, I would like to make our schools more affordable.

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

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bishop Burbidge ([21:45](#)):

I would like to see our schools more diverse. And I would like to see all our schools have the ability to welcome those with disabilities and not just as in... We're so great in our diocese, when I say welcome as integrated into the community with the other students. And we're making some progress there. So ours right now is to include those with disabilities, more diverse, more affordable.

Billy Atwell ([22:17](#)):

That's wonderful. Very good. All right. Next question is what is it like to be a Catholic Bishop during this pandemic? Do you have any anecdotes that are funny, sad, or surprising? I have a villa, I probably would have each of those, but yeah [crosstalk 00:22:31].

Bishop Burbidge ([22:31](#)):

Yeah, I think the sad part is I'll answer each one. The sad part is, sometimes having to look at my schedule and because of the protocols and especially now with no social gatherings and to see some of the things coming off my schedule. So that's always a little sad to see that. And even doing the things that we still can do it, I was at confirmation the other night. It was good. It was good that we were there, right? But it's not the same, because I'm not able to meet with the students beforehand. I can't go to the hall afterwards, meeting their parents and grandparents and sponsors. I can't see their faces.

Billy Atwell ([23:11](#)):

That's right, it's a pretty big deal.

Bishop Burbidge ([23:11](#)):

Yeah. You don't get the same adrenaline that you usually do with these things, but it's good we are doing it. So it's a good thing. It's surprising to see just the perseverance of our people, and most of our places, everyone have, has been very cooperative and understanding that what we do is a sacrifice, some of these protocols but are necessary for the wellbeing of others, I guess, so maybe one funny experience was a recent visit to a grade school and a little kids they're perfect, they understand all the protocols, they don't complain about their masks or anything like that. In one of the classrooms, I think it was like second grade or so. And just talking to the kids and trying to engage a little bit. And I took a couple steps forward, but I was moving on the floor where the arrow was that I was not supposed to be. And with that, they all shout, "No, no, you are not supposed to be there." I was like, what can I do wrong? But they all knew I did not follow the arrow.

Billy Atwell ([24:19](#)):

That's so funny.

Bishop Burbidge ([24:19](#)):

So I got right back in line.

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

Getting corrected by second graders. They probably didn't prepare you for that in Bishop school, right?

Bishop Burbidge ([24:26](#)):

Yeah, exactly.

Billy Atwell ([24:28](#)):

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

Bishop Burbidge ([24:32](#)):

Just one final thought, I guess, it was wonderful to see so many people I heard from our pastors. So many people coming to mass on Ash Wednesday.

Billy Atwell ([24:41](#)):

Oh, wonderful.

Bishop Burbidge ([24:42](#)):

Really, really happy to hear that. And as I've mentioned earlier, we're seeing some good signs. Our churches are very safe.

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

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([24:51](#)):

If they're following the protocols, as we've asked them, they are very, very safe places to be. And as I've asked our faithful it's start taking some gradual steps here. If you are at a point now where you've discerned that it's okay maybe to go out to public places, whether it's restaurants or stores or things like that. Whatever was into that the sermon were okay, that's a safe thing to do. Try to think along the same lines about going back to church.

Billy Atwell ([25:18](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([25:18](#)):

I think if you can do these things, then this would be a good thing to go back to church. The churches can be one of the safest places you're at.

Billy Atwell ([25:23](#)):

That's true.

Bishop Burbidge ([25:25](#)):

So begin to start taking those gradual steps. I understand that there are people who are not there yet who have discerned, "I'm not going out to public places. I'm not. So I'm not going to." I understand emotionally and people with conditions. And also we're not saying anything like that, but for those who are taking other steps forward, getting back to more sense of normalcy in what you are doing, apply that to your spiritual life too. Our doors are open. We need you back and we assure you, or we're going to continue to make it the highest priority of keeping everyone safe and healthy.

Billy Atwell ([26:05](#)):

Very good.

Bishop Burbidge ([26:06](#)):

So I do wish everyone, Billy these remaining days of Lent remember everyone just step-by-step day by day, always with God's grace. But I do hope and pray that for you and your families and all those you love that this sacred season will be a time of abundant spiritual blessings and graces for you for all those you love as together, we walk humbly with our God.

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