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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, the chief communication's officer for the diocese and your co host. For those who have given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal, please know that you have made this podcast possible and all the work that's done by the communication's office here, as well as many ministries carried out throughout the dioceses. So we just want to say a big thank you to those who have given to the BLA.

Billy Atwell ([00:29](#)):

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Billy Atwell ([01:16](#)):

Bishop, how you doing?

Bishop Burbidge ([01:17](#)):

Billy, I'm doing well. I hope all of our listeners are doing well, and hopefully had some times for some rest and renewal. But it's hard to believe we're in the middle of August recording this podcast. It goes very quickly.

Billy Atwell ([01:30](#)):

I know. It is wild.

Bishop Burbidge ([01:32](#)):

We're doing so also on the feast of one of my favorite saints, St. Clare of Assisi. It's her feast day today. She's the founder of the Poor Clares. As we know St. Clare is someone who gave up the things of this world to be with God with an undivided heart. We are so blessed in our diocese to have the Poor Clares who live a cloistered life praying for all of us and is in a special way for our priests and increase in vocations for which we're so grateful to them and for all the faithful. So many people send in special intentions, same with the monasteries of our Dominican the Cloister Sisters. So we're just so blessed to have the presence of such witness in our day.

Bishop Burbidge ([02:21](#)):

I think today in honor of St. Clare, if we could all just say a special prayer and one of thanksgiving for the Poor Clares who offer us such great witness in our diocese.

Billy Atwell ([02:31](#)):

Absolutely.

Bishop Burbidge (02:32):

Happy feast day to all of them.

Billy Atwell (02:33):

Absolutely. Before we get started, I wanted to ask there had been major news for a while and then that news shut off about the eucharistic document from the US Conference of Bishops. I haven't heard any news, but has there been any development in the last couple weeks?

Bishop Burbidge (02:46):

Right. I think you're talking about the document that came up at our June meeting.

Billy Atwell (02:50):

Yeah, exactly.

Bishop Burbidge (02:52):

That the committee on doctrine received permission to continue working on document, which is meant to be a teaching document on the precious gift of the holy eucharis and also our worthy reception of it. It applies to all people. We keep saying that it's not aimed to speak to one group or any certain individuals but to all of us as Catholics. So there is progress. One of the things that was asked of us as the June meeting was in preparation for our November meeting where we will vote on the document itself. So there will be a document that will be presented to bishops. We will all have a chance to review it, to offer recommendations, to edit, to offer edits, all those things, and then at our November meeting, we vote on the final document, if this is something that we accept as a body of bishops.

Bishop Burbidge (03:45):

But what our Archbishop Gomez asked us to do, he gave us summer homework. He said, "I want you to gather as regional bishops to have a discussion this summer in a smaller group. So that can be shared with us in preparation." In fact, tomorrow, I have a Zoom call with the bishops of our regional, and we will be discussing the document itself and how we can present to the faithful a beautiful teaching document on the holy eucharis and a renewal of eucharistic wonder and all that we should have. Again, we always remember and pray God that the eucharis is the source of our unity and never a source of division.

Billy Atwell (04:25):

Absolutely. Well, we'll be praying for you. That's great.

Bishop Burbidge (04:27):

Thanks.

Billy Atwell (04:28):

No, we've got a lot on this docket for this podcast. Before we get started, any other news or anything else you want to get into?

Bishop Burbidge ([04:34](#)):

Just the idea that we do have our seminarians getting ready to return to the seminary after a summer. Many of them spent in parishes. Some spent in Guatemala in Spanish Immersion Program, and some in Omaha at a program devoted to seminarians throughout the country. So we keep them very busy in the summer. When I was in seminary, when you left in May, you were free. But yeah, you got a job. You had to work and all those things. But we didn't have all those experiences, but think wisely bishops learned that really seminary formation is all year round. It necessary includes some of those opportunities that I just mentioned. I've heard great things about our seminarians and their presence this summer. We are blessed that we will have 11 men going into the seminary this summer. New men.

Billy Atwell ([05:36](#)):

New men, wow.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:37](#)):

Which brings us to like 51 seminarians, but 11 new men [crosstalk 00:05:43]-

Billy Atwell ([05:42](#)):

That's amazing.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:43](#)):

... coming in to the seminary. So a little prayer for them.

Billy Atwell ([05:46](#)):

That's very good. We've got a two seminarians coming from an unusual route. They're coming from Cameroon. Talk about how that comes about and what is that like.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:55](#)):

Yeah. This is really an exciting experience I think. We are blessed to have some priests from Cameroon serving our diocese. So I'm in relationship with their bishops of course, and one bishop in particular in the diocese in Cameroon, Diocese of Kumbo. He has vocations, but again, in Cameroon, there's many struggles, including financial struggles. He asked if I would be willing to sponsor two seminarians who are in their final... They're ready to begin their final four years of theological studies. Would we be willing to sponsor these seminarians and allow them, provide the funds so that they could be formed with our seminaries, and part of that would be a pond ward nation, God willing. They would serve here in our diocese for four years and then return home to their country.

Bishop Burbidge ([06:59](#)):

Again, you mentioned the Bishop's Annual Appeal earlier in this podcast. We are blessed to have seminarians, but how could we ever afford to pay for the formation and to do this work of charity if it wasn't for the generosity of the faithful of this diocese because so much of the Bishop's Annual Appeal is dedicated to the formation of future priests. So I echo your words of thanks to all who help us to do this. So the two men from Cameroon, they arrived last week, at the end of last week. I was on a family vacation, so I spoke to them on my phone, but I am meeting after this podcast with all of our new seminarians, including them.

Billy Atwell ([07:41](#)):

Oh, that's great.

Bishop Burbidge ([07:42](#)):

Very much looking forward to that.

Billy Atwell ([07:43](#)):

Well, give them our greetings.

Bishop Burbidge ([07:45](#)):

I will do that.

Billy Atwell ([07:45](#)):

That's exciting to have them here, even if it's for just a short time.

Bishop Burbidge ([07:48](#)):

Yeah, please pray for them. This is a big adventure for them. All of a sudden their bishop tells them, "By the way, you're going to the United States." And they will be attending Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg.

Billy Atwell ([07:57](#)):

Oh, great. Very good. Bishop, two things that are on people's minds as of late. The reopening of schools and the vaccine. That's obviously occupying a lot of attention. Kind of going one at a time, do you have any updates on school reopening since our last podcast and how that's going to function?

Bishop Burbidge ([08:15](#)):

Sure, and I just had the opportunity to meet with our principals yesterday. I began by renewing my thanks for all their leadership this past year, what they and their colleagues were able to accomplish. I think there's a little disappointment. I think we were all excited about heading in the right direction and maybe being freed from some of the restrictions that allow us to open our schools and keep our students together this year, but there's ongoing concerns and questions to be answered. So it's going to continue that vigilance that's necessary.

Bishop Burbidge ([08:55](#)):

But here's the key, Billy, our schools are opening. We are bringing our students back, and we have plans in place to do so to keep them safe. I feel very confident about that. We learned a great deal last year. We're ready to go, and again, thanks to our principals.

Bishop Burbidge ([09:14](#)):

So each school, like we did last year, have submitted to us their reopening plans for review by our diocese, and the plans reflect the information about if that we have learned from federal, state guidance, as well as the input of faculty, parents, and other stakeholders. Same thing we did last year. But things vary from one community, one region of the diocese to another. So decisions are being made

at accessed as the local level, and one of the priorities is to ensure we were being dynamic and flexible in the weeks and months ahead.

Bishop Burbidge ([09:49](#)):

What I mean by that is that the plan we start with at a given school year is not necessarily where things will end up. We'll be adaptable, flexible, vigilant, pray God. Pray God we get great news and we are able to lessen some restrictions.

Bishop Burbidge ([10:08](#)):

I know that people want to know if masks will be required. That is going, again, to vary based on location and the COVID rate of that area and the ability to that particular school to reduce some of that risk. I also get asked if we are going to require staff or volunteers to get vaccinated. We are not requiring. We are asking them to seriously consider, to encourage, but we're not requiring.

Bishop Burbidge ([10:36](#)):

It's pretty clear to us that the masks will not have to be worn outside when the students return this year. So when they're outside... And from every indication I have, it looks like the fall sports are turning. So it's going to be a little bit more normal than last year but still vigilance. Thank the good Lord our Catholic schools are able to keep our students together and continue their education. And thanks to our teachers, thanks to our parents for working together. We're in this together.

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

The key I heard from Joe Vorbach in speaking with him was this is not a set it and forget it plan. Whatever you open with at your school, if it's not ideal for you, stay tuned because they're going to be watching the numbers closely every week. They're going to be making new assessments about is there anything we should be changing, is there anything we can relax? They know that parents want to, in many cases, relax some of the restrictions, but his big thing was we're going to continue to adapt and be flexible.

Bishop Burbidge ([11:37](#)):

Right. Just FYI, Joe Vorbach is our superintendent for Catholic schools, and you're exactly right. That's what we reviewed with our principals yesterday. So ready to go. As always, I can assure our parents who are choosing to send their children to our Catholic schools, I am so proud of our Catholic schools, strong in Catholic identity and excellent in education.

Billy Atwell ([12:05](#)):

Absolutely, absolutely. So the other big topic on people's minds is the vaccine itself. More reports are coming out about some people getting COVID despite having the vaccine. There's still a lot of people who are unvaccinated. So for many, the question is should I get vaccinated? That's a question that we get. So what is your thought on that? We know the vaccination rate is not where the government wants it. It's right around half the country. What are your thoughts on whether or not people should get vaccinated?

Bishop Burbidge ([12:32](#)):

Yeah, and again, this is another question that is very much on people's minds. What we want to make sure of is that this is sadly, even the masks and the vaccines, everything's... It just seems like it's just taken a political. It's becoming more political than ever before. So what's at the heart of this to the answer to your question? Really at the heart of it is service I think. What is the best thing for me to do in service of others, also being responsible and vigilant with my own wellbeing and my own physical health and wellbeing?

Bishop Burbidge ([13:26](#)):

So we discussed many months ago when the vaccine was first available to the general public, and I shared back then and I'll certainly repeat now that I thought, I prayed about what was the right decision for me, and I felt convincingly that the right decision for me was to get vaccinated. Part of that process I think for myself and for all of us should include a few things. What does the church say? As faithful Catholics, I think we should ask that. We've explained a number of times that the church has spoken on this issue. While not ideal, the two vaccines, the Moderna and Pfizer, would be marvellously permissible. Not ideal, but we're in the midst of a global pandemic. So we're not really in a position to say I can't get the vaccine because my church says I can't do that. That wouldn't be accurate. We've issued documents explaining in much more detail the reasons for that.

Bishop Burbidge ([14:48](#)):

So the church, what is the church saying? I hope some people would think that it's important or maybe consider at least listening to their bishop. And my perspective is for the good, for the wellbeing of others, I think you should seriously consider getting the vaccine. I encourage that if possible. I think you talk to your own physician and trust so much to the care of your physician. What is your physician saying? What's his recommendation, and what is it based on what he knows about your health and your situation? There could be a medical reason why it does not make sense. Maybe you're doctor's saying at this point it does not make sense for you. I don't know. But I think that's someone else should be consulted.

Bishop Burbidge ([15:42](#)):

Then of course, this all leads to prayerful discernment. Lord, what is it that... Guide me. Give me the wisdom. Give me the Holy Spirit to enlighten me. As I make this decision, mindful also of what I have to be thinking about also is a sacrifice maybe involved for the good and for the wellbeing of others.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:07](#)):

But Billy, at the end when people make their decision, I think we have to be respectful of it. I do get concerned where there seems to be, there could be on the government level and maybe businesses or whatever where there's going to be pressure or labeling or whatever on people's decisions. So I hope I'm being clear on what my position is, what the process is, but in the end, there has to be respect for individuals.

Billy Atwell ([16:48](#)):

So I want to point people to that resource you mentioned a minute ago about the vaccine. When we were getting lots of questions from people, we compiled... Okay, what do people really need to know about the vaccine? So we put that together in a resource. That's available at arlingtondiocese.org/coronavirus. There's a number of resources up there and information available to you, but that one in particular has been helpful for people. So again, arlingtondiocese.org/coronavirus.

Bishop Burbidge ([17:15](#)):

Billy, I do thank you for mentioning that. I do want to emphasize that this document I think and anyone who is discerning, seriously discerning what is the best thing to do, I really do think for you to reach a decision, this is a document that you really should look at. I mean, this included many people of great expertise from religious, from [inaudible 00:17:40], from bioethics and all those things. So we always say when we discern and we form our conscience, it has to be informed. I think with the help of some really good people, we came up with a very good document. So thanks for mentioning that.

Billy Atwell ([17:54](#)):

Yeah, not a problem. Catholic Charities has been partnering with the federal government to help evacuate Afghan refugees, and our local Catholic agency here, Catholic Charities Agency is helping to resettle some of the folks that have served our military. That's one thing that's been unique about the refugee resettlement program here in the diocese of Arlington is we've helped a lot of people from Afghanistan who were interpreters or provided different service to the US military, and all of a sudden they're becoming a target. This has happened in the past, that's why we've been doing this.

Billy Atwell ([18:27](#)):

So this is a ministry that is going on for many years in the diocese and one that you have continued to support and put your energy behind. Why is it that this in particular's been so important to you?

Bishop Burbidge ([18:38](#)):

Thanks for highlighting because the diocese has been doing this for a long time and has really earned a beautiful reputation from across the country, the work that we do. Again, it's human respect. Respect for human life. The dignity of each person, respect for each person. It's our care for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. So that's the big umbrella. We do this because the Lord told us that we welcome the stranger in our midst. We find ways to open our arms, to embrace those who are in need. So we want to help anyone who is fleeing extreme violence or persecution, and we have a special duty to help and rescue those who are now, like you said, a target of violence for helping our service men and women. Their work certainly saved the lives of many American soldiers, and we need to be sure we fulfill our duty to them.

Bishop Burbidge ([19:40](#)):

Then needs of those who come here that we are humbling and sobering. Many of these wonderful men and women that we are helping were extremely successful and had great professions and were well respected. Now they need the basic necessities of life. Diapers and clothes and food and bed linens. They come here with nothing. We pick them up at the airport. It's such a beautiful ministry. We pick them up at the airport with a couple bags they have, and they literally fled in fear at a moment's notice.

Billy Atwell ([20:18](#)):

When you hear people that are assisting this migration refugee services ministry, these people are not even checking bags. A carryon and that's it.

Bishop Burbidge ([20:26](#)):

I know.

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Billy Atwell ([20:27](#)):

It's wild.

Bishop Burbidge ([20:28](#)):

Just imagine yourself in that situation. So Catholic Charities works to help these individuals become self sufficient. That's where we're headed, and we waste no time. As soon as they're settled into an apartment, they work to identify lines at work that fit their language ability and professional skills and the goals ensure that they're self sufficient within a couple months. We have really nice stories of people we've helped now doing the same in this work.

Billy Atwell ([20:55](#)):

That has been fascinating to see those stories.

Bishop Burbidge ([20:57](#)):

I think Catholic Charities and the diocese, we have 16 staff members assisting proximately 600 Afghan nationals who receive their special migrant visa throughout this emergency operation. We've helped 10 families who was resettled within our diocese so far just recently. So as you said, this is a work that has been going on for quite a long time and certainly a work that must continue thanks to all those who help make it possible.

Billy Atwell ([21:26](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. All right. So I've got a couple questions from the faithful here. Are you ready?

Bishop Burbidge ([21:31](#)):

I'm ready.

Billy Atwell ([21:32](#)):

All right. Do you receive any special or extra spiritual graces if you are buried in a Catholic cemetery over another kind of cemetery?

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

No. Really, Billy, that's more based on our belief. Where we are buried, it could be dependent on family history where people have been buried or geographically what's possible.

Billy Atwell ([21:58](#)):

Financial limitations.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:59](#)):

Financial limitations. But no, it's that belief that the grace comes from as we prepare to go home to the Lord. Our believe in the resurrection and that we are docent until thus return. The burial should be wherever it is have a sacred tone to it. Our belief in the resurrection should be reflected in the prayers that are said or anything like that. But I don't think the location gets us any special graces.

Billy Atwell ([22:34](#)):

All right.

Bishop Burbidge ([22:34](#)):

If we did, I'd be looking for some of those places.

Billy Atwell ([22:37](#)):

All right. The last one's pretty easy. Do you have a favorite summer Olympic sport?

Bishop Burbidge ([22:43](#)):

I like the track and field sports. Just that long distance running. I watch some of those races. It's like wow. I don't know how many miles that people just for hours just run. You just think about what it took to get to that point day in and day out of training to make that long run. You can certainly apply that to the spiritual life. That it's day in and day out is that practice, is that discipline, not just for that sport but for all the sports. I get fascinated too with the gymnastics and the diving and things like that. When the judges or the announcers, commentators have all these specific information about this very short thing that just happened. I'm like, "Wow. What is all that technique?"

Billy Atwell ([23:41](#)):

When they say there's a bobble, I'm like, "I didn't see anything."

Bishop Burbidge ([23:43](#)):

What is that? That dive that lasts four seconds, and they get into all this detail. I'm like, "Wow, that's the exactness of the sport." So yeah, I find those kind of things really attractive. Again, I think when you see the Olympics, you're reminded of St. Paul would talk about athletes. We got to be in condition-

Billy Atwell ([24:10](#)):

To run the race.

Bishop Burbidge ([24:11](#)):

Yeah, the run the race. In body and soul and spirit, but it takes discipline. You're going to fail, and you got to pick yourself back up and get going. Our application, of course, in the spiritual life would be the real finish line. The real finish line that we're trying to cross is the one that leads to Heaven. But it takes discipline, practice, perseverance, picking ourselves back up. So lots to learn there I think.

Billy Atwell ([24:40](#)):

You are a true pastor. You found a very spiritual angle to a very prac- I was just thinking just a practical answer. [crosstalk 00:24:45]. That was great. Thank you very much. Any final thoughts and if you'd send us off [crosstalk 00:24:51]-

Bishop Burbidge ([24:50](#)):

Yeah, Billy, there is one. We certainly have talked about some significant issues that's on everyone's minds these days. I know they have sensitivities. I'm trying to be so respectful about that. There are two others we might as well just mention real quickly. The ongoing discernment about the motu proprio, the traditional Latin mass. I want our people to know when I said in the beginning continues. That this is a

process with two goals in mind: to be loyal to what Pope Francis is asking us and to be as pastorally generous as possible in allowing that mass, traditional mass to continue for those who are spiritually nourished by it. So we're in the process, and we will come out with here's how this is being implemented in the Diocese of Arlington. But that discernment is ongoing right now. Nothing's changed, and everything continues. But it's an ongoing process with consultation.

Billy Atwell ([25:51](#)):

Great.

Bishop Burbidge ([25:52](#)):

The other issue that is impacting our families, our parents, our schools, our society is the whole question of transgender issues and gender identity and what it means to be male and female. We see how it's impacting workplaces and schools and all those kind of things. So we have used this summer again with a lot of help from very sound theologians, marvel theologians, people from the bioethics field and priests to come up with a pastoral document on what the church teaches on this issue and why because our parents, our teachers are asking for help here. So we will be issuing within this month, maybe even sooner than later. It's in its final stages. A document that I think will be very, very helpful to the faithful of our diocese. I always say that charity requires clarity. That means we teach the truth in love. So what will be explained theologically and pastorally in this document goes against maybe what the world is saying.

Bishop Burbidge ([27:30](#)):

So I expect probably some controversy and probably some negative reactions. We teach the truth. We have the truth, and so I really hope this document will be a real help and a pastoral assistance to the faithful of our diocese to be able to explain to others what it is, why we believe God created us male and female and all the implications of that, and for us to be true to who we are. Also acknowledging that this is an issue that requires pastoral support, assistance, and guidance. So again, truth in love. Clarity but with compassion. Then we will follow that after the pastoral statement with what that will mean in our schools and in our activities and endeavors.

Bishop Burbidge ([28:36](#)):

So you'll make known to people how we'll be posting this and all, but again, I pray fervently that it will be a guide and assistance to the faithful.

Billy Atwell ([28:47](#)):

Wonderful. Any final thoughts, and then if you'd send us off with your blessing.

Bishop Burbidge ([28:51](#)):

No, just a word to our students, our young people who are getting ready to go off to college for the first time, to new places that please bring with you the faith, the virtues that your parents, that your maybe Catholic schools or Catholic faith formation programs have brought with you because you'll be challenged on campuses to live and practice that faith. So be strong and be steadfast in the faith. I always advise our students going to college to please, one of the first things they do is to get involved in Catholic campus ministry where there's such support given to Catholics especially on secular campus to do that. But know that wherever you're going, my dear young friends, this is God. You're not going there

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by some sort of chance. This has been God's plan for you. He has wonderful blessings awaiting for you. Give your very best and depend on God's help.

Bishop Burbidge ([30:09](#)):

Same thing for all of our students returning to school. Use your gifts and abilities, recognize them and that they came from God. Give your best effort. In your schools, take care of one another, encourage one another, support one another, and be instruments of unity that we need so much in our world now. So for those beginning new academic years, I wish you many blessings. And to all the faithful and the diocese, may we be strong in faith and joyful in hope and continue to walk humbly with our God.

Bishop Burbidge ([30:46](#)):

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