

Bishop Burbidge (00:00):

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

Billy Atwell (00:07):

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Bishop Burbidge (01:03):

I'm doing well, Billy. I hope all of our listeners are doing well. It's amazing how quickly the summer has gone by. This past week was able to meet and celebrate mass for our Catholic educators and youth ministers and DREs and now our students, most of our students are back to school. It's it's hard to believe how quickly it went by. I remember the old days, maybe some of our listeners do, but everything started, like school started after Labor Day. But right now, it's like we are in full gear. So I hope everyone was able to get some time for rest then and renewal and refreshment.

Billy Atwell (01:41):

Absolutely. Bishop Burbidge, on August 14th, the massive 7.2 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti causing a tremendous amount of damage. It has killed to date 2200 people as of the latest reports, injuring others, it's actually destroyed 50,000 homes. A small bit of good news, there were 20 adults and four kids who were previously reported as missing that had been recovered in the rubble there. Unfortunately, this has gotten overlooked by a lot of news outlets because of other news that we'll get to in a minute. But how did you respond to seeing this news? Haiti just keeps getting hammered with natural disasters and the people there keep suffering, so how did you respond to that? And then how can we help?

Bishop Burbidge (02:24):

I know, it really is. It is so sad to see Haiti enduring so much suffering. And the recent description of the earthquake and the loss of lives, your heart just is broken for all the people in Haiti for all they have suffered in recent years, and yet another disaster. My prayers, of course, I know I speak for all those who are listening, go out to the people of Haiti and to anyone who has family or friends in Haiti. I know how concerned and unsettling this is for you. We know that the earthquake really did not just impact those who passed away and their family and friends, they're brothers and sisters, they're a part of our family. So the entire nation, the whole world feels feels the suffering.

I don't want people to feel helpless though, there are things that we can do. And certainly one way is to provide resources, to raise money that will go to relief efforts. So we've been asked, we've asked our pastors to take a voluntary collection. I know some parishes have already done that and others will do so the next couple of weeks. As always, our people here in the Diocese of Arlington are

always so generous. And those funds through work of the conference, go directly to provide relief. And there's a very secured process. So I do say as heartbroken as we are for people in Haiti, we know there are two things we can do, and don't underestimate the impact of both. And that is number one, prayers. Prayers for those who have died, prayers for who have lost loved ones, and also our own generosity.

Billy Atwell ([04:18](#)):

Absolutely, absolutely. Bishop, we're on the cusp of the 20th anniversary of 9/11, which is hard to believe. I keep thinking of all that's transpired between that time and now. And obviously with everything going on in Afghanistan, it's fresh on people's minds. When we think back to the tragedy of that day, which impacted this diocese and this region and in a very personal and direct way, we remember the immediate tragedy, but we also remember the tone of the nation soon there after. A lot of the divisions crumbled away, we saw a unity we hadn't seen in a long time, and haven't seen since frankly. What do you remember from that day? And do you have any ideas for how we get back to that point of unity?

Bishop Burbidge ([04:57](#)):

I think everyone can remember exactly what they were doing and where they were that day. It's a tragic day we'll never forget. That day was actually one of the saddest days in my life. I was rector of the seminary at that time.

Billy Atwell ([05:18](#)):

In St. St. Charles Borromeo.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:19](#)):

In St. Charles Borromeo. We were actually, all the seminary, the entire seminary community, we were actually on buses at the time of the attacks going sadly to the funeral of a young seminarian.

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

Oh, wow.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:36](#)):

So we're here we are sad for that reality and then the news came our way of the attacks. We had seminarians at that time, as we do now, studying in St. Charles Seminary. So there were quite a number of seminarians from the Diocese of Arlington on those buses whose parents worked at the Pentagon or in DC. So our fear for our country was also made very personal about their own parents. So like everyone else, we just watched and horror and we began the rosary, we began praying. So we do remember that day with such sadness. But you're right though when you mentioned that when we think about that time, we also can also remember the first responders who put their lives on the line to rush to the Pentagon and put out the fire and tend to those in need. We know in New York, many first responders lost their lives, so they should be remembered forever for their selflessness, their sacrificial giving as true heroes in the best meaning of that word on that day. I know we're working on a video highlighting how we were impacted as a diocese locally.

I know on that day, I wasn't here at that time, of course, but I know that on that day, two of our priests rushed to the site. Father McGraw actually was on the road and he witnessed the plane hit the Pentagon. Father DeRose who was Our Lady of Lourdes and they rushed right over as what any priests

would do, rush over to be present. The church bring the saving power, the human love of the Lord, be present. So our first responders and all who did so much to help, we remember with just great thankfulness. And following the immediate response to the plane hitting the Pentagon, the church in our area continued to help those who were suffering, of course, with funerals and grief counseling and all those things.

I think it's an important thing to remember too about our church and people of faith and goodwill that even throughout the world, that when a tragedy occurs, the church is there to offer immediate support, of course. But we never leave, we never leave, we remain after natural disasters and terrorist attacks, economic collapses. Through challenging times, the churches there to help people endure and eventually thrive despite the circumstances because what do we have to offer? We have to offer that in the midst of suffering, in the midst of a cross, that's not the end. We have the beautiful truth that God is present and from all of this, we are assured of his victory and glory.

Your other question is certainly the question of the day, I think we all remember. Boy, there was a spirit of unity after that tragic day. We witnessed that at stadiums and in cities and people just embracing each other and singing God bless America. And it didn't matter whether you were Republican or Democrat or what background you were from, we were in this together and we as a nation reflected the unity that makes us who we are and who we are supposed to be. Our unity I think only will continue to be reflected in such a way when in the midst of what we're seeing now of division and harsh rhetoric, it will only get back to that unity when we are reaffirming the sacredness of all human life, which therefore gives a respect to each and every human person.

We're all created by God, we're all part of God's family. And if we truly believe that, then even in the midst of such political tension and discourse and all kinds of issues, the family, even in the midst of that, will treat each other with respect and lovingly and know that that unity is possible. So pray God. We pray God every day that we have peace throughout our world, peace in our own nation, and the unity that makes us who we are and who we should be. One nation, under God, we should pray for that.

Billy Atwell ([10:46](#)):

You gave an interview recently to WMAL, it's a package that they haven't published yet, but about 9/11. And the woman acknowledged that, would God Bless America even be played now at some of those stadiums? And you mentioned that. And I thought about that more afterward and thought about how part of unity is there something that binds us. And it's not just national love for your nation and love for your country and things like that, there's something else. You've talked about the unity that is ours in Christ. Well, as that breaks away, it would be hard even for a tragedy to bind us because there isn't that glue left in our culture. We've got to rebuild that as well.

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

We got to rebuild that as well. Again, we have to pray for that, we need some divine assistance here, and we need to be proud of who we are as created in God's image and likeness and God who allows us to live in a land in which we are free and have so many abundant blessings

Billy Atwell ([11:47](#)):

And as you spoke about this issue and the opportunity that's in front of us, I almost look at the time between now and this anniversary as almost like a preparatory period for us to ask ourselves like, "How am I contributing to the unity that I want to see? How am I contributing to the peace that I want to see

in society?" If you want to really honor those who died in 9/11, whether they were first responders or on those planes, let's begin now and prepare ourselves for that.

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

That's a great point. That's a great point because it's not only should we remember those first responders, but we should also honor them. And what better way than as you just mentioned, we pledge a new to be an instrument of peace each day and an instrument of unity, it's who we're called to be.

Billy Atwell ([12:29](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. The biggest news in recent memory at least has been the tragic end to the US presence in Afghanistan. We've seen in recent days the Taliban has retaken the country from Afghan security forces and did so in a lot less time than was predicted even by the intelligence community. This is a truly historic unfolding, and it certainly impacts our area because there's a lot of defense contractors and military. So this is obviously on a lot of people's minds, but particularly here. As Catholics, how do we follow this issue? Because it's not over, there are still potentially thousands of Americans behind enemy lines and Afghan SIVs, as we've spoken about, these individuals who have served our country in different capacities. So how should we follow this issue? And then what should we consider first when we're thinking through the implications of a situation like this?

Bishop Burbidge ([13:20](#)):

It's true and the images that we see online and on TV of mothers throwing their babies to US military men and women, it's just awful, it's just so sad to see. It's hard to see that this situation has broken down so quickly. So again, we don't underestimate the power of our prayers being united in prayers. And I know our parishes are including Haiti, Afghanistan and the intention specifically as we should continue to do so. And pray God that our priority is to ensure that United States citizens, military, and civilian get out safely. They cannot be left to chance or to the evil forces. We must also ensure that we live up, I believe, to our moral obligation of getting the interpreters, the translators, the cultural consultants, allied Afghanistan. They served our military, they kept them out of harm's way as much as possible, and we know what will happen to them if they're left there.

So I think pray God every effort should be made to evacuate them safely. And we must also keep these prayers for the people of Afghanistan. Their future, it's just so frightening to think about what the future looks like right now. We're certainly aware of how the Taliban operates. And Billy this also gives me the opportunity to talk again, so what do we do in the midst of evil, in the midst of suffering? Well, we know there are things we can do and we can contribute to positively in assisting. And so it gives me the opportunity to talk about our work of Catholic Charities here in the Diocese of Arlington. We are one of three resettlement agencies in Northern Virginia and designated by the State Department to receive and place newly arrived Afghan families who received a special immigrant visa, SIVs they call them.

It's important, I think, for our listeners to know that we have resettled 326 SIVs since July 1st and 196 of them are from Afghanistan and 2,600 over the past six years. So that's incredible. People come here with very little and we're there to often meet them right at the airport and to begin that resettlement process. 15% of Afghans who come to the United States as SIVs, again, that's the special immigrant visa, settle in Northern Virginia.

Billy Atwell ([16:17](#)):

There's a large Afghan community.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:19](#)):

And we expect just in preparation for this podcast, just to give the most current information, we expect to resettle between 900 to 1,200 in the next 12 months. And sometimes I'm asked, what do I mean by the SIV? It's granted by the government to individuals who have assisted the American government and military operations abroad. As I mentioned, primarily is translators or contractors whose lives are in danger if they remain now in their home country, life is in danger, trying to being killed. So all refugees and SIVs go through an extensive vetting process by multiple federal agencies before being issued the visas. As part of the resettlement, Catholic Charities helped to integrate these SIV holders into American society. And they're coming to-

Billy Atwell ([17:19](#)):

It's a lot different than Afghanistan.

Bishop Burbidge ([17:20](#)):

Right.

Billy Atwell ([17:21](#)):

There's a lots to adjust to.

Bishop Burbidge ([17:22](#)):

It's a whole new world, you can imagine. Can you imagine just coming with nothing and trying just to start over in a whole new land. So we help to secure housing, we helped them to learn English, gain an understanding of our American culture, update resumes, secure employment, help children enroll in school, and provide additional education support. Catholic Charities began participating in Operation Allies Refugee on July 30th, serving several incoming plane loads of evacuated SIV holders from Afghanistan in emergency effort. And Catholic charity staff is also providing legal assistance for paperwork completion, translation, child activities, and other essential resources to men and women and children at Fort Lee, Virginia. Many of these SIV holders then traveled on to destinations elsewhere in the United States to settle with family already residing in this country. I was told before our podcasts that about 35 of those Afghan SIV holders who came to Fort Lee in August are settling right now in the diocese of Arlington.

Billy Atwell ([18:38](#)):

Exactly.

Bishop Burbidge ([18:39](#)):

So dear friends, an opportunity to assist, you can imagine what is needed. You come to a new country leaving a very dreadful, fearful situation, imagine emotionally the toll it's taking, but even materially, you have nothing. So we want to again ask for the generosity of those in our diocese to provide things that would be helpful. Basic things like household goods, lightly used furniture, things for children like clothes and diapers and bassinets or all those kinds of things, toiletries, basic necessities. And, Billy, maybe you can explain to our listeners because I know the desire for the people in this diocese and

people of Goodwill throughout our communities is so significant and great to help. And we want to mention two specific ways that they can help. So maybe you can give the details.

Billy Atwell ([19:44](#)):

Two easiest ways to provide some of these goods that Bishop Burbidge has mentioned, the first is, if you want to know exactly what's needed, there is an Amazon wishlist that we've set up where you can purchase and it goes directly to our Migration & Refugee Services. And all the products there are exactly what we know folks are going to need. So if you want to provide those, go to ccda.net/refugeewishlist, again, ccda.net/refugeewishlist. And there are parishes that are doing drives to collect goods and they're loading them up and then bringing them over to Migration & Refugee Services. If you're a parish that wants to do that, go to ccda.net/mrcdonate, that's Migration & Refugee Services donate, that's going to be the best way. But as much as there are definitely needs, these folks, as Bishop Burbidge mentioned, come off the plane with, a lot of times one suitcase for a whole family with four or five kids. And they barely have enough to get them through the plane ride in the first couple of days, they need a lot of things.

But the biggest need is actually long-term housing. Within three months, they have to be self-sufficient, and Catholic Charities guarantees rent for the first three months. But because they were translators and these professionals, they're often able to find jobs here in the area. If you know of anyone who has property for rent, that is the greatest need, is that there are people coming that we have nowhere to place them. And that is a real tragedy. So again, reach out to Catholic Charities, ccda.net, if you know anybody who has property to rent that might be willing. Again, the first three months are guaranteed by Catholic Charities. And these people have to get jobs within those first three months and are then self-sufficient from there. The point of this is self-sufficiency, they don't want to be dependent on us forever. And they're hard workers. So again, please reach out, ccda.net if you'd like to help in any of these ways, especially in the area of housing.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:32](#)):

And thank you for mentioning that Billy. And also just a profound thanks to all those of our team in Catholic Charities and those working in refugees resettlement office. Countless, countless hours of selfless, generous, dedicated service. Greeting, and embracing people with such compassion make us very, very proud of our diocese and of our church. It's always important to remember that Catholic Charities and this situation that we're talking about here now, we embrace and seek to help all people. It's not just Catholics, people who are refugees, who share a different faith, we're there to help them. And it goes back to what we said earlier in our podcast, is because we are all members of God's family and our embrace is wide, to embrace all God's people. Again, I think that if we could say, what is the theme of this podcasts? I probably would end up saying it's prayer because we also need to be praying for their safety, their wellbeing, and God's blessings upon all those who are going through this difficult situation. But again, a word of thanks to the selfless individuals who are still part of this beautiful, essential ministry at this time.

Billy Atwell ([22:52](#)):

Absolutely. A little over a week ago, you published A Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology. Since then, you've been asked to appear on a lot of different Catholic media outlets, it's been published in some secular outlets, it's picking up a little bit of steam there. So again, it's called A Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology, it's available at arlingtondiocese.org for those

who want to read it. For those who haven't read it, however, could you describe what it is, why you created it, and who's it really intended for, who is the audience you were looking for?

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

Sure. And I would encourage, as you just did, for people to read the document. We put together a great team of people who have expertise and wisdom in science and philosophy and theology and pastors. We worked very hard on this document to make it readable. So it's a document that's intended especially for parents, for teachers, for people who say, "Of course, Bishop. I believe that God created us in his image and likeness as a man or woman. And believe it or not, I'm being forced to defend this at school or in my workplace or community. I just need the language that will help me to explain that this is the truth. But help me to explain why this is true and why we believe it, and to bring that message in a loving and compassionate way to others."

So this is what we call a catechetical document, it's a teaching of the church, it's what we believe. And we always strive to teach the truth in love. So I would say, yes, this document is the truth, but it is presented in love, which is how we should always speak to one another. I never thought it would be counter-cultural to say that God created us either a man or a woman. That, as we know, that's rooted and it's human reason alone. A person of any faith knows this, that the human person is an embodied soul, the composite of the spiritual and the physical, we are created either male or female. And that is genetically determined at conception and present in every cell of our body.

And so we accept and receive how God has created us and we want to reach out. We know that in society and even in our own communities there is gender confusion and dysphoria. And people who claim, "Well, I've been created as a male but now I think I'm a female." Well, we want to say to that person we want to be here to walk with you, to accompany you, but we have to begin with what is true. If you begin to try to help someone with something that is false, that's going down a path that is going to cause more confusion and actually more suffering, even your studies will show that. So if we love someone, we speak to them truth and we work with them to understand, well, what are the issues? Why are you experiencing this? And to provide the support and the counseling that would support.

So I think it's intended to speak to parents, to teachers, to all of us who want to speak about this sensitive issue in a truthful way and always compassionately. We say very clearly in this document that anyone who is experiencing confusion with their gender, in no way should any person ever be treated harshly or bullied any way. We as people who follow a gospel can never allow that, it's always with respect. But because we respect and because we love, we speak in truth. And I have to say to our listeners, and we knew this was coming when we issued a document, we were well-prepared. Overall, we knew we were going to receive overwhelming support because we're teaching the truth, and overwhelmingly it has been supported. But certainly there have been some attacks on this document, we knew that would come.

And unfortunately we speak the truth in love, and it is unfortunate to see that people who disagree with us often do so so harshly and without respect. So we want to be mutual in the respect we have for one another. I know on that point, I do have to say to our faithful, to our listeners is that we cannot let our voices be silenced here, we can't, we can't be. I know sometimes to embrace this document and to bring it to others, yeah, you might be rejected. You might be ridiculed, you might take a hard time for it. So what? Don't be afraid, be courageous, this is the truth. Say it lovingly, but this is true. And we cannot allow others, because they're going to label us or whatever, to silence us, that just cannot be the case. Yeah.

Billy Atwell ([28:59](#)):

When I read the document for the first time, it was pretty much in its final form at that point. The first thing I thought was how caring it was. And you talked about speaking the truth as counter-cultural, but in interviews, I've heard you say that, "Well, the way we convey the truth in this document is also counter-cultural." Because, like you said, "We're met with untruths spoken harshly" That's the common way issues are debated in society right now. It's also a hallmark of your ministry though, that you always express such effort to be respectful of people and to make them feel... To know that they're cared for and loved. And you've reflected that in this document, how important was that to you going into it, that that was conveyed throughout, that we never say the truth in a way that would at least sound intentionally feel harsh?

Bishop Burbidge ([29:43](#)):

From the very beginning, and this document went through various drafts. And so we wanted to make sure theologically, with the use of human reason, philosophically, that we we're speaking in a very clear and concise language. But through it all and everyone on the team, one, it has to be pastoral, affirming the respect that we owe to each and every human person and compassionate and to also speak to our parents. Many, many families are impacted by this issues. And as you walk with someone through this issue, you're constantly reminding them, "I'm speaking to you because I love you. And it's because I love you that I tell you what is true and what is real." It is, I have to say though, and I've heard this from many parents, and I'm very, very glad to see how vigilant so many of our parents are being, that what is being taught to their children, especially those who are attending some of our public schools, you have to know what your school board is saying, you have to know what's in the curriculum.

I've been very inspired by parents who would say, "Wait a second, if I'm sending my child to your school, this isn't part of what I'm asking you to do." So it's good that we are bringing the truth and faith out into the public arena. So parents need to be vigilant. Of course, in our Catholic schools this is the truth that is taught so beautifully to our children each and every day. Before parents come to our schools from a public school or something, we want to make sure that they know your child's going to be loved in our school, he or she is going to be treated compassionately. But here's what we believe about the human person. We want to make sure that that's a good fit for them.

Billy Atwell ([32:05](#)):

Catholicism isn't just a culture, it's a truth statement.

Bishop Burbidge ([32:07](#)):

Right, yeah.

Billy Atwell ([32:07](#)):

By going to a Catholic school, this is what we believe. The last section of the document is specifically directed to those who are going through gender dysphoria or having experience with some of the gender confusion. You've gotten a lot of questions about that, very positive questions. I think people were very happy to see a very pastoral message to those who are struggling knowing that you're part of our family, we love you, and we want to take care of you. If anyone listening is in that position or they have a child experiencing that, share some of that message with them if you would.

Bishop Burbidge ([32:39](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. And like we said throughout the podcast today, the church is always there. Pope Francis always reminds us that no matter what the issue or what the struggle someone is going through, we are always there to accompany, to walk with you. So we're available, we're available. I know our priests, our counselors are always there to assist and to help and to guide and to provide the spiritual nourishment you need. No matter what our cross or no matter what our issue is that we're dealing with, we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we need the nourishment that comes from prayer and the sacraments which is available to any of our faithful who are dealing with this issue. So the church must be carrying out what the Lord told us. And the Lord promises people, "I will never abandon you, I'll always..." The Lord himself always taught the truth because he loved. But he promised no one would be abandoned. And that's who we are as a church and it's who we are as a diocese.

Billy Atwell ([34:01](#)):

You mentioned the counseling resources, you just blessed a grotto at Divine Mercy University, where they're very active in helping equip their students and how are you going to help people that are going through this issue? This is becoming more common, so how do we serve in truth but with love through professional resources like the-

Bishop Burbidge ([34:20](#)):

And that's the kind of counseling that I do advise for our parents who you may need to seek that kind of support. That they use the science of psychology in the profession of counseling and the wisdom and grace of theology. So that help is out there, that help is available.

Billy Atwell ([34:48](#)):

Absolutely. Bishop, we went through a lot of big topics here some, very sad thing some, opportunities for hope. But what are your final thoughts? And then if you would send us off with a-

Bishop Burbidge ([34:57](#)):

Yeah, just one final comment on the document itself, A Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology. Again, I would ask people to... I know some outlets are covering, but actually read the document itself, it's very readable.

Billy Atwell ([35:12](#)):

It is accessible like you said. If a knucklehead like me can pull it off, everybody can read it.

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

And then there's end notes. So for the people who want to really dive a little deeper into it, we provide a lot of resources that they can go right to direct sources if they wish to also. So I would certainly encourage that. Like you said, Billy, we did go through a lot on this podcast. We're well aware of so many alarming and sad situations throughout our world, even many issues, including division within our own country. So let's renew ourselves to be, praying for the peace that only Christ can give throughout our world for the courage we need always as followers of Christ to teach his truth in love and to be courageous in practicing and sharing our faith with others. But always with the grace and strength that comes from the Lord, a divine assistance that he offers to us and pray that we will walk humbly with our God.

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Billy Atwell ([36:27](#)):

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