

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 co-host. If you're listening to this podcast, then you are benefiting from the generosity of those who have given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal this year and in years past. The BLA supports a lot of ministries throughout the diocese that you've heard us talk about on this podcast, but one of them is the Communications Office, so we want to say thank you to those who have given to the BLA.

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And one more thing before we get started: Bishop Burbidge is inviting each parishioner of the diocese to join him on Sunday, November 21st at 4:00 PM at the Cathedral of St. Thomas More for Solemn Vespers to kick off the beginning of the 50th anniversary of our diocese. It's our jubilee and we're beginning a preparatory period then. So, again, Vespers, also known as evening prayer, will be an opportunity for all of us to pray together, to truly remember, rejoice, and renew this great diocese as we prepare for the Golden Jubilee. To learn more about the jubilee in general, go to jubilee.arlingtondiocese.org.

I now welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you doing?

Bishop Burbidge (01:44):

Doing very well, Billy. I hope our listeners are doing well and staying safe and healthy. They're in my prayers every day.

Billy Atwell (01:50):

Absolutely. Before we actually get into our main topics, I want to jump back there. I was talking about the jubilee a moment ago in my introduction. You formed a committee that has been working hard to create lots of opportunities for people to engage with this jubilee. If you would just share some of the background and the backstory of the preparations that have gone into this.

Bishop Burbidge (02:07):

Right. And I hope our faithful will be able to read a little bit about that in our recent edition of the Arlington Catholic Herald. But just basically, everyone, that we're getting excited in 2024, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Arlington. And so, I did not just want to wake up one morning and say, "Okay, let's have a big celebration in 2024." Let's use this as a time to evangelize, as a time to us to grow closer in our relationship with the Lord, both as individuals, as families, as well as a diocesan family. And so, let's take advantage. Let's prepare for this with certain intentions.

And so, with the help of a great, great committee, we said, "Yeah, okay, let's do a three-year preparatory period." And as you mentioned, the themes: we remember, we remember those who helped to give us such solid foundations in God's blessings throughout our history, and our theme... our

focus beginning next month in November, will be on the Eucharist, "Do this in memory of me." Then, we're going to rejoice in year two with our focus on our Blessed Mother, [inaudible 00:03:24] rejoices, and the greatness, and proclaims the greatness of the Lord. And then, renew the evangelization. And so, as you mentioned Billy, for each year, there will be certain activities, and pilgrimages, and events, and resources.

But next month we're starting. Solemnity at Christ the King. And I thought a beautiful way to start will be in our mother church, the cathedral, where I will lead Solemn Vespers, or evening prayer. People don't get a chance to do that a lot. So they can learn a little bit more about that with our diocesan choir present. It's a beautiful experience. I just would love to see a wonderful representation of our diocese and get the momentum going as we move forward at this exciting time.

Billy Atwell ([04:07](#)):

Absolutely. Again, for anyone that wants to learn more about that, the Jubilee, go to jubilee.arlingtondiocese.org. We've even got some booklets there to help guide you through adoration or the Mass that was written by the religious sisters serving in our diocese. So we've got some great things, a lot of events that you can check out and pencil on your calendar.

This past weekend, you hosted what became the first listening session associated with the synod of bishops, the synod on synodality that the Holy Father has called for. You hosted it at Rally, which I know is a day that you look forward to each year. It's a day of fun and faith for high school students. So for those who are not aware, if you could just give a brief background of the synod of bishops, because you have addressed it before in the podcast, but also what kind of response did you get from the young people? 'Cause you were listening to them. You asked the questions and they answered. Usually it's the opposite.

Bishop Burbidge ([04:51](#)):

Exactly. And again, Catholic Herald did a great job in our recent edition speaking about the synod, but basically it's our Holy Father's request and it means "to journey together." So he wants us to journey together in these coming months to discuss how we can be more effective as a church, as a parish, as a diocese in growing again in our relationship with the Lord and in bringing the gospel and the face of Christ and the truth and joy of the gospel to others, including those who have been away from the church. And so he says, "Let's..." He's asking all the bishops to be among the faithful, among the holy people, God, and those who've been away from us and are not actively engaged, to listen to each other to have a better understanding.

It's not about changing church structures or church dogma. We're not talking about that. We're talking about how we as a church can be strengthened and more alive in our faith, but how can we do that unless we hear from each other and what our experiences are and what contributions we may make in assisting the bishops in achieving some of these goals?

You were right, I was at Rally, which is one of my favorite events of the year sponsored by our Youth Office, which gathers high school students from all around our diocese who live in various communities, who attend various schools, public schools, private schools, some are home schools, some attend our Catholic schools, and they're all together as high school students. It's always a great joy to be with them, and especially this year, to listen to their experiences, both at schools they attend and also in the communities in which they live.

For all the young people who were there and all the young people listening, you just always leave me inspired and encouraged whenever I'm with you. But this year was special because we spent a

good segment of the day, maybe a good hour or so, where I told them, "Okay, this is what the Holy Father's asked me to do. You're the first group. We're going to listen to you." Part of this synod process gave us about 10 questions to maybe bring forth to people. We narrowed it down a little bit and we simply asked the question and, I'll tell you, Billy, it was just so inspiring how much and freely our young people shared their experiences, their insights, and recommendations with me. Sometimes they were coming at the question at various points of view and it was beautiful to see how they listened to each other. And even though one person would say this and someone approached from another extreme, there was nothing but respect, applause after each comment.

I did not comment for the most part. I think they were shocked at that. "Bishop's not saying anything here! He truly is just listening." And I would say one powerful part of the segment for me was their response to the question: "What is the most challenging part of being a high school student and living your Catholic faith?"

Billy Atwell ([08:26](#)):

It's an interesting question.

Bishop Burbidge ([08:26](#)):

Yeah. And they poured out their hearts.

Billy Atwell ([08:29](#)):

Wow. What were some of the things that they shared?

Bishop Burbidge ([08:32](#)):

Yeah. And the reality is that for them in their... and especially in school, when they try to live their faith and present to others what we believe and why we believe it, how quickly people are to label them: to label them a hater, to label them as belonging to a church that practices discrimination, to say your church is nothing but rules and commands and things like that.

And so I said to our young people, "My heart really is sad to learn that this reality is so real for you, but I guess, in another way, we're not surprised because from the very beginning, Christ told us that if we're going to follow him, we have to take up our cross." I said, "But don't forget what sometimes is the way you're being treated is also a strategy to silence you. Because who wants to be called a hater or who wants to be called someone that discriminates or things like that? So don't let that happen. That's a strategy. You have to still continue to be who you are. Let others see your joy in living in your faith and be confident, be steadfast. Will there be a price to pay? Yeah, maybe, but maybe there'll be other hearts and lives you'll touch and transform by being that person that you're called to be." And certainly I did encourage them that it's a reminder also of how much they need God in their lives, because we can't live our faith courageously, especially when we are attacked, and sometimes aggressively and even by people in authority.

Billy Atwell ([10:30](#)):

Oh yeah, often it's coming from- [crosstalk 00:10:32]

Bishop Burbidge ([10:31](#)):

Yeah. Unless we have a strong prayer life and our own relationship with Christ. But just how they were so honest and so transparent, it was just so beautiful. I learned a lot from them.

Billy Atwell ([10:43](#)):

That's great.

Bishop Burbidge ([10:44](#)):

I left extremely inspired and it really was... I really got a... Myself, I have received a better understanding of what Pope Francis is trying to accomplish with the synod, because it really was beautiful to see, not just me listening to them, but them, these young people, listening to one another in a respectful way. I think that's what we need in our church and it's what we need in our nation.

Billy Atwell ([11:08](#)):

People struggle with what you're talking about, facing adversity and so on. As a dad, I experience this, and you're a spiritual father to all these kids there, so that's why your heart's pouring out. I want my kids to be kind of shielded and protected from these things, or at least until they're adults and I feel like they can handle it. Now, in all truth, they'll be in their thirties and I still will want to protect them from these things. But we also know that some of the greatest saints of the church became known as the greatest saints of the church because they faced serious adversity. It wasn't because their lives were easy and peaceful all the time. It's because of this. And hopefully out of these struggles and these experiences, some of the greatest saints of the U.S. church will emerge. You might have been speaking to some of them.

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

Oh, God willing. And the other thing that is important is an event like Rally, because sometimes they feel like they're all alone, an island- [crosstalk 00:12:02]

Billy Atwell ([12:02](#)):

They all probably are.

Bishop Burbidge ([12:03](#)):

But on Sunday they were together with young people their age, their peers from all around the diocese and you could see how excited they were, "Wow. You know, I'm not the only one out there. There's people just like me here." And so that's what we have to do. We have to lift up and encourage each other in faith, too.

Billy Atwell ([12:21](#)):

It's funny, adults need that, too.

Bishop Burbidge ([12:22](#)):

We do. [crosstalk 00:12:23]

Billy Atwell ([12:23](#)):

The kids need that, that we don't have it.

Bishop, you recently sent a novena prayer to all the pastors of the diocese asking them to lead their parishioners through a daily prayer beginning October 25th, so two days ago as of this recording, all the way through Election Day, November 2nd. It's entitled A Memorare A Day for the Health of the

Commonwealth. I like that, it kind of rhymes, right? You're asking the faithful to consider praying that prayer as individuals or as families. Why is it important that they participate in this prayer through the election?

Bishop Burbidge ([12:55](#)):

Yeah. So we always talk about faithful citizenship, right? So faithful citizenship is taking seriously our duty, our sacred duty as a citizen, to vote, and be grateful for the freedom to do so and all those who offer the ultimate sacrifice so that we're able to do so. But we do it faithfully. We bring our belief, our core values, our moral beliefs and convictions to the voting booth. Who's going to uphold that which we know is true, especially the sacredness of all life and the dignity that all persons deserve as children of God?

But if we're going to be faithful citizens, then it has to all begin with prayer. We have to pray, number one, for the wisdom, that I gain insights to vote in a way that's going to bring about justice and help all people and the common good for our Commonwealth. But that we also must rely on God. Billy, how is this nation going to be healed of the division that we're seeing, of the harshness that we're seeing, the rejection of beautiful values without God's grace?

And so, above all, let's begin being united in prayer. And so we're asking through our Blessed Mother the help of her Son's grace, especially now as we lead up to a day, the election day, which will have great impact on all of us and upon our Commonwealth. So I think it's an opportunity for us to show our unity as a diocese and I know our prayer's on our website or people can Google the Memorare and find it. There's a lot at stake here and our duty is to be in the public arena, but we begin as a people, prayer-guided, inspired by our Lord through the intercession of his Blessed Mother. That's the reason I've asked us all to pray.

Billy Atwell ([15:04](#)):

That's great. Thank you. And so for those listening, we begin with prayer and when you're ready to act and form your conscience, go to [vacatholic.org](#), where you can get great resources that show candidate comparisons, where they stand on the issues using their own words to help substantiate that, also voting records. This year it's a big one because we have the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, the entire house of delegates up for elections, so this is a major election for our Commonwealth, so please take a look at that. I also interviewed Jeff Caruso on our Searching for More Podcast that you can find at [arlingtondiocese.org](#). Just go to our podcasts and you can find that there, or go to our YouTube channel as well. Jeff's a great guy and he provides great background to what lobbying efforts look like when you're doing it from a Catholic perspective, how he works to help those legislators understand what the church believes, why we believe it, and evangelize in what can be a hostile environment. Politics can be a rough business.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:01](#)):

Yeah. And he's our Executive Director for Virginia Catholic Conference and he really does... Even though people don't always agree what he's bringing forth to them, he's very well respected. We're really glad to have him as the face in our engaging elected officials.

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

Absolutely. Bishop, November 2nd... So we just mentioned the election day, well, on November 2nd, All Souls' Day at 11:00 AM, you're going to be celebrating Mass interestingly in a graveyard there, at a

cemetery. What an interesting image and very Christian. Specifically, it's going to be the All Souls' Day Mass at Fairfax Memorial Park. You've celebrated this each year since you've come here and it's always beautiful imagery of you going around and blessing the different gravestones. Talk about why this Mass is important to celebrate actually on location there at the cemetery and what it means for you to bring those blessings to that place.

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

Yeah. I think the way that All Souls' Day, again, is a beautiful opportunity to pray for our faithful departed, our loved ones who have gone home to God, and mark with the sign of faith. It's very powerful to be in a cemetery to be reminded of a reality that sometimes we just don't think about, or unconsciously don't allow ourselves to think about, and that is what we say on Ash Wednesday, "You're dust and unto dust you shall return." This is just a journey, this life here on Earth. We're going to die. And so we always, not in fear, but in joyful anticipation, prepare ourselves for that, but don't live our lives as if this is the end-all be-all. When you stand in a cemetery, you are reminded of that in a powerful way.

You're also reminded that there's a heavenly communion that, even when we celebrate Mass, we have an altar... We're celebrating Mass so there's an altar there at that cemetery, so it shows us that we are in communion with all the saints who have gone before us and including, God willing, all our loved ones. There's no better way to be in union with them than at the celebration of the Eucharist. And then when you bless the graves, including the graves of a number of our priests are buried at Fairfax, it's a reminder to be thankful for their example and witness and to pledge to do our best to honor them by imitating the good qualities that we saw in those who have died.

Billy Atwell ([18:31](#)):

Yeah, it's a very powerful witness, I think, and great experience. Again, that's November 2nd at 11:00 AM at Fairfax Memorial Park. You can go to our website to get any other details you might need.

Quick reminder, before we get to questions from the faithful, our diocesan pilgrimage is October 30th. That's this weekend. It's coming up. Don't forget if you're coming that box lunch options are available at the Shrine, but pilgrims are encouraged to bring their own bag lunch if possible. It's wheelchair accessible. There's listening assisted devices. You can go to nationalshrine.org for more on that. The Shrine, because it's D.C. law, or policy at least, it does require masks for anyone who's visiting indoors there at the basilica. I think that's going to be a great time. It's going to be a lot of fun. Again, arlingtondiocese.org for more information.

There is a plenary indulgence that will be available to those who attend. To gain that indulgence, in addition to, I'm going to read the exact wording here, "In addition to excluding all attachment to sin, even venial sin, they must fulfill the following three conditions: sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father." Again, go to arlingtondiocese.org for more information there.

We're closing in on the end of Respect Life Month here. However, please make sure that you've read Bishop Burbidge's column, Called to be Defenders of Life, at catholicherald.com. There's a lot of great stuff there. And again, Bishop mentioned the synod article there, the jubilee article, so there's a lot of great stuff in the Catholic Herald. Make sure you're signed up for the e-newsletter.

Bishop Burbidge ([20:07](#)):

And Billy, just on that, we were talking about journeying together. That's what a pilgrimage is, right? We accompany each other as brothers and sisters in Christ throughout a day of prayer, knowing that our ultimate pilgrimage is our... we share the same goal to get to heaven. And you mentioned the three conditions. One of them is confession, and we have a number of our priests who are going to be available throughout the pilgrimage for the celebration of the sacrament of penance, so there'll be ample opportunity for all to celebrate that beautiful sacrament.

One of the parts I love at the end of the Mass is that throughout the day, there's a beautiful gift store at the basilica Shrine and people buy religious articles, and I love at the end of going up and down the aisles, and that's a... I get a lot... I get all my steps in that day... go up and down the aisle and people are holding up their religious articles and we have the holy water and I'm honored to bless the religious articles before the final blessing. So it's really... We are hearing good numbers about the number of people attending and-

Billy Atwell ([21:14](#)):

A lot of buses from parishes. And I think this could be great.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:17](#)):

I'm also... I encourage people... You did mention the mask requirement, but I heard there could even be the possibility that that might be lifted before our pilgrimage, so just to check, but come prepared. Yeah.

Billy Atwell ([21:30](#)):

Certainly hope so. Yeah, we'll see.

All right. So we've got a couple of questions from the faithful. The first is, "I've watched some of your homilies on YouTube. How do you prepare for a homily? Is it different than preparing for like a speech or a lecture?"

Bishop Burbidge ([21:43](#)):

Yes. Well, that's a great question. That's a key word for homilies is preparation. It requires for me, for my brother priests, and our deacons... You look in advance of the readings that you'll be preaching upon, because don't forget, you're proclaiming God's, you're preaching God's word, so it's the readings. You take time to pray with those readings. You might do a little research on a Scripture passage, just be reminded of some of the... what the evangelist was, through certain words, or what Jesus, through certain images, was trying to teach us, and you pray. You pray, "Lord, thank you for this great opportunity to preach to your people this Sunday. May I be an instrument of your voice." I think if you prepare, if you pray, then with God's grace, you can be assured you'll touch the hearts of His people with His word and His message. You just never preach yourself. You preach our Lord Jesus and His word.

And then it's a little bit different than preparing a speech or lecture because a speech or a lecture is usually on a given topic. It's not specifically on the word of God. And so it's not... When you preach you're trying to not only give information or teach, you're also trying to inspire and touch the heart and give something that would help people to live that next day with the spiritual tools they need to grow closer to Christ. Whereas a lecture or a speech still requires preparation and prayer, don't get me wrong, but it's more the giving of information where a homily can't just be giving information. "In this passage, this is what this means." It's like, how does this apply to us? 'Cause God's word's alive. So a homily's supposed to make God's word alive.

Billy Atwell ([23:53](#)):

Very good. This next question, I actually got this question from... We've been asked this question multiple times. I got this question just yesterday from a parishioner, but someone wrote in, "Rumor has it that our Catholic schools have higher enrollment than ever before? Is that true?"

Bishop Burbidge ([24:07](#)):

Yep, it's not a rumor. It's true. Our schools have definitely seen increased enrollment across the board. We are, as of today, we are up 7% this school year over previous years in enrollment.

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

That's amazing.

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

Some schools are at capacity with a waiting list, which is truly a blessing. I think this is a great credit to our Catholic educators, who during very trying and challenging times kept our schools open, kept learning going, and kept our students safe and healthy. It took a lot of work. It took a lot of perseverance and patience, but this is a vocation for our Catholic educators and they did it.

I think another reason is that it's very clear that in our schools, we see the parents as the first teachers of their children in the ways of education and certainly in the ways of faith formation. We only consider it a privilege. We consider it an honor to partner with our parents. Actually that's the way it should be in all schools, whether it's public school, private school, or Catholic school. Unfortunately, I think parents are realizing that's not always the case, but in our Catholic schools, that is definitely the case, and they've experienced that. And people who came over to us last year, even now that their county schools are open, they're staying with us.

I just want maybe to use this question to just again, to thank all of our are Catholic educators and to thank our parents, to thank our parents for your sacrifices, for the example you give your children, for you taking the heart, the responsibility, a beautiful vocation God has given to you as a mother and a father and the many ways that you live that out every day to teach your children about our Lord, to teach them how to pray and teach them what's good and pure and holy. So also a great, great opportunity to thank our parents.

One of our strategic plan goals is to find a way, and we're very intentional about this, to make our schools more available, accessible, and affordable for more people and across the board. It's a challenge, but we're going to embrace that challenge and with God's grace find a way to do that.

Billy Atwell ([26:36](#)):

That's great. If you want to learn more about our schools, again, go to arlingtondiocese.org and take a look there. They really are stellar and they've shined, especially as of late. Bishop, any final thoughts? And then if you would send us off with your blessing.

Bishop Burbidge ([26:48](#)):

Yeah, just one, Billy, when I was talking earlier in the podcast about the high school students... It did sadden me when I heard... But I hear and all faithful Catholics hear, when we talk about the sanctity of marriage or the genuine meaning of sexuality and gender identity and speak the truth and love, people will label us as haters, and I told our students the other day that that can't be the case. Our church is

founded on Jesus Christ. He's the one who founded our church. His mandate is to love God and love one another. And that's what we do. I gave them examples of how that love is lived and reflected in our church, just through the work of Catholic charities, for example, of all that the Catholic Church does to help people of all faith, of all faith, in their time of need: when they're poor, when they're homeless, when they're in a crisis pregnancy, when they do not have food, when they do not have rent. We are a church in imitation of Christ who loves, and don't let anyone tell you anything differently than that.

We pray that... All of us pray for that grace each day to follow the greatest commandment, to love God and to love one another. And so I thank all of our listeners and all of our faithful throughout the diocese for the many ways that you reflect the love of Christ to your family, to those you meet, and even those who may disagree and oppose with you. Keep loving, keep showing people the joy that is yours in living the gospel and together, let's walk humbly with our God.

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