

Bishop Burbidge (00:00):

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

Billy Atwell (00:08):

Welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, Chief Communications Officer for the diocese and your co-host. Those listening to this podcast are benefiting from the generous contributions of those who have given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal in the past. It supports many ministries throughout the diocese, one of which being communications and the studio operations that we have here, so we want to thank those who've given to that.

If you haven't already, please rate this podcast and write a review wherever you're listening to it. You can sign up for our E-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org, and also Bishop Burbidge offers a short gospel reflection every day on Twitter and you can follow him @bishopburbidge. Make sure you're following the diocese on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. If you'd like to ask Bishop Burbidge a question, send it to info@arlingtondiocese.org or call us at 703-831-7013.

Also, we have a special devotion going on in this first preparatory year for the Golden Jubilee of our diocese that'll be in 2024. You can make this your best advent, Christmas and New Year's yet with a devotion to 40 hours. Every parish is celebrating at some point during the year of 40 hours of Eucharistic adoration and exposition. Go to jubilee.arlingtondiocese.org to check out the next 40 hours devotion happening near you.

Also, this coming weekend is the Catholic charities Christmas collection. This collection is really critical for Catholic charities and being able to continue the good work that it does on the scale that it does all of these good works that you've heard about on this podcast and in other communications from the diocese. So please consider a gift and thank you so much to those who have given to that collection in the past. I now welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you doing?

Bishop Burbidge (01:52):

I am doing well, Billy, and hope all of our listeners are doing well and enjoying many blessings throughout this sacred season of advent. Thank you for mentioning the 40 hours. A number of our parishes, as you said it will take place throughout the year, but a number of our parishes have already had their 40 hours and I'm hearing from the pastors. What a beautiful celebration and response from the people.

Billy Atwell (02:14):

Absolutely.

Bishop Burbidge (02:15):

People coming just to be with our Eucharistic Lord and appreciate that time just being still in his presence, along with the liturgies that occur during those 40 hours. So thanks for mentioning that and making the list so available to our people. And thanks for the Christmas collection for Catholic charities.

Billy Atwell (02:33):

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge (02:33):

Our people are always so generous to that and what a great way in this Christmas season to know that our gifts are given to us, not only to praise God, but to serve others, to be shared with others, especially those in most need. And we all have trust and confidence in the great stewardship of Catholic charities that whatever gifts we offer go directly to help children and parishioners and members of our community who are really in need this time of year and we can help brighten their Christmas. So thanks everyone for your generosity and support.

Billy Atwell ([03:10](#)):

Perfect. Bishop, you're a brave man because you braved international travel recently. You just returned from Rome, visiting our seminarians there. How was that trip and also how are the seminarians doing?

Bishop Burbidge ([03:21](#)):

You know, we have four of our seminarians studying in Rome at the North American college in a particular university. So as their Bishop, I have to show my concern and support of them. So I made that great sacrifice, Billy, of traveling to Rome. What a sacrifice.

Billy Atwell ([03:38](#)):

Yeah, right.

Bishop Burbidge ([03:40](#)):

It's always a great joy to be there, but you're right though, and I'm sure our listeners know this, international travel is not easy these days.

Billy Atwell ([03:40](#)):

No.

Bishop Burbidge ([03:50](#)):

There is a lot to go through before you get on the plane, including making sure you have a negative test before you get back on the plane and wearing the mask the whole flight. It's a pretty long flight. But people are doing what is necessary out of love to protect and keep each other safe. So it was certainly not that much of a burden, but it was only a short trip. My Vocation Director, Father Eisenberg, and I went, left on Friday, came back Wednesday, but boy did we accomplish a lot? We were in St. Peter's Basilica with our seminarians. We were so privileged to have mass right there at the tomb of St. Peter just by ourselves. We went to visit the cave where St. Benedict prayed for three years and there's a little chapel there at the monastery. We had mass also there. I was able to offer mass for the entire seminary community. And as you can imagine, the seminarians also found some good restaurants for us to enjoy.

Billy Atwell ([04:55](#)):

I bet.

Bishop Burbidge ([04:55](#)):

I told them, because they're at a distance, and I reminded them that you're at a distance, but be assured that the faithful of our diocese are so good in praying for all of our seminarians, keeping you in our thoughts and prayers, so you're never far from our thoughts and prayers. That goes for all of our seminarians. But I think it means a lot to our seminarians in Rome.

Billy Atwell ([05:16](#)):

Yeah. We wouldn't want them to feel the spiritually disconnected just because they're across the pond.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:20](#)):

And we got to see Father [inaudible 00:05:22] who-

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

Oh, that's right.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:24](#)):

Yeah, he works in the Holy See for the Secretary of State, so he really is working directly in service to the Holy See, to the mission in work of Pope Francis. So I hear so many positive compliments about him and he makes us and our diocese very proud and we're grateful for his service to the universal church.

Billy Atwell ([05:44](#)):

He's doing well?

Bishop Burbidge ([05:45](#)):

He's doing well. He's doing well.

Billy Atwell ([05:47](#)):

That's great. Your excellency, oral argument started last week for the Mississippi abortion case before the Supreme Court that basically Mississippi passed a law that imposed restrictions on abortion after 15 weeks. The final decision won't be known for months. I think we're used to fast turnaround on things. We were expecting it to be fast. It won't be for quite a while. But pro-life proponents are really hoping that this case will make the legal argument for the unborn that we all want. What are your initial thoughts on this case and what does this mean for the country as a whole?

Bishop Burbidge ([06:18](#)):

I've heard the same news that you've just conveyed and certainly keeping updated on the situation. And it seems like the case, Billy, could be an occasion for the court to overturn Roe versus Wade. I'm not an attorney. Obviously, my concern is much more about the effect of this case, but it is, when you think about it, after all these years, it's sad that in America we find ourselves hoping that the outcome of a case will result in the protection of unborn children from a brutal death. This should not take a court to decide.

Billy Atwell ([06:55](#)):

Absolutely.

Bishop Burbidge ([06:56](#)):

But the good news about a positive Supreme Court ruling, as we unfortunately saw with Roe versus Wade is that it's lasting.

Billy Atwell ([07:03](#)):

Yeah. That could be for a long time.

Bishop Burbidge (07:05):

So if Mississippi wins this case, what a major shift that this would be in our country and I ask all who are listening to be praying, to be doing penance, to offer sacrifices, your sufferings, to pray for our Supreme Court justices that they will have the wisdom and courage to do what is right and that is to protect the life of the unborn.

Billy Atwell (07:29):

Absolutely. Well, we'll certainly be praying for them and hope for a positive outcome there. This almost flew under the radar, but this coming Thursday is the 60th anniversary of the dedication of St. Thomas Moore. Now it wasn't dedicated as a cathedral obviously. And you could maybe explain that for those who aren't aware, but the building as a church. Talk to us about that.

Bishop Burbidge (07:49):

Yeah, no, I'm glad you raised that because as you mentioned at the beginning of the podcast, we're doing three years of preparation for our 50th anniversary in 2024 and the first year is about remembering our history. And so it's good to think about our roots and how we started. When St. Thomas Moore was dedicated, it was a parish church in Arlington.

Billy Atwell (08:10):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge (08:11):

But when the diocese of Arlington was formed in 1974 out of the diocese of Richmond, we needed a cathedral and the cathedral is the mother church of the diocese. It's the chair. It's the catheter where the Bishop's seat is. I always say that the cathedral belongs to every parishioner in the diocese. We are all members of the cathedral parishes. It's our mother church. And at the time our church was founded, St. Thomas Moore, maybe because of its location, its size, was named the cathedral.

So this anniversary is a reminder of our history. It helps us to remember. That's what we're trying to do this year, to remember those who went before us and established the churches we have now. And from here, we should consider, I believe, the legacy we're leaving behind and the future generations that will benefit from the work we're doing. Just recently, as you know, we have dedicated some beautiful new churches. We know it's not merely about the building. It's about the faith that is celebrated within the building, but our Lord deserves a worthy dwelling place, a worthy home. So I'm so glad that we are building, when we have the opportunity, beautiful new churches.

Certainly, I think we may have an opportunity as we get ready for our 50th maybe to enhance our own cathedral a little bit.

Billy Atwell (09:44):

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge (09:44):

I'll be talking more about that in times to come. And in fact, even this Saturday, I'll be breaking ground on the new church for St. [inaudible 00:09:55] parish.

Billy Atwell (09:56):

That's right. That's right.

Bishop Burbidge (09:56):

Yeah, so our diocese continues to grow.

Billy Atwell (10:00):

It's amazing to see all the... Just think in the time that you've been here all the churches that have been new construction or rebuilt and missions becoming parishes. All these things that have happened, it's really stunning, and unfortunately not the norm throughout the country. What a blessing it is to be here.

Bishop Burbidge (10:15):

We are very, very, very blessed.

Billy Atwell (10:16):

Absolutely.

Bishop Burbidge (10:18):

There was a local controversy that has made some news and actually there's some new news today. The Fairfax County public schools recently completed a formal review of two novels that had been challenged by parents because of the graphic sexual content. One was called Gender Queer, A Memoir, and the other was called Lawn Boy. The committee reviewed and unanimously, unfortunately, voted to allow the books to return to the public high school libraries. The news release from the school system said both reviews concluded that the books were valuable in their potential to reach marginalized youth who may struggle to find relatable literary characters that reflect their personal journeys.

Lawn boy, particularly, graphically describes sex acts in one section of the book and images from Gender Queer depict the same and is overall very problematic. Opponents of the book argue that pedophilia is implied in both books. Just today, we found out that the Dolly Madison library in Fairfax County, which is a public library, had displayed those two books next to a Bible and behind the Bible was a gnome with a rainbow flag hat. They've since taken it down because there was a tremendous amount of pushback from people who said that's highly controversial.

Billy Atwell (11:29):

I didn't hear that.

Bishop Burbidge (11:29):

Yeah. People in general were very offended by that.

Billy Atwell (11:29):

Of course.

Bishop Burbidge ([11:33](#)):

So they corrected it, but it demonstrates an attitude and a hostility toward Christianity and what we believe and kind of a mocking of it. So, it was taken down, but the fact that it happened is pretty appalling. You're the spiritual father to all families in the diocese regardless of where someone sends their kids. When you see this kind of thing happen and then get approved, reviewed, and then approved again, what is your reaction? What happens kind of in your heart and in your mind?

Well, it's very upsetting and it's very unsettling and what makes it very unsettling is we continue to see these kinds of decisions made in public school systems. And not only do these committees vote to keep the sexually explicit books in libraries, but I understand the votes were unanimous.

Billy Atwell ([12:17](#)):

That's right. Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([12:18](#)):

So that is of concern also. While families were poorly served in this decision, there is some good news. The good news, and you just mentioned, how when people's voice are raised to express concern, things can change. And the good news is that plenty of people spoke up and voiced their discontent, but clearly the committees are stacked against us.

Billy Atwell ([12:46](#)):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge ([12:46](#)):

But that doesn't mean we give up.

Billy Atwell ([12:50](#)):

Yeah. Don't resign to failure. Right.

Bishop Burbidge ([12:53](#)):

Exactly. But all positive movements in society begin with courageous men and women speaking up and standing up for their beliefs. So I think we're on a starting box of a parent's movement, which is really great to see.

Billy Atwell ([13:08](#)):

That's true.

Bishop Burbidge ([13:09](#)):

That they're seeing what's happening, that they're not satisfied, that they're taking seriously their role as the first teachers of their children. And what I would really want our parents to know, parents wherever their children attend school, including our homeschool families, that I stand with you. I'm here to help you and support you and your children, especially when you see things happen in public schools that contradict what we believe and what we know to be harmful to our children. But we have a lot of work to do. I can just offer encouragement for our parents to stay vigilant, to know what your children

are reading and learning, voice your opinion with the teachers and administrators as soon as something happens, and do so in a respectful way.

Billy Atwell ([13:57](#)):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge ([13:57](#)):

I mean, be passionate about what you believe. Be clear in what you're saying and why you're saying it, but we don't do it with disrespect or any form of violence or anything like that. We're just strong in making our voices strong.

Billy Atwell ([14:22](#)):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge ([14:23](#)):

And explaining why we feel so strongly about this. You know, it's so sad because why do we have to go to these extremes? We believe, people of good will, of all faiths, believe that God has created us in his image and likeness, that we are all special and precious in the sight of God. God has created us as man and as woman. He's given us the gift of sexuality and it's a gift to be lived chastely and purely and as God intended.

And when we live in such a way, we're on the path to holiness, it's there that we find our joy and fulfillment and peace. And when all these untruths are just so prevalent, all these untruths and this issue that we're talking about around being given, and young people have to breathe this air, it is just such a concern, certainly for parents. I pray for our parents. In this day and age, I know you speak with my own nieces and nephews and hearing you and other people in our Chancery, it's parents. Wow, what a challenge you have these days. Things you were able to presume, you just can't. So we're praying for all of our parents and that your voices be known and continue to be the first teachers of your children in all areas, and especially in the area of faith formation.

Billy Atwell ([15:56](#)):

And one point that I want to re highlight that you just said was the way we approach it. We approach respectfully, strongly. We shouldn't allow people to make us into victims or anything, but I remember a quote I heard from Mother Angelica when she started EWTN. She said, "I want people to remember not just what we did, but how we did it."

Bishop Burbidge ([16:14](#)):

Right.

Billy Atwell ([16:15](#)):

And she had a very particular way that she wanted EWTN to run and to carry on the legacy and so on. And I think that's true when we speak to a school principal or administrator or a teacher, it shouldn't be like an aggressive political activist. It should sound different when they talk to a Catholic parent.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:33](#)):

Right.

Billy Atwell ([16:33](#)):

They should know that there's strength there, there's knowledge, we're well-formed in the faith, but that we're respectful, that we treat them as we should. And I think that's such a key differentiator in a society where so much of a division is rooted in a hostility toward one another. And you've always preached against that very actively.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:53](#)):

Right. No, it's very true, exactly what you said. And to put a little reminder in about the strategic plan of our diocese and all those listening sessions, and we know that one of those pillars is to strengthen faith formation throughout our diocese. And that's a recognition that most, the majority of our students, go to public schools, and they come to faith formation usually, it depends, different parishes do things different ways, but one day a week. But we heard over and over again that we really also have to be vigilant and we have to be mindful of what our students are hearing five days a week, eight hours of a school day, and what we do in faith formation when we have them for such a limited time.

And we formed, with all of our pillars, a working group of people that have expertise in these areas, but I think it is calling us to re imagine, to have a new vision of how we can be more effective, because if we're just coming in and just doing business as usual knowing that out in the world these young people are hearing these other things, we have to find ways to combat that. So, I'm making a strong appeal to this particular working group of helping us in this area.

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

Absolutely. All right, we have a couple questions from the faithful. The first is, given rising challenges to religious liberty, what can local Knights of Columbus in the diocese do to help protect religious liberty and be more public and active in this space?

Bishop Burbidge ([18:42](#)):

Well, first of all, the Knights of Columbus, my brother bishops throughout the country, we just owe so much thanks to them. They are always available to help and to support the bishops and their pastors and their parishes, and do so much good work, especially in the area of charity. And whenever we call upon them, whenever I see Knights, "How can we help you?" But this is a great area where our Knights can help because we know religious liberty, that is the ability for us to do the good work we do, our teaching, our charitable works, our adoptions, all those things. We always must be willing to do so according to our beliefs and not in contradiction to them.

So I encourage the Knights to help me get a word out to encourage every parishioner to sign up for the USCCB action alerts and the Virginia Catholic conference action alerts because these alerts are so important and they update us on legislation and public policy related to federal issues and the VCC, the Virginia Catholic Conference, handle the state matters.

Billy Atwell ([19:49](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([19:50](#)):

So I think it's virginiacatholic.org and usccb.org/takeaction. We have to, again, the word vigilant keeps coming up, but we have to know what's at stake and Knights, please be helping me in getting this word out and bringing people together, getting them to write to their elected officials, let their voices be heard. And one of the ways that we do that also is to let our elected officials... This is some of the things I do in private meetings when we meet with politicians or elected officials. I also use the opportunity, and we should do this and the Knights can help us, let them know the good work that we do.

Billy Atwell ([20:38](#)):

That's true. That's true.

Bishop Burbidge ([20:40](#)):

And it's not just for our parishes, it's for the entire community.

Billy Atwell ([20:43](#)):

That's right.

Bishop Burbidge ([20:44](#)):

I mean, we don't do it to brag. We don't do it for credit, but it lets people know what we're doing every single day to help the poor and the needy and things like that. You know, we may not be as effective as we hope, so share the good news too.

Billy Atwell ([21:00](#)):

Yeah, in the pursuit of humility you can almost like lack the transparency that's necessary to see all the good that's happening and what's at cost to the community if we're unable to serve because we have to do it according to our principles.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:11](#)):

Yeah.

Billy Atwell ([21:11](#)):

So the two websites that Bishop Burbidge mentioned for signing up for those action alerts, vacatholic.org for the Virginia Catholic Conference, those are state issues. And then usccb.org/takeaction. You don't get too many emails from them. When they need you, they let you know and that's the time to act. You can sign up at both of those places, but that's an easy step and a great starting point for advocating on those issues. All right, next question, a little bit easier I think. Do you maintain any advent or Christmas traditions from when you were a child?

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

I think yeah, my family, basically, I think probably the traditional customs and practices during this time of season. I love the advent giving tree. I think that's a very important thing in the parishes. Christmas certainly was always a time, and continues to be, where we spend time with loved ones and recognize the gift that we have in each other. And we always were mindful, and I think throughout our diocese we truly are, that we continue that tradition of seeing this as a time of year to help others, to share our gifts and God willing those traditions are continuing throughout the households in all of our dioceses. I think they are because our people are so good.

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

Very good. Bishop, anything that I missed or any final thoughts?

Bishop Burbidge ([22:41](#)):

No, just the fact that we are recording this podcast, Billy, on the solemnity of the immaculate conception. It's the infallible dogma that our blessed mother in the plan of salvation was preserve immune from the stain of sin. She was conceived without sin, but we were not.

Billy Atwell ([23:05](#)):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge ([23:05](#)):

We're sinners.

Billy Atwell ([23:06](#)):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge ([23:06](#)):

And so we must turn to our lady as the mother of mercy and ask for her powerful intercession, especially throughout these sacred days of advent, that we remove any obstacles from our lives that may prevent us from receiving her son at Christmas with hearts that are pure and holy and ready to embrace him. It's always a great time, knowing that we are sinners, hopefully for our listeners to make a really good confession before the celebration of Christmas. As always, our priests are so available to celebrate the beautiful sacrament pennants. There's no better way to prepare for Christmas than making your best confession ever.

And too, I think it's a good time, maybe today if our listeners have a chance, just pause for a moment. Our Lord had a unique and a special plan and vocation for our blessed mother and he does for us also. And just to say, what is that plan? What is that vocation that God is asking me to live right now? Whether it be as a Bishop or a priest or consecrate religious, a husband, a wife, a father, mother, son or daughter. Maybe your vocation right now is offering your suffering for the church and for those in need.

But what is God's plan for you? What is he asking of you at this time? And sometimes when we try to live God's plan for us, just like our blessed mother, sometimes it seems confusing like, "Why is the Lord asking me to do this?" Sometimes it can be challenging. It can be very, very challenging. But I think that we pray for that grace to imitate the trust of our blessed mother and to hear anew in our own hearts the messages that she heard. Do not be afraid for nothing will be impossible for God. So, pray that our blessed mother will give us that trust so that we too, like our lady, can say, "Yes Lord, let it be done to me according to your word."

So as we continue these sacred days, I wish all of our parishioners, all of our listeners, all of our friends, abundant blessings filled with the peace that we will celebrate at Christmas, the peace that our Christ child, the divine Messiah, brought into our world. And as these remaining days of advent, maybe we together walk humbly with our God.

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