

This transcript was exported on Jul 21, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:00](#)):

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

Billy Atwell ([00:07](#)):

Podcasting from the St. Clare Studio here in the Diocese of Arlington, welcome to The Walk Humbly podcast. My name's Billy Atwell. I'm the chief communications officer for the Diocese and your co-host. We want to thank those who have contributed to the Communications Office through the Bishop's Lenten Appeal. Obviously, the BLA, as we call it, supports a lot of different ministries throughout the Diocese, but one of them is communications - that made the studio possible and all of our communications outreach and evangelization possible.

([00:33](#)):

We just want to say thank you. If you haven't yet, please rate this podcast or write a review wherever you're listening. If you're listening through YouTube, make sure you subscribe to our YouTube channel and also ring that notification bell. Sign up for our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org. You can also follow Bishop Burbidge on Twitter and Instagram. On Twitter in particular, he provides a short Gospel reflection every morning. You can follow the Diocese on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

([01:00](#)):

Send your questions for Bishop Burbidge to info@arlingtondiocese.org, or you can send us a message via social media. Before I bring in Bishop Burbidge, just a reminder that Natural Family Planning Awareness Week is July 23rd to 29th. The goal of this campaign is to focus attention on the Church's magnificent teachings surrounding human sexuality, conjugal love and responsible parenthood, as well as to inspire the faithful. To find out more about Natural Family Planning, go to usccb.org for resources.

([01:31](#)):

You can also go to our website and check out our Marriage and Family Life Office. They've got great resources there, including mentors who can help you learn more about natural family planning. I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:44](#)):

Billy, I'm doing well. I hope you and I hope all our listeners are doing well also and enjoying this summer. It's hard to believe it's July. We're recording this on July 20th. Where is the summer going?

Billy Atwell ([01:56](#)):

It's disappeared. I have to ask, last podcast, we talked about how you're going to be going to Kings Dominion. Have you picked out which rides you're going on yet?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:03](#)):

Well, yeah, I'm going. I celebrate Mass next Wednesday for all those attending Kings Dominion.

Billy Atwell ([02:10](#)):

At St. Mary's in Fredericksburg.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:11](#)):

This transcript was exported on Jul 21, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Yes. And then this year, the added adventure of actually going to Kings Dominion. I did promise, I don't know what I was thinking at the moment, but I did promise the young people I would join them on some of the rides, the amusements. That should be very interesting. I actually like amusements for the most part. Now I'm not so sure what they have in store for me, but we'll see. It should be fun.

Billy Atwell ([02:37](#)):

You set a ceiling of three rides, I think you said.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:42](#)):

Yeah, maybe like three.

Billy Atwell ([02:42](#)):

See how that goes.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:44](#)):

It'll be so great to gather with our young people and just to have fun together. I'm so glad that young people from around our diocese, as we spoke about the last podcast, have multiple opportunities to be with each other and have fun. Summers, we should have some fun and relax a little bit.

Billy Atwell ([02:58](#)):

Exactly. I look forward to a full report at our next podcast.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:02](#)):

I'll let you know about my blood pressure.

Billy Atwell ([03:05](#)):

Something that I actually didn't even put in the notes for today, but I want to ask you about because it broke yesterday was a new Virginia transgender student policy that emphasizes parental rights. Catholic News Agency has written on it. I'll just read a little bit for folks' background.

([03:19](#)):

New education policies issued by the administration of Virginia governor Glenn Youngkin this week affirm that parents in the state will enjoy broad oversight of their children while they're enrolled in public schools, with the state settling key questions related to school policies regarding transgender-identifying students.

([03:38](#)):

The new model policies released by the government say that education rules "shall be drafted to safeguard parents' rights in respect to their children and to facilitate the exercise of those rights." And boy, just opening the actual resource itself or these model policies, it says empowering parents is not only a fundamental right, but it's also essential to improving outcomes for all children in Virginia.

([04:03](#)):

Now, obviously we have Catholic schools where we have always operated with policies that are consistent with our faith, but it's good to see the government coming forward with something that's

really focused on parental rights, something you've talked about for a long time. I was just curious as this news broke yesterday afternoon what your thoughts were.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:18](#)):

Bishop Knestout and I issued a joint statement on these updated model policies for public schools, and we commended and we thanked Governor Youngkin for issuing these policies. You mentioned the key points, the new policy, and everyone should read the policy. Sometimes we just read headlines. We should actually read the document. But the key points are that it restores parents' role. The parents are the first teachers, the first formators of their children. It's restoring that. It's a good thing, and it requires transparency.

([04:57](#)):

We don't take parents out of the lives of their students, and we know that schools form the whole person. Parents are entitled and they do see their students' grades, their academic grades, their intellectual progress, right? Well, it has to be the same way with their psychological development and their emotional development. All of a sudden, we don't make policies with their own schools saying, "We're not going to tell the parents." That is absolutely not acceptable, and this policy guarantees what should be the norm. It restores parents' roles and transparency.

([05:35](#)):

It also affirms the dignity of the students, all students, as well as the safety of students. The policy does mention that all students are to be treated respectfully. There's no such place for bullying or discrimination or anything like that. It respects the dignity and safety of all students, and affirms religious liberty. Parents who send their kids to public schools have firm beliefs, core values, convictions, and they should be able to, when they entrust their students to public schools, be able to have those values and convictions respected.

([06:15](#)):

You mentioned the Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology that I issued. Again, I hope people read the entire, it's not long, the entire catechesis, but I said very clearly that special care must be taken when interacting with children who experience gender dysphoria or express a belief in an identity incongruent with their biological sex. I mentioned that authentic accompaniment. Sometimes you throw out the word accompaniment, but what is authentic accompaniment?

([06:45](#)):

Accompaniment requires remaining firm in the truth of the human person while patiently guiding children towards that truth. Parents must always and immediately be involved in any discussions with a child about such sensitive topics. You mentioned our Catholic schools. The policies are consistent with what we believe as Catholics, but I did reach out in that document to parents or children in public school, and I just encourage those parents to discuss specific Catholic teaching on these issues with their children.

([07:18](#)):

I see it throughout our diocese, and I commend our parents who are sending their children to public schools for being vigilant and vocal against false and harmful ideology. I think the one thing that has come to light in recent times is parents have to be very careful on what children are being taught, what they're experiencing in a school, and have that discussion with their children and be vigilant. And then if necessary, to exercise the right as a parent to be vocal respectfully, but clearly and trusting God.

([07:54](#)):

Parents need to be confident that a child's ultimate happiness lies in accepting the body is God's gift and discovering his or her true identity as a son or daughter of God. That never changes, beloved son or daughter of God, the one who created them, made them in his own image and likeness. I do commend the governor. I do ask our listeners to read the policies - grateful that this is restoring parents' role and transparency.

Billy Atwell ([08:23](#)):

If you want to read the model policy that we're referring to from the governor, if you go to the Department of Education website, you can find it there. Again, it's going to have things in there that we would not necessarily adopt in our Catholic schools. It doesn't mean that these policies impose on us. It's just for those who are going to public schools. This is a huge step forward from a previous policy which did the opposite. It created an opportunity for secrecy and a special relationship between teachers and administrators and students, which we certainly didn't support.

([08:49](#)):

And then if you go to arlingtondiocese.org, you can find Bishop Burbidge's Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology. Again, that document has been downloaded thousands and thousands of times because it provides clarity for Catholics on what we believe with regard to these sensitive issues. Bishop, I know that wasn't on the agenda, but I appreciate you taking it on the fly here. Now, you had the opportunity just recently, this week I think, to provide a keynote address to pro-life leaders across the country.

([09:22](#)):

This is part of your role as chair of the pro-life committee for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. I'm curious if you could just share some of what your message was to them with our listeners and what were some of your takeaways from meeting with these folks from around the country who are dealing with these issues.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([09:34](#)):

Sure. Yes. I was in Holy Toledo for the annual conference for pro-life directors from around the country, as you mentioned. A good friend of mine is the bishop of Toledo. This is kind more of a personal level, but we've known each other, Bishop Daniel Thomas, since 1977 when we were young seminarians. We have maintained that friendship. Part of the joy of the fact that it was in Toledo was that we had some time together. I just was reflecting on that, and I mention this often, just that one of the great gifts of being a priest is the fraternity and the friendships that endure.

([10:17](#)):

We don't see each other a lot. He's in Toledo, I'm in Arlington, but we pick up just where we left off. And that's a beautiful gift of the priests. On personal note, it was just great to have that.

Billy Atwell ([10:25](#)):

That's wonderful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:25](#)):

But I did have the opportunity to offer a keynote address to our pro-life leaders from around the country, first of all, thanking them on behalf of all the bishops. I was speaking in my role as chair of the USCCB, the bishops' conference on pro-life activities. On behalf of all the bishops to thank our pro-life

leaders for their incredible witness and perseverance and dedication, many of them have been at this work for a long, long time, and in their name commend all those people for so many years for prayer and witness and advocacy and to talk about, yes, we had a victory in the overturning of Roe v. Wade, but our work is just beginning.

[\(11:02\)](#):

We celebrated that, but the celebration in a sense is over because now we're at real work, providentially in a sense. We were in Ohio, and Ohio is having a very, very big ballot in November where there are forces trying to enshrine abortion into the laws in the state. This in Ohio where we would expect that would not happen, but the forces are coming from the outside, not just from within this state. They are pouring money. I mean, the tons of money going into advertising, which is false advertising, trying to deceive people, but a lot of money and a lot of strategies to get the opposition out.

[\(11:56\)](#):

Ohio bishops are doing a great job in providing leadership, but this is a very critical moment. But this is going to be happening in all of our states because now it relies to the states so we're praying for that. I did speak to the leaders about, of course, our work has to be about changing laws, in a sense getting laws that are pro-life enshrined in state laws. The way we're going to do that is, and you hear me say this often, is we have to transform hearts. We have to convince the average voter that life is sacred for the pre-born up until the natural moment of death.

[\(12:37\)](#):

We are with the mom. We are with the dad. We are with the child. We will walk with them in every single way as a church. Abortion does not have to be a choice because we're there to take care of parents. We're there to help them with the material needs, whether it be diapers or food, or whether it be housing, whether it be counseling. We're there to make sure we can welcome a new life, a child into the world. I think when people see that, then they say, "Well, abortion doesn't have to be a choice. It can't be a choice."

[\(13:14\)](#):

And of course too, through the beautiful ministry of placing children for parents who need to place them into adoptive families, loving families. My talk to pro-life leaders, it's a critical time. Our work is beginning. Thank you for your witness, but let's continue to change hearts so that the right laws are enshrined in states throughout our country.

Billy Atwell [\(13:38\)](#):

You've been clear on this, especially back during the March for Life and during that time period where there was a lot of focus on this issue. The pro-choice movement, quickly adjusted their strategy and got to work. We have to imagine what new strategies we need as well. We can't do the thing that we've done for the last 50 years. We have to come up with new plans and new strategies. This is all the faithful can participate in. We all have a voice and all have a witness that we can offer.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(14:03\)](#):

As you said, those who are promoting choice and abortion, they are very, very clever and not in a good sense. But we can't be naive. And that's why lay leaders are stepping up to help us who have experts in communications and strategies and fundraising. Because unfortunately, we need money to counteract the false advertising airing. I'm so thrilled. So many people have reached out to me in my role who are

very, very competent and have the wisdom and expertise to help and different organizations, entities, individuals. Thanks to all of them as well.

Billy Atwell ([14:41](#)):

Very good. Now, you mentioned the fraternity that you experienced with your bishops, but I do know you have to keep a secret from some of your bishops. That was evidenced this week with all the parish dedications and expansion projects. You don't want them to know how nice it's been at Arlington as of late. The latest dedication was for St. Ambrose Parish, Father Fisher there, beloved priest there.

([15:01](#)):

Everyone I spoke to who attended that dedication remarked at how celebratory it was, how joyous it was for that community. But really it's an honor for the whole Diocese to have a parish grow like that. This isn't a unique case here all that much. We're seeing every year expansions and new churches being built. If you don't mind, talk a little bit about what you experienced when you were there.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:23](#)):

Yeah, no, we give thanks to God. We're growing, we're a vibrant diocese, and it's all because of his grace. We're thankful. I told the parishioners that day exactly what you said. This is a happy, blessed day for the parish, but really for the entire Diocese. We rejoiced together. St. Ambrose has been at this for a long time.

Billy Atwell ([15:41](#)):

They have. This is not a short project.

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

14 years. I told them that they get the perseverance award. But through the wonderful leadership of Father Fisher and the wonderful team advising him and guiding him, they have given us another beautiful church. Very, very beautiful, timeless in its architecture.

([16:00](#)):

Beautiful, sacred, using windows from a church in Philadelphia. Those windows were in storage, and how happy those parishioners must be in Philadelphia that, wow our church, we gave the church... People who went before them worked so hard. But now that tradition, that memory lives on in the goodness of those people in St. Ambrose.

Billy Atwell ([16:24](#)):

That's so true.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:25](#)):

It's a beautiful church. That dedication, it's funny, most people say afterwards, "I've never attended a liturgy like that." Well, most people don't, right? Your church has been there forever.

Billy Atwell ([16:36](#)):

How often does it happen?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:38](#)):

But that liturgy, oh my goodness, it is so powerful. It's one of the most powerful liturgies, and it contains everything we believe. Everything we believe is a church through the actions, through the words, and the symbols are carried out in that. It's a heavenly moment. People were floating out of the church, myself included. We brought that church to life.

[\(17:02\)](#):

Now, as I asked the people in my homily that day to make sure that together they continue to work, to find new ways of reaching out to those in the community who have wandered from the Church in a sense to say, this beautiful church, guess what? These doors are wide open for you because this is your home.

[\(17:27\)](#):

Come back, because here you're going to embrace the love and mercy of God and also loving and welcoming. It's a beautiful parish community. Pray God, those doors are wide open and people will continue to enter into them. Congratulations to Father Fisher and everyone at St. Ambrose.

Billy Atwell [\(17:44\)](#):

Absolutely. Bishop, the next topic actually lines up with a question we received from a listener, which was, if you are attending the Synod of Bishops in Rome. If you could please comment on that and your reaction to the attendees that were announced in the last week or two that the Holy Father has invited as a part of that group.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(18:03\)](#):

It's beginning of October 2023, the synod. No, I'm not attending. Those who are attending were elected by the Conference of Bishops. They included our leadership basically. But the Pope has to approve them. He approved those we elected, and then he also appointed some additional bishops from the United States. I am not one of them. I commend and thank my brother bishops who will be going because it's a real commitment.

[\(18:39\)](#):

It's three weeks. You have to be in Rome for three weeks and you're there I think it's Monday through Friday, but I think it's like seven, eight hours every day for three weeks. I thank the generosity of my brother bishops and all those who will be attending.

Billy Atwell [\(18:56\)](#):

That probably does also include the time they have to prepare, read ahead, and then follow-ups afterward. Eight hours of meeting, and then there's probably 14 hours of total work.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:07\)](#):

Right, and they're all diocesan bishops.

Billy Atwell [\(19:09\)](#):

Yeah, wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:10\)](#):

Things at home don't stop either.

Billy Atwell ([19:11](#)):

Right, right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:14](#)):

It's interesting to note that roughly a third of the attendees were chosen by Pope Francis. Others, as I mentioned, were chosen different ways such as through the Bishops' Conference. Every country is represented. The goal was for the attendees exactly to represent a wide faction of Catholicism from around the world. Some of the attendees were not... Some you might have picked or figured out, but it's really wonderful to see how vast the representation is. But I think I'm getting a lot of questions about this, what a synod is or what a synod is not.

Billy Atwell ([19:54](#)):

Yeah, a little clarity on that might be helpful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:56](#)):

Maybe I can take a few moments.

Billy Atwell ([19:57](#)):

Yeah, we're hearing the same.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:58](#)):

Bishop Barron, a favorite I know of many in our diocese, is a delegate to the synod, and here's what he says: to take the Pope at his word, that he wants a dialogue. That's what a synod is, a dialogue. I think it's good advice. The synod is about having conversations and formulating a plan. We do that on a diocesan level. We do that on a parish level. We do it on a universal church level. But it's not about changing Church doctrine or attempting to redefine the truth. The synod is not meant to be a legislative body.

([20:30](#)):

The delegates have been asked to come to Rome and advise Pope Francis on the best way forward. The Pope, this is important to remember, the Pope is free to accept or to reject the final outcome of this multi-year process. The Holy Father is a Jesuit. That's his tradition, the sitting round table, discussing, not being afraid to put every issue on the table. Billy, I think that's how the synod's going to run. I think that it's going to be many different Catholic voices from all over the world coming together to discuss the Church.

([21:09](#)):

I think that's what Pope Francis... This is what he always talks about, that we need to evangelize. We need to bring Jesus Christ to the peripheries, those who have left the Church, we just talked about, for whatever reason, those who are feeling God is not with them anymore, or those who feel that the Church was not there for them. As a church, we have to figure out in this day and age how to be more inviting, maintaining principles and defending timeless truths, of course. But let's be honest, there are many people who feel as if the Church is not listening to them or doesn't speak to them.

([21:41](#)):

This can be for many, many reasons. As church leaders, we figure out what's the best way. What's the best way? Just like I challenged the people of St. Ambrose, the Pope has challenged us as a church. We

can't just sit where we are and wait for people to come to us. We have to reconnect with people and what's the best way forward. That's what the Pope is hoping the synod will help to provide.

(22:02):

He says he wants a church that is alive outside of parish walls, so that everyone sees the joy of the face. We need a roadmap, and that's what I hope and he hopes, I believe, the synod will give us such directions.

Billy Atwell (22:18):

Yeah, I appreciate that because we've been getting those kinds of questions too. What is a synod? Not everybody's really paid attention to past synods. It's good to have that clarity. It's not about changing what we believe. All right, we have a couple questions from the faithful. The first is, have you had any surprises in your role as chairman of pro-life activities for the USCCB?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (22:37):

Well, I think the first would be the amount of time that's required to do it. That's a little surprising. But I have a great team at the United States Conference of Bishops - lay staff that keep me very updated. But there's something happening almost every day with new bills being proposed or new discussion items surfacing or new statements that have to be written. The staff is wonderful, but as chair, they need the approval of the chair.

(23:09):

There's a lot of constant need for attention, which I'm honored and privileged to fulfill that role, especially at this critical time in the pro-life movement and with what's upcoming with the election. I think that the biggest surprise was I did see that perhaps what you just said, that there wasn't a sense of urgency of redefining where we are now post-Dobbs, what's the new strategy. Again, celebrating a victory is a good thing, but we still have so much work to do.

(23:47):

The landscape has changed and now we have to readjust, as you mentioned, some of our strategies and moving forward. But it's an honor to serve in this role. I'm supported by my own staff here in the Diocese that have such a great team that allows me to accept this additional responsibility.

Billy Atwell (24:05):

Well, we are excited for you. Especially like you said, the timing of that two- year term couldn't have been better. All right, the next question is: We often hear of lapsed Catholics returning to the faith. In your opinion, what is or are some of the biggest reasons people return to the Catholic faith? What was the impetus behind that decision?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (24:24):

After they're away a while?

Billy Atwell (24:25):

Yeah, after they've been away.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (24:27):

I would say that they come to see the empty promises of the world. All of us, just for being human, we're looking for happiness. We're looking for peace. We're looking for serenity. We're looking for joy. People begin to search and find those things and the world promises it will bring those gifts to them. And then they realize it's not enough. There's something missing here.

[\(25:02\)](#):

And then I think people rediscover that the Church has the truth, the proclamation of the Gospel authentically, because the Lord has told us where we find those gifts, where we find joy and fulfillment and happiness and peace, and it's only by embracing his Gospel. We don't give empty promises. We say to be human, to be a follower of Christ, you're going to have a cross. There is going to be suffering, but you're never going to be alone. You're going to find the strength to carry. That's the Lord's promise.

[\(25:40\)](#):

That truth and that promise are fully revealed in the celebration of the sacraments. And then people begin to see it is by receiving the Lord himself in the Eucharist, by receiving his mercy. Because many people who have wandered away from the Church have also wandered a path that's contrary to Gospel. But guess what? There's no sin greater than God's mercy, and all you have to do is to ask the Lord with a sincere and contrite heart to forgive you. Some people say you're one confession away from being a returned Catholic.

Billy Atwell [\(26:18\)](#):

Yeah, wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(26:19\)](#):

And that's all it takes, and then you're embraced in love and mercy of the Lord and of a parish community. But I do think, Billy, if I could just maybe expand on that question a little, elaborating a little bit on bringing people back to the Church, we all play a role in doing that. I think it's important to remember that sometimes the way we as Catholics can invite our family members or our neighbors or our colleagues or friends back to church may not be that being the first invitation. It may not be, "I want you to come to Mass with me," because people may not be ready to do it.

[\(27:00\)](#):

Sometimes evangelizing may be something that maybe for a certain person isn't as threatening. "Hey, listen, our parish today - we're boxing food we've collected because we feed the poor. Would you want to come with me to help us do that?" And they come to the parish and they're involved in a service activity or something like that. Everyone loves doing that. Or "Come help, "we're collecting food for babies and for moms and packing the diapers and delivering them. Will you want to help me?"

[\(27:29\)](#):

Or "We're having a parish festival." Who doesn't want to go to the parish festival? Or "We're having this great multicultural event, because our parishes have so many cultures to represent. Why don't you come to that?" Sometimes it's those invitations that begin to open someone's heart to like, "Wow, there's something more here." And then eventually say, "Hey, would you want to come to..." Maybe then after a while, people's ready, "Would you want to come to Mass with me," or some education program or something like that.

[\(28:04\)](#):

Our evangelizing, getting people back to church, maybe sometimes it is, but often it's not like, "I want you to come back to church with me." It has to be a gradual movement. We have so many things as a

Catholic Church to offer as far as education, service. "Our parish is doing a sacred music concert. Do you want to come to that?" Or "We're having a beautiful display of sacred art. Would you want..."

[\(28:27\)](#):

You know what I mean? It's gradually inviting people back, and then people understand, "Here within the Church is the truth, is the real presence of Christ given to us in the sacraments and lived out in the body of Christ."

Billy Atwell [\(28:41\)](#):

That's wonderful. That's great. Great insight there. I think most of us that know somebody who has returned to the faith, it's exactly one of those kinds of things. There's something very relational like that. Any final thoughts, and then if you would send us off with your blessing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(28:54\)](#):

No, just, again, hoping that there maybe is some time left for everyone to have a little rest and renewal before we begin the full force of students returning to schools and getting back to a more disciplined schedule in a sense. I hope people are refreshed and renewed and certainly finding that rest in accepting the Lord's imitation who says, "Come to me." Praying for everyone's safety, everyone's health and well-being, and praying that together we will continue to walk humbly with our God.

[\(29:34\)](#):

Thank you for listening to The Walk Humbly podcast. Make sure you check out more episodes on iTunes, Google Play, Stitcher and Spotify. You can follow me on Twitter [@bishopburbidge](#) where I offer Gospel reflections each morning and share photos and updates of what is going on in the Diocese of Arlington. Stay up-to-date with news, event information and inspirational content by subscribing to our e-newsletter at [arlingtondiocese.org](#).