

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

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

Kerry Nevins ([00:07](#)):

Podcasting from the St. Clare Studio here in the Diocese of Arlington, welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast. My name is Kerry Nevins, multimedia producer here in the communications office with the diocese and an interim co-host for this podcast. If you have a question for Bishop Burbidge, you can send it to us at info@arlingtondiocese.org or find us anywhere on social media and send us a quick message, we'd love to hear from you. A couple of plugs to start, the Diocesan Jubilee Fest is officially one month out. This is going to be one of the biggest festivals in our diocese's history, and you're not going to want to miss this. There's going to be a Marian procession, followed by a Mass, celebrated by Bishop Burbidge. Then there's going to be games, food, live music, a petting zoo, rides, local vendors, and even fireworks, so do not miss this opportunity.

([00:58](#)):

And by the way, it's a free event, totally free, all you have to do is register. Just head on over to arlingtondiocese.org/jubilee-fest. And lastly, the Virginia Catholic Conference is asking parishioners to act on an alert asking Governor Youngkin to veto two bills currently on his desk. One of the bills is going to require health plans, even religious entities, to cover contraceptives and even some abortion inducing drugs and devices. So this bill is going to end lives and it's a direct attack on religious liberty. The other bill is very broad and it's going to grant minors the right to obtain contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs and devices. So this also just flies in the face of religious liberty and Virginia's parental consent law. So head on over to vacatholic.org to urge Governor Youngkin to veto these bills and do your part.

([01:58](#)):

I now welcome our host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how's it going?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:01](#)):

I'm doing well, Kerry, it's great to have you here as a co-host. We're grateful to you for all the good work you do as a multimedia producer here in our diocese and now, sitting behind this desk. So it's great to be with you. I want to go back to the great invitation you extended to all the faithful, for our Jubilee Fest. June 8th is the date, everyone, at the Warren County Fairgrounds. So June 8th, beginning at around 3:30 with the procession.

([02:28](#)):

And as Kerry mentioned, this is a Jubilee celebration for everyone in the diocese. This gives us the space to invite everyone for music and food and dancing. It's just going to be a great diocesan party, bringing us all together on such a happy occasion. So please come, don't let that registration thing be an obstacle to you. We just need to know somehow that you'll be there so we can account for the food and all those kind of details. But your parish will be able to help you too, and like Kerry said, it's free, it's our gift to all of you for being such great parishioners in the Diocese of Arlington. And thanks also, Kerry, for mentioning the virginiacatholic.org, a way to allow our voice to be heard on such important issues. And as we have said often on this podcast, we know this to be true, every contact, whether it be an email, a phone call, a letter, everything is registered and your voice is heard and it makes a difference. So thanks for highlighting those two issues as well.

Kerry Nevins ([03:28](#)):

Yeah, happy to do so, Bishop. So Bishop, our first topic, it's a pretty serious one, it involves the ongoing war in the Holy Land, between Israel and Hamas. So in addition to the thousands of lives lost on both sides, the ongoing conflict is now having a strong impact here, in the United States, on many college campuses. A lot of students have engaged in protests, they've occupied campus buildings and a lot more, to protest the support of Israel. Counter protests have also ensued as well. So Bishop, just what do you make of what's going on between the Holy Land and here at home?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(04:10\)](#):

Yeah, as you said, it's a very serious topic. But first and foremost, we must pray for peace. That's something that we all can do, that's something that we all should do, every day. Praying for peace throughout our world, and especially in all these lands torn apart by conflict and division and war, in our own nation, pray for peace. The continued war in the Middle East is of great, great concern. Not only because of the loss of life, certainly, but also because of the potential for it to expand into other areas. We must acknowledge the October 7th, 2023 attack by Hamas was a brutal, unprovoked attack on civilians and the worst act of anti-Semitism since the Holocaust, really. And so there are still many Israelis being held hostage, so these are all the consequences of such violence and such evil.

[\(05:11\)](#):

A military response on Israel's part, is justified. Similar to our assault on the Taliban after 9/11, there has to be a response. However, in the prosecuting of this war, Israel has a responsibility to avoid unnecessary casualties and not to target civilians. How it should be prosecuted, how a just peace can be achieved, is certainly for those entrusted with public authority to determine, but these are the goals. The goal is, we want to bring war to an end, war has to be eradicated, the taking of lives, this evil. But now, we're in such a conflict, we have to pray not only for peace, but for world leaders that they are enlightened and guided, to bring resolution, to bring peace and to begin to respect the sacredness of all human life. So prayer for peace, prayer for our world leaders.

[\(06:10\)](#):

Regarding the protests on college campuses we're all seeing every night, it is very unsettling. We always want, of course, to defend the right to freedom of speech, sure, we have to do that. That's one of our nation's foundational principles. However, I think we all know this, freedom of speech doesn't mean the freedom to break the law, to destroy property or to disregard the rules of universities. The violence we have seen, including the taking over of university buildings, cannot be accepted. And how unfair to the students who have worked so hard that they cannot take their exams in a situation that is not surrounded by all this conflict. And they fear walking to campus and even graduations being postponed or canceled, so that's not good. So freedom of speech must obey the rule of law. So as we see these unsettling times in our world, in our nation, it is a reminder for all of us, that we need the peace only Christ can give, but we also have to be instruments of peace as well.

Kerry Nevins [\(07:26\)](#):

Yeah, yeah. I think it's absolutely important to toe that line between fighting for justice but also not infringing on the rights of others.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(07:35\)](#):

Right.

Kerry Nevins [\(07:36\)](#):

So Bishop, many of us are aware that mental health has really been in a state of crisis for quite some time. This crisis affects, particularly, young people, a fact highlighted in an advisory by the U.S. Surgeon General. There is also a crisis around serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, which contribute to a lot of social problems such as homelessness. And finally there's an ongoing crisis brought on by addictions and substance abuse. So can you just talk about what, specifically, our diocese, is doing to help parishioners deal with these various mental health challenges that we're seeing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(08:13\)](#):

Sure. Yeah, mental health, emotional well-being, they are integral to our spiritual and physical health, we're connected, right, as a human person. We're body, soul, and spirit, physically, spiritually, emotionally, we are the human person. And so when one of those things are not in line with the health that we would like to see in our lives, it impacts every part of us. And so mental health is so critical, it's part of our whole being as human persons. And we are aware, Kerry, as you said, that there's a great need to address mental health challenges in our communities, in our parishes, and even in our schools. We are seeing this, so much so, with our young people. No wonder, I mean, we know the impact that Covid had on young people being separated, we know the pressures that they face and the demands that are part of their lives as well.

[\(09:08\)](#):

And so that's one of the reasons that our Catholic Charities provides mental health counseling at its offices and at nine parishes throughout the diocese, our schools, we provide counseling. We know we need more counselors, it's a very important field and such expertise is needed. And I'll add that, the counseling that we offer is from a Catholic understanding of the human person, and that's so key. And, it offers counseling that is affordable, based on a sliding scale. So we also have heard, I hear, constantly, from our priests and others around the diocese. Certainly, when we did our listening sessions for our diocesan strategic plan, the Synod. About the many individuals and families who are facing mental health issues in an increasingly challenging and difficult time in our world. I would be surprised if any family could say that there's not at least one person in their family or extended family that's not dealing with this issue.

[\(10:12\)](#):

It's so prevalent in our times, but we're not alone. That's one of the things that I always try to remind our young people. Often when they're dealing with stress and anxiety, they're overwhelmed, they feel alone, but we're never alone. The Lord is accompanying us at every moment of our lives, and he also sends instruments. He wants to heal us and he will heal us in miraculous ways, and sometimes he'll use other human beings to be those instruments of healing. So the Church has to be in the middle of this, we have a mental health crisis, the Church has to be in the middle of it, not distant from it. It's an invitation to Jesus, he went wherever there was need, physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

[\(10:58\)](#):

So in listening to the faithful of our diocese and to our priests, I have established a Diocesan Mental Health Council, whose members have the necessary expertise and experience to support our priests, our youth ministers, our educators, our parents, who, daily, interact with parishioners and loved ones regarding this issue. So that's what you have to do, and we're blessed in this area, to have so many dedicated people who are experts in how best to respond to mental health. And so we'll be bringing them together, and I know they'll be a great support to us.

[\(11:39\)](#):

And also, with the grace of God, right. And we pray, and I assure everyone listening, that we do pray for all those suffering mental health and emotional issues. Again, realize you're not alone, seek the help and support that's available and always trust in the power God to make things new. He does that, he does that for us. And never think that where you may be right now, emotionally, mentally, if it's not a good place, that that's where you have to remain. No, God has the power to heal, to make things new and make yourself available to the support that's there.

Kerry Nevins ([12:18](#)):

Yeah, yeah. And that's super important, and I can just speak to that aspect of you talking to young people, whether it's at Work Camp or when you're just visiting schools, you talk about, you're not alone. And it's that twofold closeness of, you can be close to Christ, but also close to the instruments like you said-

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([12:33](#)):

Right.

Kerry Nevins ([12:33](#)):

That he provides to us in our friends and our family.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([12:36](#)):

Yes.

Kerry Nevins ([12:37](#)):

Yes, it's critical. And so on the topic of young people, just recently, this past Saturday, 1,400 students attended BASH, the annual event for middle schoolers, where they can hang out with friends, play on various rides, attend Mass and hear from some speakers. And then this past Tuesday, you were the celebrant at the Annual Vocations Mass for eighth graders at All Saints parish in Manassas. These are always such great events, great annual events for young people in our diocese to come together. What are some of the things that you wanted those middle schoolers to know, when you had the chance to speak with them?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:14](#)):

Well, they are great events and they are fun. And when you're around so many young people, I have to say, I always have such a great time. And I come home lifted up, inspired and energized, just being around our young people. As you mentioned, I had the great opportunity to do so at the BASH and then recently, with our eighth graders from around our schools. You gave a number, like 1,400, I think you were there. The number that fascinates me about that day, was I learned that we ordered 550 pizzas that day.

Kerry Nevins ([13:46](#)):

Wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:46](#)):

That says it all.

Kerry Nevins ([13:48](#)):

Yeah, that's right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:48](#)):

But there were not enough, there was no slices left as far as I saw. But-

Kerry Nevins ([13:52](#)):

Eighth graders will do that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:53](#)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. But it's always a joy to be with them. And yeah, I said to them, "I hope these kind of events remind you," I say to the young people, what you just stated, "that you're not alone." You belong to something bigger, you belong to something bigger than your school, you belong to something bigger than your parish. You belong to a diocese, you belong to a church, you belong to God's family. Sometimes we just isolate ourselves, like this is my own little world, but our world as Catholics is so much bigger. And these kind of events remind our young people that, and then they say like, "Wow, there's a lot of people my age who share the same virtues, the same values, faith that are common." That they don't always get to see in the community or perhaps in the schools that they attend or whatever. But when they're all together, it's like, "Wow, there are other people."

([14:53](#)):

And that's what we need to do, right? We need to support, we need to encourage, we need to lift up each other. And hopefully, that's what we try to do. And I'm so grateful to our youth office, and a great team there, led by Kevin Bohli, who just provide our young people with such great experiences throughout the year, always well-organized, always fun. And also, so thankful for the teachers, the catechists, the youth directors and volunteers who come to be with the young people. We can't do it unless we have people helping us, so I'm so grateful for the people who join our youth office in giving our young people such great experiences.

Kerry Nevins ([15:41](#)):

Yeah. And I can remember attending as a middle schooler myself, and it was so much fun, and I just got to meet so many people from all across the diocese. So it's-

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:50](#)):

Yeah.

Kerry Nevins ([15:50](#)):

It's a memory that, at least, I've kept to this day. So Bishop, next Wednesday on May 15th, you're going to be awarded an honorary degree and deliver the keynote address to the graduates at your alma mater, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, for their Concursus ceremony. You spent many years there as a student, a dean, and as rector, so I'm sure you have so many great memories from your time there. So just speak to what this award means to you.

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

Yeah, I am truly honored and humbled to receive this award. St. Charles Borromeo Seminary has a very, very special place in my heart, 'cause I entered there as a young college student and then spent other years there, in different roles. So it's been a big part of my life and my priesthood, and so it's very dear to me. And so to have this opportunity to receive the award and to offer the graduation speech, is an honor. Particularly, this year, because after 150+ years on the current campus, this is actually the final Concursus ceremony at this location.

Kerry Nevins ([17:10](#)):

Wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:10](#)):

Yeah. I know, it's a little sentimental-

Kerry Nevins ([17:14](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:14](#)):

To say the least. But for various reasons, it was decided that the seminary had to move to a new location.

Kerry Nevins ([17:23](#)):

Okay.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:24](#)):

And I know that decision was guided by the Holy Spirit. But it is going to be a little sentimental, I think, for everyone, knowing that this will be the last ceremony on that campus that means so much to all of us. But it's a reminder that life moves forward. And everything that the seminary stands for and for all these years on that campus, what was essential to forming priests and the traditions and the values, virtues, that were handed on, they will continue to be, just in a new place, in a new way. But that's what life's all about, keep moving forward, treasuring the memories that God has given us in the past. So thanks, got most of the talk written, I still got to tweak it a little bit.

Kerry Nevins ([18:14](#)):

Okay.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:15](#)):

So say a little prayer for me there.

Kerry Nevins ([18:17](#)):

Sure. Yeah, absolutely will.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:19](#)):

It was humbling, you were talking about the BASH. I always say, when I'm with young people, it's always, never an exception, usually something happens that just is a great way of just keeping you grounded

and humble. So I was there at the BASH and I could see a group of young girls, and they were waiting to see me, I said, "How nice is that?" So I went to talk to them and they say, "Hey, can we have our picture with you? Can we have our picture with you?" I say, "Oh, yeah, sure, sure, that would be great." So we take the picture and as they're walking away, they said, "And just to confirm, you're the bishop, right?" I'm like, "Yeah-"

Kerry Nevins ([18:55](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:56](#)):

"Unless I heard I was."

Kerry Nevins ([18:57](#)):

Yeah. Right. That's great. Bishop, you're going to be celebrating your 40th anniversary to the priesthood, coming up on May 19th. And so just because you're ordained a bishop, that doesn't mean you're no longer a priest.

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

Yeah.

Kerry Nevins ([19:11](#)):

You still have that role as priest. And so when you look back on all these years of serving as a priest, what are some things that come to mind?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:20](#)):

Yeah, that's true, 'cause sometimes people will like say to me, "Hey, Father, oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry Bishop." I say, "No, I love that title, it reminds me I am-"

Kerry Nevins ([19:27](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:27](#)):

"I am a priest still." And so, yeah, 40 years, anniversaries are great, right? Because they just get you to think, they get you to reflect a little bit. Which I've been doing actually, in my prayer, as I get ready on May 19th, to celebrate 40 years as a priest. I've been really trying to bring that to my prayer and kind of asking myself the same question you just asked me, "What's the Lord saying to me as we celebrate?" And I think, Kerry, I am just so grateful, I mean, I love being a priest, I love being a bishop, I really do. I feel the same joy and zeal, as a newly ordained. And I say, "Well, how is that possible?" And it's only because the grace and mercy of God, like I'm not deserving of any of this. And through it all, the Lord has just sustained me and blessed me for 40 years.

([20:25](#)):

And so I think if anything, the only thing I'm reflecting on right now, is the goodness of the Lord, who promises that when he chooses us to do something, whatever the vocation is, he will always give us the strength to do it. And I'm sure everyone listening, probably, can say the same thing. In whatever

vocation you're living right now, when you look back on it, yeah, there were great times and blessings. Yeah, there were some bumps in the road and some challenges, but guess what? The Lord who chose me, the Lord who called me, was there all the way. And so I'm just filled with such gratitude.

[\(20:58\)](#):

I am so thankful for the people I've met along the way, other priests and bishops, but also the people I've had the great privilege of serving, and also the people with whom I've worked. I've been so blessed that, actually, in three different dioceses, have just met so many wonderful people who have been and are a source of inspiration for me. I've learned so much from them, so I'm thankful, Kerry. I'm grateful for the special people God has put into my life these past 40 years. And I pray that God gives me the health and grace to keep moving forward, 'cause I certainly love what I am privileged to do every day, but I know it's only with his grace and mercy.

Kerry Nevins [\(21:48\)](#):

Yeah, yeah, and that's right. And we're so blessed in our diocese, for you to be surrounded by so many other great priests, that are able to-

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(21:56\)](#):

I know.

Kerry Nevins [\(21:56\)](#):

Assist you and form you and be of service to you as well.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(22:00\)](#):

Yeah, I thank God for them. We were at the priest convocation last week, and I just looked around so many times and what you just said is right on target. I am so blessed to be surrounded with such great priests. We enjoy each other, we respect each other, and we have a great fraternal bond. And we were reminded at the convocation, that when we say, "Oh, the priests have a great fraternity," we do, but it's rooted in sacramental graces. It's not just like a fraternity, it's fraternity, because we've all received the sacramental graces that come-

Kerry Nevins [\(22:34\)](#):

Right.

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

With the ordination to the priesthood. And so I think that's why it's so easy to see that bond that we have.

Kerry Nevins [\(22:42\)](#):

Sure. Yeah, yeah. It's very visible, I think, to the whole diocese. Well, Bishop, I think it'd be remiss if we didn't spend some time thanking all the moms out there in preparation for Mother's Day, this Sunday. May is also the month of Mary, who is our heavenly mother, so in your column for the Catholic Herald this month, you reflected on how Mary is the Queen of Peace. And so I couldn't help but think of how the moms in our life were able to demonstrate that gift of peace, the peace that comes from being in friendship with God. So Bishop, what are your prayers, or what is your prayer for moms this year, as we celebrate Mother's Day?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([23:17](#)):

Yeah. Well, first of all, like you said, we begin by giving thanks for our moms, living and deceased, and for the role that they have played in our lives. For the ways that they have imitated Mary's, "Yes," to the Lord, and how they have said, "Yes," to the Lord, day in and day out, of loving sacrificially and generously. So we are thankful to our moms. Like you said, we probably all can recall times where our mothers were that instrument of peace, peace in their home, peace in our own hearts, know how to make that right. And we pray that God gives them that grace to say, "Yes," every day, 'cause that's their call to holiness, is living out their vocation, as wife, as mother. So we pray that God blesses them on their special day and always pray for our moms who are deceased, pray for moms who are expecting children, that God will bless them and the child in her womb, and take the opportunity...

([24:23](#)):

It's good, I love when we have special days like Mother's Day, it's like every day is Mother's Day, it should be, at least, right. But we need that reminder, that special reminder, to pause and to be thankful for all our mothers have taught us, and especially by example. And we have to, also, be realistic. There could be some individuals who, for one reason or another, good people, always involved, that may be struggling with a relationship with a mother. That's a reality in the world, but again, we pray for that grace for healing and for forgiveness, which are always available to us from God.

Kerry Nevins ([25:00](#)):

Yeah, yeah, that's absolutely right. All right, Bishop, well, we've got a couple of questions from the faithful. The first comes in, "I have been told by a priest at my old parish that my son is not a child of God, because he was conceived through in vitro fertilization. I believe any child born is a gift from God. Can you respond to this? What does the Church teach about in vitro fertilization?"

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([25:26](#)):

Yes. Let's be crystal clear, that every human person, no matter how he or she was conceived, as the questioner stated, bears the image of God and is called to union with him. So the process of in vitro doesn't rob a child of his or her innate human dignity, so I'm really glad that that question came forth. And secondly, we recognize the struggle many couples face with infertility. And I know that is truly a struggle and we try to be there, in fact, we have a novena during the year, often, for praying for couples who are dealing with infertility. However, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the end does not justify the means. So this means that a good intention cannot make an evil action good, so while we understand the good of wanting to have children, that's a good, of course it is. We cannot use immoral means to achieve that good.

Kerry Nevins ([26:25](#)):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([26:25](#)):

So that's a basic teaching of Catholic morality. So that's why the Church opposes the process of in vitro fertilization, because it necessarily involves immoral acts. And--this is a grave, grave danger, a grave reality--leaves many frozen embryos, human lives, in a state of limbo. And that is, of course, unacceptable. So it's precisely because, Kerry, the Church recognizes the dignity of human life conceived in that manner, that we should say, "It should not be done, it does an injustice to the person." But getting back to the question, I think you said, the person asking the question, "I believe any child born, is a gift from God." Yes, please know your child is a special gift from God.

Kerry Nevins ([27:14](#)):

Yeah, yeah, that's absolutely right. And it's a very hot button topic nowadays, so I think we all deserve a little bit more clarity on it.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([27:22](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

Kerry Nevins ([27:22](#)):

And so it's good to talk about this.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([27:24](#)):

Yeah, very much so. In fact, I was just, earlier this morning, just talking with some of my colleagues at the pro-life office at the conference of bishops. And we know we have lots more work to do here and bringing this attention forward and being a little bit more, providing clarifications and a practical way of understanding this issue. It's a very sensitive issue, so we know we have more work to do with that. So everyone stay attentive and we'll try our best to be good teachers here.

Kerry Nevins ([27:54](#)):

Sure. Yeah, we'll be on the lookout. Second question is, "What metrics and feedback allow you to assess the health of parishes in the diocese?" This question is especially timely, in light of, we see parishes across the country, they're closing. So how do you and the team around you, assess the health of parishes in our diocese?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([28:17](#)):

Well, it's the amount they give to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal.

Kerry Nevins ([28:19](#)):

That's right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([28:21](#)):

I'm only kidding, I'm only kidding.

Kerry Nevins ([28:22](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([28:22](#)):

I'm only kidding about that. No, we do acknowledge that in some dioceses across the country, including some that are geographically close to us, parishes are being merged or closed. And that pains all of us, no bishop wants to go into a diocese or serve in a diocese where you have to make that decision. I mean, and what often happens is, everyone agrees, "Yeah, we can't can't sustain all these parishes. We need to do something about it, we need to merge or close." And everyone agrees on it, usually, until you say, "Okay, well, it's going to be this parish."

Kerry Nevins ([28:59](#)):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([28:59](#)):

And then, of course, it's emotional, and that kicks in, that's understandable, but it pains all of us to do that. So when you see this in other areas of our country, it's not like the Church is abandoning people, it's that people have moved.

Kerry Nevins ([29:11](#)):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([29:12](#)):

Or they moved to different locations. So the Church has to go where the people are, using the resources and the personnel it has. Now, I'm grateful that we have a different situation here in the diocese.

Kerry Nevins ([29:22](#)):

Yes.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([29:24](#)):

In this Diocese of Arlington. We're strong, none of our parishes are at risk of closing. Every time I visit our parishes, and this is without exception, I see a great vibrancy, a great excitement. I'm always amazed when I go to parishes and I love reading, before I go to the parish, I always try to read the parish bulletin the week before. But I always like the front cover, or the inside cover, it always lists, most times, lists, all the parish ministries.

Kerry Nevins ([30:00](#)):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([30:00](#)):

That are going on, the outreach. I'm like, "Wow, look what's going on here."

Kerry Nevins ([30:03](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([30:03](#)):

Whether it be outreach to the poor, the needy, evangelization, spiritual outreach, it's just incredible. So we are very, very, very blessed. But yeah, we have a variety, I would say, Kerry, objective and subjective steps, we take regularly to measure our parishes' health. Probably, could summarize by saying, we look at three things, the well-being, like make sure of the well-being of the priests in the parish. You want to make sure that--we have to put them in a position to succeed, that they have the support they need. We look for, what I just mentioned, strong pastoral ministries in each parish, serving the people of God, evangelizing. And finally, we look to charitable works, making sure each parish is responsible for serving the poor and vulnerable so that our faith is in action.

([30:47](#)):

And I'm assisted by seven priests in our diocese, who serve as deans and mentor the parishes in that area. They keep me posted on how the parish is doing, get reports every year from the deans, so we see that all the time. We know about their sacramental records, finances, the state of the facilities. Our pastors also provide a self-evaluation of the parish, annually, and in this, we can look to the parish over time to identify any trends. At the diocesan level, we conduct financial audits every two years, we conduct safety and security inspections every three years. And lastly, we have the October count that lets us know, each year, it's not a hundred percent scientific, but it gives us a great indicator of, what is the percentage of parishioners that are actively engaged in the life of the Church each week, going to Mass.

[\(31:44\)](#):

And you see trends there, sometimes you see a bump or sometimes you see maybe something's changing and, "Okay, well, we got to look at what's going on here." But as I said, thank God we're in a diocese where our parishes are healthy and vibrant, we have such great pastors, great priests, lay leaders serving in them. And we're so grateful, especially as we get ready to celebrate our anniversary, that after 50 years, this diocese is moving forward. And the trends are very, very positive in parish life, and I thank all who serve, who volunteer, and who work in the parishes, and especially our pastors.

Kerry Nevins [\(32:22\)](#):

Yeah, yeah. We're all absolutely blessed to be in this diocese and be in a diocese of its strength. Well, Bishop, we've talked about a lot of topics here. Today, we've got the Feast of the Ascension. On the day of this recording, it's Ascension Thursday. Here, in the Diocese of Arlington, we'll celebrate that on the upcoming Sunday. So would you mind just giving us any final thoughts and send us off with your blessing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(32:44\)](#):

Yeah, the Ascension is a great reminder, that we proclaim the truth that the risen Lord was taken up to heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God and remains with us, especially in the giving of his spirit. And we say at the preface of the Mass on Ascension, "Where Jesus is, we hope to be." And that's a reminder that, we too, this life here on earth, is only a journey. And hopefully, we're all heading to be with the Lord our God in the gift of heaven, on the day he calls us himself. And just as he did with the disciples, as he ascended to heaven, he sent them out to proclaim, to live his Gospel, to preach his Gospel, to continue his work, as the Lord does for each one of us. That's why we say at the end of the Mass sometimes, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." So I hope we all renew that promise as we celebrate the Ascension.

[\(33:42\)](#):

Kerry, thanks a lot, you did a great job.

Kerry Nevins [\(33:43\)](#):

Thank you.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(33:44\)](#):

It was great to have this conversation with you, and I'm praying for all of our listeners. And with the grace of God and his help, we will continue to celebrate his blessings, especially as our Jubilee nears, and promise anew to walk humbly with our God.

[\(34:01\)](#):

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