

The Walk Humbly Podcast – Episode 118

[00:00:00] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** This is Bishop Michael Burbidge and you are listening to the Walk Humbly Podcast.

[00:00:07] **Billy Atwell:** Podcasting from the St. Clare Studio here in the Diocese of Arlington, welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, Chief Communications Officer for the Diocese and your co-host. If you would like to have a question considered for the podcast, send it to info@arlingtondiocese.org or send us a message via social media.

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

[00:00:27] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Billy, I'm doing well. Beautiful weather we've been enjoying. Hope all our listeners are enjoying the same. It's a great time of year. So—doing well.

[00:00:37] **Billy Atwell:** The heat is breaking, finally. Hopefully we won't see 90-something again. So before we get started, we've got a couple of events we want to flag for everybody. The first is the diocesan pilgrimage to Emmitsburg, Maryland. It's on Saturday, October 7, which is the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Bishop Burbidge, you're going to be there leading a pilgrimage to two different sites. What are you looking forward to most about this pilgrimage?

[00:00:58] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Billy, I'm really looking forward to this. We're concluding our second year of preparation focused on Our Lady. So how wonderful, providential. Our pilgrimage is on, as you mentioned, Our Lady of the Rosary, at the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and the National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Emmitsburg.

And I'm really hoping as many people, individuals and families can join us. A pilgrimage is just such a powerful reminder. It's a reminder that we walk together in faith. It is the Lord leading us, but where are we walking? We all have the final destination for which we long, to be with God and all the angels and saints forever in Heaven and with Mary showing us the way.

So I really think it's going to be a beautiful day, everyone. I hope you can join us.

[00:01:40] **Billy Atwell:** So there's going to be Confessions available. There's a Eucharistic procession. There's going to be Adoration. Bishop Burbidge is going

to bless religious articles while we're there. It's really great. So we're going to start at the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and then it actually moves over to—it's only about a six-minute drive down the road—to the National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes.

[00:02:00] So we hope you can join us. Again, that is on October 7. Some parishes are sending buses or vans, so contact your parish and see if they're coordinating a group. And then the next is really a “save the date.” We're really looking far out here on this one, but June 8 of next summer, we want people to go ahead and get on their schedules, the Diocesan Jubilee Festival.

Bishop, I know you're really excited.

[00:02:18] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** I am really excited about that. Our 50th anniversary, we'll be celebrating in a few different ways—a Mass with representatives, because our cathedral can't open the doors to everyone in the Diocese, but we will have representatives from every parish, every school—it will be livestreamed, all those things. It's going to be a beautiful Mass, September 5.

That October, we will be going to the Basilica National Shrine. So they are two major ways we're going to celebrate our 50th Jubilee, but this is the exciting news for me. This diocesan jubilee festival on June 8 is for everyone. We're going to the fairgrounds out in Warrenton, a beautiful Mass.

[00:03:00] There's going to be music and festivities and dancing and food. There's going to be so many great things. And I really want this to be—in a sense—these “doors,” everyone can come. And it's individuals, it's families, it's people of all ages. It's a way to gather as a diocese. So I know it's a busy time of year, so we're jumping ahead. Get this on your schedule. June 8, everyone.

[00:03:19] **Billy Atwell:** Yeah. So that's going to be the Warren County Fairgrounds on June 8. That's a Saturday. Go ahead and save that date and you'll hear us talk more about it as we get closer to it. Bishop, as readers of the Herald and those who follow us on social media are certainly aware, we recently recognized Sister Mary Sue Carwile, the former principal of St. James School in Falls Church, for being elected the second councilor for the congregational leadership for the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, often called the IHM Sisters. This past weekend, the Sisters celebrated a hundred years of teaching at St. James School. Not a hundred years of existence as an order or a congregation, but just at that one school. You have a long history with the IHM Sisters. You know them very well. I wonder if you might

[00:04:00] share maybe some stories or just your thoughts about their devoted ministry.

[00:04:02] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** I have a long history. I went to two different grade schools and was taught at both schools by the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Then I went to high school and sisters were there as well. And even in graduate school, I had the IHM sisters. I told the people on Sunday, I said, “Now, don't hold that against the sisters.”

They did their best. It was a raw product, but I have a great love and admiration of the sisters. On Sunday, I was thinking of so many of them who really had a great impact in my life, not just because they are such super educators, Catholic educators, but just the witness of their joy.

And for serving the Lord and his Church. And I really did. I thought and prayed for and I remembered by name many of the sisters who taught me who were [00:05:00] called home to God. And it was so great that some of the former teachers at St. James came back. And they just talk about their memories and they were just so happy to be here and we were so thrilled to welcome them and to honor them back.

I just, and really with the women religious in our diocese, we're so blessed with various communities and congregations. I just gathered with them on September 9 and boy, I look around the room—I see these sisters and think of all the years of service. And so many ministries—teaching and hospital work and counseling and charitable works and it's just, you can't help but to be inspired.

And I was really glad that our diocese really focused in the Catholic Herald last January on the various religious orders in serving in our diocese. I guess people still can see that, right?

[00:05:43] **Billy Atwell:** Yeah. If you go to catholicherald.com and search “religious sisters and the Arlington diocese” you'll see that article that was put together.

It's great to see the full scope of it. Because we are well served in this diocese and it's—there's less sisters each year, where we're trying to encourage young [00:06:00] women to consider this vocation, see if God's calling them to it. But we're so blessed to have IHM sisters and several other orders here as well.

I was looking at some of the history. The IHM sisters arrived to our diocese—seven sisters—on August 28, 1923. Think about all that's happened between

1923 and now. And their first day of school was September 17, under the leadership of Mother Josepha Clark. So her and seven sisters began teaching 92 students at St. James School. I think they've grown a little bit since then.

[00:06:28] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah, they have grown. They have grown. God bless and many thanks to all the women religious serving our diocese.

[00:06:35] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely. Thank you. Bishop, the Church in the United States recognizes September 18—so that's yesterday as of the day of this recording—through the 24th as National Migration Week.

It culminates in the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Pope Francis chose the theme for this year: “Free to choose whether to migrate or to stay.” Our diocese is deeply involved in helping to resettle Afghan refugees especially [00:07:00] since the fall of Kabul to the Taliban. But well before that, we were assisting in that good effort.

I thought you might share a little bit about why the Church is involved in this effort? Why is this so important to us?

[00:07:05] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah. And as you mentioned, we are getting ready to celebrate our 50th anniversary. We celebrate the history of our diocese. From its founding, it has always been available to settle people from other lands who made their way here for various reasons.

And that ministry continues at a significant level even today. When we saw that tragic footage of people trying to leave Afghanistan who were unable to get on the planes, our hearts, all of our hearts were broken. Those people are still there. Many who assisted U.S. forces are now left as victim of the Taliban's, rule of tyranny.

Our duty is to assist them in finding safety. Why? Because They're God's family. They're brothers and sisters. We are united. And to-date, Billy, we've settled close to 2,100 Afghan refugees.

[00:07:53] **Billy Atwell:** Yeah. Just since the fall of Kabul, which, cause we've been doing this work for 20-something years, when the war first began.

But I was thinking about—and Pope Francis talked about this recently with regard to migration—not thinking of just numbers but of faces. With every number is a face. I think about 2,100 faces—men, women, and lots of children.

[00:08:14] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah, and I'm so proud of Catholic Charities and all the incredible work our Migration Services have done to help those families find stability and peace and doing this, as you said, in just such a Christ-like compassionate way. And to all in the Diocese who support Catholic Charities and the Bishop's Lenten Appeal that will allow us to do such work.

These people come with nothing. And usually back at home, they were very settled, successful, hardworking. They come with nothing. And we also assist with refugees from other areas of the world to resettle.

We help people to work through the legal immigration system, which we know is broken to migrate here. And our hope, Billy, is that through education, [00:09:00] advocacy and charitable works we can help create the conditions that people need to live in safety and dignity wherever they choose to reside.

So it's a privileged work. And it's carried out in the Lord's name. Absolutely.

[00:09:13] **Billy Atwell:** Bishop Burbidge has a full statement for National Migration Week available at ArlingtonDiocese.org. You can also read it in the Herald. You can join Bishop Burbidge at St. Agnes Parish in Arlington for Mass on September 24 at 11 a.m. to mark the World Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees.

Again, that's St. Agnes Parish, September 24 at 11 a.m.

Bishop the "CALLED" conference is next weekend. And for those who don't know, it's now basically a sold-out event—they do have a waiting list building, if you're interested—for young adults on September 23. Now, young adults are anyone single or married between the ages of 19 and 35, I didn't realize I had passed that several years ago, I thought I was still in that group, but not so much. But the day's going to include breakout sessions, dinner, prayer, live music, vendors, lots of time for a [00:10:00] fellowship and socialization. There's gonna be ministry booths. If people are thinking about maybe getting involved in volunteering, I'm curious, what inspired you and the young adult ministry team here to start this event and what role do you see this demographic playing in the life of the Church?

[00:10:11] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Sure. And yes, it's actually this weekend, September 23, just a few days from when we're recording now. And it's, as you mentioned, Billy, it's a day of information. Young adults will have time to be together, to hear speakers and then pray, and then we'll have Mass.

I'll be honored to be the celebrant and homilist at the Mass. And then we'll have a great time and some dinner. And it's just going to be a wonderful day. And we're so blessed in this diocese to have so many young adults—very faithful young adults who clearly love the Lord and want to serve and they want to be together.

It's like all of us. We need to be in that community and groupings where there's people who have the same experiences that we have and are from the same [00:11:00] generation. It's an opportunity for them to lift up each other, to encourage each other in faith. I am so grateful to our Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministry for conducting this day. I think it's going to be spiritually enriching and enjoyable for our young adults who gather. And, it's a way of us saying as a diocese that, when we look to our young adults, they're not the future only of the Church.

They're the Church now, right? We need them now more than ever. We need their engagement, their active participation in the life of their parishes. We need their joy. We need their zeal. We need their creative ideas. We're all asking, “How can we get more people back to church who are called—as the great name for this conference—called to come home?”

Listen to some of the great ideas, creative ideas our young adults have. And I think it's a reminder for the Church, and I would even humbly say even in our diocese that we have to be a little bit more intentional and do a better job in [00:12:00] inviting young adults to leadership within the Church now.

Sometimes young adults will say to me—and I understand why—“It's great what the Church does for us and, these events that they have for us, but we want to serve now. We want to be in leadership roles in our parishes and in our diocese.” And so we're trying to do a better job, that when we form our different councils and committees to make sure we have representatives from this young adult community in leadership roles.

They're not too young to be assisting in leadership. I hope this day that our young adults see this as, first of all, as the love that the Church has for them, that I have for them as their bishop. I get energized in being with them, and as a recognition of the gifts that you bring to the Church.

[00:12:52] **Billy Atwell:** Very good. So Saturday, September 23, if you'd like to get on the waiting list, go ahead and sign up for that. That's also a way for the Young Adult Ministry to be able to reach out to you in the future for other events and activities and opportunities down the road.

Bishop, when I look over your calendar, it's clear to me that the school year is well underway, and you have one school visit after another lined up.

So as you've begun visiting all of our different schools and greeting the students and the faculties and staffs, what are some of the biggest takeaways you've had from the school visits so far?

[00:13:20] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah, it's a great joy. Beginning in August, I start celebrating the beginning of the academic year with the Mass of the Holy Spirit at our colleges and universities within our diocese, our four Catholic high schools.

And then I've been doing some visits to some great schools in between. And again, Billy, this is one of the things on my calendar, on my schedule that brings me great joy. I just love being out in our schools and I get so energized and it's just really a wonderful experience. So what do I see?

I see parents making incredible sacrifices to send their kids every day to a [00:14:00] school where their children are assisted by very talented, gifted Catholic educators, to assist them in the formation and education of their children. Our parents make sacrifices so their children are in a religious atmosphere, where there are religious articles and crucifixes, where they can pray every day, can stop class to go to Mass, where they learn about their faith, and in that beautiful environment, breathing that kind of air every day, especially in our day and age, where, in other settings, that is often far from the case.

So I see our students and their joy. I see behind the scenes, the sacrifices of their parents, the dedication of our teachers. The reason why maybe the Lord tells us to be childlike. Jesus doesn't tell us to be children, he says "Be childlike." In other words, their innocence, their desire to learn, their joy for life. And it's just so exciting. And our Catholic schools have once again, this year, seen an increase in our enrollment. So there's just so many blessings to see, and you never know, Billy.

[00:15:00] You never know the questions they ask you, so they keep you very humble. Just the other day in one of the schools, I think it was second grade, this young girl raised her hand—and it looked like a very important question. So I called on her right away and she pointed to a picture.

And she says, "How come you don't look as young as you do in that picture?"

I was like, all right, that is humbling. But thank God, I think the picture was seven years ago.

[00:15:29] **Billy Atwell:** All right, so we have a question from a parishioner. It's a very sensitive question, but before we get to that, we want to thank everyone who has given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal. You make so many ministries in this diocese possible through your generosity and in your goodwill. One of those is the Communications Office and you make this podcast a possibility.

So thank you to those who have given. You can sign up for our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org. We provide great monthly summaries of what's going on, some of the best content we've created as well as events that are coming up and [00:16:00] statements and messages from Bishop Burbidge. Bishop Burbidge is on X, formerly known as Twitter—I don't know if I'll get used to that for a while—@BishopBurbidge, where every day he provides a short Gospel reflection for that day.

You can also follow him on Instagram where we provide different messages from his homilies and statements and spiritual reflections. That's @BishopMichaelBurbidge, and the Diocese is on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as well. All right for our question. It says, “September is Suicide Prevention Month. I have heard all kinds of rumors about whether people who commit suicide can go to heaven. Can you please clear this up for me?”

[00:16:31] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Sure. It is a very sensitive question.

It's Suicide Prevention Month. We acknowledge that this is still a reality. And first of all, we pray immediately for anyone at this moment in their lives who are suffering anxiety, depression, despair, mental, emotional illness. We always pray for their healing, the healing that only Our Lord can give.

And even Billy, when someone does commit suicide, the first thing we [00:17:00] think of is compassion—we think of mercy. We think of God's mercy and God's love for his beloved sons and daughters. And as we know when someone takes his or her own life at that point, they're really not free.

Maybe that mental illness or that emotional illness or that despair or anxiety just overcame them and they lost that freedom. And we always teach that, you're not guilty of mortal sin if you're not free. And we never declare, someone's not with God, some rare occasions we say someone is with God when they're saints.

But I know that at the funeral mass of people who commit suicide, we celebrate that in faith. We celebrate the life of that person, the blessings that person brought to others. And then at that final stage, maybe for the various reasons we discussed now we entrust that person to the God who knows them, to the God alone who sees within their hearts and who they are, the God we believe [00:18:00] forgives and embraces and loves and, again, embraces in mercy.

And I know it's a trauma for families who have loved ones who commit suicide. Please know we're praying for you, too. That God will help you in this healing. It will never be the same, I understand that, but that God will allow you to move forward and that you experience this healing love and know that help is there for you also.

Through your priest, through your counseling, whatever. And, God forbid there could be someone out there right now who is, due to despair or depression or emotional suffering right now, contemplating taking one's life. But please know how precious you are in the sight of God.

You are God's son. You are God's daughter. His very spirit lives within you and he will never abandon you. And I know the times it feels like—it does feel like sometimes for us—the world's abandoned us or those we love have abandoned us. “I feel alone.” You're not alone. God is with you. We're praying for you and there is help available.

[00:19:00] There is help available. I know there's a 988 suicide lifeline. Our parish priests are there to help you. Our counselors are there to help you. So please know you're never alone. God loves you. And brothers and sisters, let's commit today, especially as we talk about this sensitive subject for all those who are suffering from depression or anxiety or mental illness that they feel the love of God and know that he is there for them and that we are there for one another.

[00:19:22] **Billy Atwell:** All right, Bishop, if you would also close us out with a blessing and final message.

[00:19:26] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Absolutely. And again, hope everyone, at this time of year is seeing God's goodness, God's blessings, especially in the beauty of creation as we look all around us and in the goodness of one another. And again, may we always be there for each other to lift up, to encourage each other in faith, as we walk humbly with our God.

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