

Walk Humbly Podcast: Episode # 122

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

[00:00:08] **Billy Atwell:** Podcasting from the St. Clare Studios in the Diocese of Arlington, welcome to the Walk Humbly Podcast. My name is Billy Atwell, I'm the chief communications officer for the diocese and your co-host. If you have questions for Bishop Burbidge you would like considered for the podcast, send it to info@arlingtondiocese.org,

[00:00:24] or feel free to send us a message on social media. A quick plug – this weekend is the Catholic Charities Christmas Collection. This is a major fundraiser for Catholic Charities and the critical work that it does to serve the most poor and the most vulnerable in our diocese. There's a lot of poverty in the “shadows,” as we say here, in Northern Virginia and throughout the region.

[00:00:45] And they serve so many people. So, this collection is very important. Again, it's this weekend – the Christmas collection at your parish. I now welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you doing?

[00:00:54] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Billy, I'm doing extremely well. Hope all of our listeners are doing well and off to a very good Advent.

[00:01:01] A beautiful time of year for all of us, dear friends, to slow down and make sure we're preparing our hearts for the celebration of the Lord's birth at Christmas, and again, on that day that he comes again in glory. So, a beautiful time of preparation. And I wish all of our listeners have many Advent blessings.

[00:01:21] **Billy Atwell:** And an important day – it's your seventh anniversary of being installed here and also the feast of St. Nicholas, who's your patron.

[00:01:27] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah, yeah, exactly. Seven days, seven years – it does go quickly. I'm sure our listeners feel the same way. Life moves quickly. It's a great reminder to just appreciate every opportunity that God gives us.

[00:01:44] And, it was a beautiful day to be installed – St. Nicholas, you think of gifts when you think of St. Nicholas. And I certainly consider it a precious gift that God in his mysterious plan chose me to be the bishop of this wonderful diocese, and I have the great privilege of serving with so many tremendous

priests and colleagues, and...just inspired wherever I go by the faithful witness of those in the Diocese of Arlington. I am thankful for their gift of prayer and support as well.

[00:02:17] So, it's a joyful day. It's a great day. And I renewed my promise at Mass to do, with God's grace, all that I can to be a faithful shepherd. So, thanks everyone for your prayers. And, we have a lot of work to still do. So, we're in it together.

[00:02:36] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely. I always use the measuring rod for how long since you've been installed.

[00:02:39] I was at your installation and my third child was two months old at the time. She was too little to leave with a babysitter. So, we had to bring her with us and she made it through. But I always think boy, I was reading books with her yesterday.

[00:02:51] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** It goes fast.

[00:02:52] **Billy Atwell:** It does. Now, before we get into serious topics, I wasn't with you for the last podcast, and so I haven't been keeping up with football and scores and all the rest.

[00:03:00] How are the Eagles doing? I'm sure people are curious to your reaction to the season.

[00:03:04] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Well Billy, a little suspect here. It's the first time you've asked me that question. As the Eagles were 10 and 1, you never asked me about football. And now they suffered a devastating defeat on Sunday. Someone had to put you up to that. I'll find out who that is.

[00:03:24] **Billy Atwell:** No, I'm devious enough to do it myself. That I don't need help with.

[00:03:27] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** We got crushed. The Eagles got crushed by the 49ers. Yeah, but they look great. I think the Super Bowl might go through San Francisco. But the Eagles have a big game Sunday night.

[00:03:40] I'm really glad the NFL checked with my schedule because they moved it to Sunday night. It's a Sunday night game, 8:20. So I'll actually get to watch the Eagles play the Cowboys. So, lots of football still left, a great time of year.

[00:03:54] **Billy Atwell:** Very good. It is a good time of year. Throughout the year, you visit our seminarians.

[00:03:58] And so I wanted to ask you about that. You're very deeply connected to our seminarians and you put a lot of effort into their formation and collaborating with seminaries who help form them in the faith and help guide them, if that's where God's calling them, to their vocation and the priesthood, and that certainly pays off.

[00:04:14] You recently visited Saint John Paul II Seminary in Washington, D.C. I'm curious, what was that trip like? And what did you share with the men there? What do you say to them when you visit?

[00:04:23] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Thank you, Billy. We are very fortunate that we have a seminary so close by that will assist me in the formation of our men, we call our college seminarians, who have not yet achieved their college degree, or some who have, but now are in a pre-theology stage.

[00:04:51] It's a wonderful seminary right in our backyard. And it's a seminary with great priestly example and formators that our men benefit greatly from. They're there with men from the Archdiocese of Washington and Baltimore and the Diocese of Wilmington and some other dioceses across the country.

[00:05:13] It's really great that it's the best of both worlds for men who are called at a younger age. So, they get to begin to live the formation with a structure and the spiritual and human, pastoral, and intellectual formation. But they also, as young men, have the opportunity to pursue, their philosophy and their other liberal arts courses on a college campus, the Catholic University of America.

[00:05:42] **Billy Atwell:** Right, yeah.

[00:05:43] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** So, they are with their peers, men and women, on the college campus. They get to experience that world. We get to see how they do in that kind of world and that kind of setting, and at the same time, in a beautiful formation program, really intensifying and listening to the Lord's call wherever he may be leading them.

[00:06:02] So we have six men there. They make me very proud. Whenever I visit them, I just try to remind them that their spiritual life is their highest priority. I know the academics are demanding, but all the Lord asks of them – all that I ask of them – is that they give their very best.

[00:06:24] And it doesn't matter the grade, but you give your very best. But make sure that you know why you're in seminary formation and that spiritual formation, that deepening of your relationship with Christ. If you're going to be a seminarian, God willing, a priest, you have to be a disciple. So tell them – take advantage of the great opportunities that you have here.

[00:06:44] And the wonderful seminary that you're forming in. And thank you everyone, 'cause I can assure my seminarians that they are being prayed for every day in this diocese.

[00:06:54] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely.

[00:06:55] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** So, our men are doing great, very happy. And it was a wonderful visit.

[00:06:59] **Billy Atwell:** Now, did you begin in minor seminary like they are there?

[00:07:01] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** I did. I did the same thing. I was a younger seminarian, but I went to a college seminary where everything was at the seminary.

[00:07:12] **Billy Atwell:** Oh, okay.

[00:07:12] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** So, you took all your courses there. It wasn't connected to a university. So, we were somewhat sheltered, I guess, in many ways. Maybe that explains a few things, but I like this format much better.

[00:07:26] **Billy Atwell:** When you think back on the formation you had in seminary – it was at a different time – what would you say is the greatest improvement? Because I know you've been a big part – you were the former chair for clergy consecrated life and vocations for the U.S. Conference of Bishops. So, you've really seen hands-on, plus you were dean of a seminary.

[00:07:41] So, what would you say is the greatest improvement since your seminary formation to what the men experience now?

[00:07:45] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah, I would definitely say – and I think a lot of it's the influence of John Paul II – human formation. There's four foundations of seminary formation: the spiritual, the intellectual, the pastoral, and the human formation. And when we were training in seminary, the human

formation – which is like affective maturity: How are you relating to other people? What's the balance in your life? How are you doing in relationships? What is your emotional, mental wellbeing, all those kind of things too. Grades are easy to measure, pastoral experiences are easy to supervise, but what's going on at that human level is a more difficult thing to see.

[00:08:37] In my time, that was really kind of downplayed a little bit, where now, it's at the forefront. And I think the other thing that has changed in a very positive way is the transparency. It's not about checking boxes – and our seminarians are very transparent. They share where they're doing well, maybe some areas where they're struggling.

[00:09:05] And there's a very strong bond with the bishop and the vocations director. And I really feel like we really do get to know our men. Now, again, they also have a spiritual director – there's an internal forum that stays just with them and the spiritual director. But that human formation is so important and I think in all the seminaries that we use, that is really a strength and I think it has produced really abundant fruit.

[00:09:34] **Billy Atwell:** Oh, yeah. What a gift to the Church for sure. Bishop, there was a big story in the news I wanted to ask you about. On Sunday, a bomb exploded at a Mass being celebrated in the Philippines. It killed four people and injured more than 42 others. Marawi is the name of the city. It's the largest Muslim city in the Philippines.

[00:09:52] And the Islamic State is taking credit for the explosion. This has been reported by all the major networks, but there really hasn't been follow up since then. I was just curious of your thoughts, and if you wanted to share anything regarding this hostile act.

[00:10:03] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yes, definitely. It's devastating and it impacts all of us when we hear of such violence.

[00:10:11] You know, the toll that it has taken – deaths and so many family members near and far suffering with the loss that they experience. And so, it should bring us to our knees, first of all, as we pray for the victims of this terrorist act, and certainly for peace around the globe.

[00:10:32] You know, we can't allow ourselves to be callous to terrorism and think, “Well, here we go, another attack.” I mean, everyone must, you know, lead us to shock, not just become numb, that this is the way of the world. It can't be the way of the world.

[00:10:51] And we should be deliberate and thoughtful in our prayers every time we see news like this, but it is a reality and it's irrational. I mean, how do you explain this – terrorists targeting people? Not because of some grievance they have, not that they would justify – that wouldn't justify terrorism, don't get me wrong, but because of a violent ideology. When people peacefully gathering for Mass become a target, it is clear that the aggressors are driven by pure hate and evil.

[00:11:19] So our reaction must be rooted in faith, not hatred. We must begin with prayer, rely on the Prince of Peace, whose birth we are preparing to celebrate, because he can change hearts. And we pray for the transformation of hearts, transformation of our world. Prayers to everyone who have connections in the Philippines and I'm sure it's very sad, but our thoughts and prayers are with you.

[00:11:49] **Billy Atwell:** I mean, being Catholic, we can all imagine being attacked for our faith and sitting in Mass, you would never expect something like that to happen. So certainly to the Filipino Catholics in our diocese and around the world, we pray for them as well. I'm sure this shook them up a bit. Bishop, just a short while ago, we participated in a beautiful solemn vespers Liturgy, maybe ask you to talk a little bit about that, but it really kicked off this final year of our three-year preparation for our Jubilee anniversary.

[00:12:15] So this is our actual Jubilee year, themed “Renew,” which focuses on evangelization and acts of mercy. We've been preparing for this since 2021, and it's amazing that we're here in this year of “Renew.” So, I was wondering if you would share what you hope for in this year ahead.

[00:12:34] And as we think about the process we've been going through, if you have any reflections.

[00:12:37] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah. Once again, time flies, right? We announced a three-year preparation. Now we're in year three.

[00:12:45] **Billy Atwell:** Yes, “Remember, Rejoice, Renew.” I feel like we're still in “Remember,” but no, we're well down the road.

[00:12:48] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** You're right. It was a beautiful celebration.

[00:12:50] I thank Father Drummond and everyone at St. Michael's who graciously welcomed us for the solemn vespers. It was the Sunday after

Thanksgiving at five o'clock at night and I knew it was going to be a beautiful day and I just didn't know how many people would actually be there.

[00:13:05] And when I pulled up, I was so impressed with the number of priests who were there, consecrated religious, deacons, seminarians, and so many of our lay faithful from around the diocese, many who traveled the distance. But – I know you and I talked about this afterwards – we said it was like the face of the diocese.

[00:13:25] **Billy Atwell:** Yes.

[00:13:25] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** I mean, all the multicultural communities were represented. There were younger people, college students, some older people. And from all the regions of our diocese, this is what I was praying this was going to be.

[00:13:38] **Billy Atwell:** Exactly. Right.

[00:13:39] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** A diocesan event bringing us together and showing our unity.

[00:13:44] And then we prayed so beautifully the evening prayer of the Church. And I really thought that everyone there, even at the reception, everyone was staying – it was that sense that we really are a diocesan family, and we are united. And we did choose for this final year that theme of “Renew,” with the focus of the Lord's promise: “Behold, I make all things new.”

[00:14:18] Something we were just talking about – the power of the Lord, our God to transform hearts, to transform our world, to transform us. That's what the Lord offers to us: new life to make us a new creation. And so, if things are not going well in our own spiritual life, or we're maybe despairing a bit, or anxious, or whatever, you're never given to think, “Well, nothing can change.”

[00:14:46] “This is the way it's going to be.” That's giving up faith in the power of God who promises, “Come to me, I will make all things new.” And he'll do that for us. So, I'm praying that, as a diocese, we become that new creation in Christ. But also, we want to use this year as a focus on the New Evangelization.

[00:15:10] I know our listeners hear me talk about this a lot, and what we mean by the New Evangelization is that we have the truth. We have the truth of the Gospel. We have the Sacred Scripture and teachings of the Church. But what's new is how we present it. And we can't be presenting it the same way

[00:15:28] we did 20 – like the seminary formation we talked about – it can't be today what it was when I was in seminary, it has to change. Who are these men now? What is the culture they're going to be setting into? What must we change to form good and holy priests? We have to ask that same question. We want to lead people closer to Christ.

[00:15:47] We want to support them in living and practicing their faith. Well, how are we going to help them to do so? We can't be doing the same thing we did 20, 30 years ago. Maybe some, but not everything.

[00:15:59] **Billy Atwell:** Right.

[00:15:59] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Especially if it's not working.

[00:16:01] **Billy Atwell:** Right.

[00:16:01] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** And so, we have to ask the question – whatever ministry we're in, in the parish or whatever.

[00:16:07] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** What's a new way? What's a new initiative? What's a new program? And there's a lot of people in the Catholic world – experts who write about this. Some of our pastors and parishes are doing some really great things. And one of the results of our strategic plan is, why don't we share these best practices?

[00:16:27] If this has worked for you, let's share it, 'cause this has helped people in your parish. Oh, this is an initiative that you started, and now what you're finding is it's leading to more people coming back to church. I was just talking to a pastor the other day and he was telling me a whole new way that they're doing religious ed., religious formation.

[00:16:46] How it's involving the parents and the family, leading them to come to Mass as families. So, let's share that. So, renew – that we're renewed, become a new creation in Christ, and we participate – all of us – actively in the New Evangelization, sharing joyfully the light of our faith.

[00:17:09] **Billy Atwell:** Wonderful. Yeah, we've got a lot of great things coming up. So, the actual anniversary is August 13th, but really the big event that we hope everybody would consider coming to is the solemn Mass. It's the 50th anniversary of our diocese. It's going to be September – excuse me – June 8th.

[00:17:25] is going to be the Diocesan Jubilee Festival. It's gonna be a beautiful Mass and all kinds of wonderful things going on. It's at the Warren County Fairgrounds. We've had a festival there for a couple of years. Well, this one's gonna be really themed around our Jubilee. So, June 8th, that's really the big event that we hope everybody will join us for.

[00:17:42] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** And like you said, Billy, that's for everybody. It's not just – it's for everybody, young and old. And everyone, please consider reserving that date on your calendar.

[00:17:52] **Billy Atwell:** Yeah, June 8th.

[00:17:53] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** We're putting a lot into this. We want this to be a real festival. We'll begin with Mass outside and we're going to have a great day, great music and dancing and joy and bringing us all together.

[00:18:06] That's the way we should celebrate a Jubilee, right?

[00:18:08] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely. So, Thursday, September 5th at St. Thomas More Cathedral, there's going to be a solemn Mass celebrating the 50th anniversary of the diocese. We're also going to live stream that because we understand seating capabilities there are going to be inherently limited.

[00:18:21] We've also got the diocesan pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. That's on October 5th. That's in Washington, D. C., obviously. Are we going to have a special guest with us?

[00:18:33] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Well, it's our hope – it's on the books that the Apostolic Nuncio, the Pope's representative, Cardinal Pierre, will be presiding.

[00:18:43] I'll be preaching, but he'll be presiding. And I was just talking to one of his assistants and I've been whispering his ear about that festival we were just talking about.

[00:18:53] **Billy Atwell:** Oh, is he a fan of a good festival?

[00:18:55] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** He loves festivals. So he, if at all possible, might make a cameo appearance.

[00:19:01] **Billy Atwell:** Oh, that would be great. So again, the solemn Mass that will be live streaming is on September 5th, and that pilgrimage to the

Basilica Shrine in D.C. is October 5th. We'll get you a lot more details. You'll hear from us again on that here coming up. We want to thank everyone who has given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal.

[00:19:16] You make, not just this podcast possible and the ministry of the communications office possible, but vocations, Catholic education, our pro-life ministries, ministries for families and engaged couples and so many different ministries possible because of the BLA. Thank you to those who have given this year to that.

[00:19:34] If you haven't yet, please rate this podcast or write a review wherever you're listening. Sign up for our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org. And if you didn't know, Bishop Burbidge is on X, formerly known as Twitter. Every day he provides a short Gospel reflection for that day. And we also publish a lot of quotes and short reflections from Bishop Burbidge on his Instagram account, [@bishopmichaelburbidge](https://www.instagram.com/bishopmichaelburbidge).

[00:19:55] A couple of questions from the faithful – Bishop, you just passed your anniversary of being installed as bishop here. That's actually today. In your seven years as bishop of Arlington, can you share with us one of your most memorable experiences in Northern Virginia?

[00:20:11] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah, there's so many.

[00:20:12] **Billy Atwell:** Yeah, how do you pick one?

[00:20:15] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** But we've been blessed in having a couple pilgrimages to the Shrine and recently to Emmitsburg, and I would guess they stand out as memorable because when you get to the presider's chair to begin Mass, when you're on a pilgrimage like that – as recently as Emmitsburg – and you say, “In the name of the Father, the Son, Holy Spirit,” and “Peace be with you.”

[00:20:44] And you look out, I just get chills, a lump in my throat, because you look out and you see your diocese.

[00:20:51] **Billy Atwell:** Especially when you fill the Basilica.

[00:20:52] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** I know. And it's like – this is the face. This is the diocese here. And you just get chills and, just the prayerfulness and the joy that's present.

[00:21:03] So they have been really special. But so has this three-year preparation period – I really feel that it's been a really grace-filled time in our diocese. And so many good things have happened in our parishes because of it. There's so many great memories and hopefully a lot more to come.

[00:21:25] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely. Last one – why do some priests celebrating an English Mass say some parts in Greek or Latin? I don't know if I've ever heard Greek, but Latin.

[00:21:34] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah, 'cause it's allowed. It's allowed within the Mass at those certain parts. So, it's one of those options. There's a line often is given to priests – do our rubrics, and they're usually in red in the Roman missals.

[00:21:52] So, they are in red. And so, you do what it says there, but there are some different options in the liturgy that priests can have also. So, the Church allows for that as well.

[00:22:04] **Billy Atwell:** So they're just exercising that option in the missal. Great. Very good. Bishop, any final thoughts? We've got one more podcast before the end of the year.

[00:22:10] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Okay. Yeah.

[00:22:11] **Billy Atwell:** Any final thoughts for this?

[00:22:12] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** No, just repeating what I just said in the beginning. This is a sacred time. And yet, Advent occurs in a very busy time in the secular world. There's a lot of good things added to our calendar and gatherings and there's shopping and there's all those kinds of things.

[00:22:32] That's fine. But we just want to make sure that by the time we get to Christmas, we're not exhausted and drained, but rather anticipating with great joy what we're celebrating. So, take care of yourselves along the way and just make sure everyone, keep the focus and be peaceful – great time to be reconciled with God, maybe in Confession, with others in your own life as well.

[00:23:00] That prepares us so well for the celebration of Christmas. Together with God's grace, may we continue to walk humbly with our God.

[00:23:09] 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.

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