

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 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 have questions you would like to send to Bishop Burbidge, send them to info@arlingtondiocese.org or you can send us a message on social media. I now welcome for the first podcast of 2024, Bishop Burbidge! Bishop, how are you doing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (00:28):

Wow, Billy, thank you so much. I wish you and your family and certainly all of our listeners and the faithful in our diocese a New Year filled with Our Lord's peace and his abundant blessings. Happy New Year everyone.

Billy Atwell (00:43):

Happy New Year to you. So a lot of people in the beginning of the year, they've still got their resolutions firmly in hand. They haven't slipped yet, probably, or at least hopefully not too much. But I'm curious, do you do New Year's resolutions? What are your thoughts?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (00:53):

I do. I do. I think, like everyone else perhaps, I've learned that sometimes you start off with the greatest of intentions and it's challenging sometimes to maintain those resolutions. So I think, with the help of others, I've learned some steps that have been helpful to me--I'm far from perfect--but helpful to me when you do make New Year's resolutions. First of all, I think a new year is one of those visible signs that we need to be reminded of what God always does for us. God always allows us to begin anew--through his mercy, through his goodness, through his love. He always allows us to begin anew so we never get deceived into thinking--which the devil certainly wants us to think, "Well, I'm stuck. I can't change," or "This is the way it has to be." And God always says, "No, no, I come to make all things new. I will give you a new heart, a new way of living."

(01:57):

So I think a new year is--let's take advantage of that. And so that's why I think it's a good idea to make New Year's resolutions. It's almost affirming your belief that God allows us to become a new creation. And so I think the first resolution that we have to make is: I'm going to rely more and more on God's love and mercy and less on myself. Because I think once we do that, then we're better equipped to keep our resolutions. Because keeping resolutions is not just about self-determination or my willing it. It's part of it, but we can only do it with the grace of God. So maybe the best resolution is: I'm going to rely more on God's love and mercy and goodness. I always try to be reasonable in my resolutions, maybe like, "What is the one area or two areas in my life where I really do need to change for the better, rather than making a list of 25 things?"

(03:08):

And that's so hard to manage and to stay vigilant, to be really focused on what those major areas may be and to carry them out for the right reason. I think sometimes if your motivation is higher and it's towards excellence in a sense, you have a better chance of keeping it. For example, I mean most people I know, after spending some days at home relaxing a little bit--it seemed like I was out for lunch and

dinner every day with all this wonderful food and cookies and all these kinds of great things we enjoy--a lot of people make a resolution to maybe lose weight or to get in better shape. That's a great resolution.

[\(03:53\)](#):

But if it's beyond "just so I look better" or "for appearance's sake" and more like "Because I am a temple of the Holy Spirit and I'm in the spirit of God, so I am entrusted to be taking care of myself because the spirit of God lives in me." Well, that gives you even more motivation. If you make the resolution to be more charitable, especially in speech. If you're doing this, "Well, because then I'll be more likable." That's fine. But what would be better is "I'm going to be more charitable because I know that in being charitable towards others, I'm reflecting my love of God." And see, I'm more motivated now. And then the other thing that's always been helpful to me is: Go day by day, don't make a resolution for a year.

[\(04:45\)](#):

Just see how you're doing each day. And if for some reason you made a resolution and then you found out you didn't keep it that day and say, "Oh, see, same old thing, I can't do it again." No, God may allow us to stumble, but he'll pick us up. So try again the next day. And so I hope that with the love of God, with the mercy of God, that all of us make resolutions to draw closer to him and to be instruments of his love and peace, especially throughout this new year.

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

That's wonderful, thank you. Bishop, on this podcast, we've highlighted the imprisonment and the religious repression that's going on in Nicaragua, and sadly, that situation is only getting worse. Catholic News Agency has reported that four more priests have been arrested and another priest has been abducted and is still missing. So they're not sure what's exactly going on there. This is in addition to several priests and seminarians who have already been in custody for refusing to end their ministries. They shut down a radio station at one point--the government did.

[\(05:49\)](#):

The Nicaraguan president is insisting with Rome that he has the ability to appoint bishops and cardinals. So obviously the tyranny is getting more concerning. The U.S. Department of State is demanding the release of the bishops--because there's two--as well as priests and seminarians and stopping the targeting of Catholics. A lot of Catholics' homes were raided on Christmas Eve. We have Nicaraguan Catholics in this diocese. And this is also just a situation of international concern. What is your reaction to these kind of escalating issues going on there?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(06:19\)](#):

Well, yes, as you see this horrific reality in Nicaragua, we're not only seeing it from a distance because, as you said, there are numerous individuals and families right here in our diocese from Nicaragua. So this is very close to home. Just about every day, even yesterday at an appointment I had, there was someone, "Please Bishop, please have all the faithful pray for our priests and bishops in Nicaragua and all who are being treated so harshly." It really is close to home as well. We all have to be united, first of all in our prayer, the faithful of this diocese and throughout our country and people of all goodwill, that this is a horrific evil that must, with the grace of God, be eradicated. But we have to be intentional in praying specifically for this intention every day.

[\(07:20\)](#):

It just reminds you: When the freedom that is ours in living as God's creation, the religious liberty that should be treasured and protected and cherished, when that begins to deteriorate, then it leads to the

most horrific harms as we're seeing. And so it is also a warning for all of us, even in our own country. We talk often about the protection of religious liberty, religious freedom, one of the greatest freedoms. We can never compromise who we are and what we believe, and we'll never most likely be called to pay a price like these bishops and priests and heroic laymen and women.

[\(08:06\)](#):

But there is a price to pay for it in our daily living. And so we can't compromise, because once you start giving up that freedom, then one concession is an inch closer toward tyranny. And so it's a reminder to all of us, dear friends: to myself, to bishops, to priests, that while we may not be personally called to defend the faith under threat of harsh treatment or imprisonment, we must always be ready to take up the cross and to pay a price to hold onto what we know is true and to the faith and virtues that are dear to us. So prayers are reaffirmed. I do ask all of our pastors to include a special intention at Mass each and every day.

Billy Atwell [\(08:57\)](#):

Absolutely. And on the topic of religious liberty, actually, here in the U.S., we had a major victory earlier this week. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Texas hospitals and doctors are not obligated to perform abortions under a longstanding national emergency care law. The federal law does not mandate any specific type of medical treatment, let alone abortion. That's what the court had decided. So basically, the federal administration had tried to use that national emergency care law to say that abortion should be compulsory from healthcare providers. Religious liberty groups are celebrating this as a really pivotal victory. You're the Bishop of Arlington, obviously, but you're also the chairman of pro-life activities for the USCCB. What's your reaction? This is great.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(09:44\)](#):

True. You're right, Billy. This is truly wonderful news. And the court was unanimous on this too, I believe. In the legal world, each case is so important, as its results may form a precedent for future cases. So you're right, we do celebrate this as a victory. Thank the Good Lord. It is unfortunate that the Biden Administration insisted on trying to force doctors and hospitals to take the lives of preborn children in a place where life should be saved at all costs.

[\(10:16\)](#):

But at least the courts saw clearly what so many others know to be true. And as we always say, the truth will always be victorious. No doctor, nurse, or other medical care providers should ever be forced to violate their deeply held beliefs or religious convictions, much less be coerced into performing an abortion. And I know that in our diocese and throughout our country, there are many, many doctors and nurses and physician assistants and those in medical care who beautifully witness to life. And I know it's not always easy for them. And so we pray for them as well and offer them our thanks.

Billy Atwell [\(10:59\)](#):

Absolutely. So we'll celebrate that victory. These transitions are easy today. Next thing I wanted to ask you about is the March for Life.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(11:07\)](#):

Yes.

Billy Atwell [\(11:07\)](#):

Speaking of abortion, the March for Life. So the next podcast is set to record just after the March for Life. So I wanted to get your thoughts on this. The march is on January 19th. This is going to be the second march after the Dobbs decision. And you're going to be again delivering the homily for the Vigil Mass for Life, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. For a lot of people, that message sets the tone for what we should be focused on the next year. So no pressure.

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

Yeah, I was going to say, Billy, thanks a lot.

Billy Atwell ([11:37](#)):

But what are your hopes for this march? Each march is different, it's unique. What are your hopes going forward?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([11:42](#)):

Well, one of my greatest hopes is that the faithful of this diocese will attend in huge numbers, both the March for Life and the Life is VERY Good events that take place beforehand. We will have evening prayer the night before, and Mass and a rally the morning of the march. All that information I know is made available on our resources. Again, we know that after the Dobbs decision, while there were moments to celebrate, we know that our work is only beginning. We know that, and we know what's at stake. And we unfortunately have also suffered some defeats where Ohio and other states have enshrined abortion laws and laws that do not protect the preborn.

([12:30](#)):

So we have a lot of work to do. And we know the formula, it's prayer, it's witness, it's advocacy. And the March for Life in our nation's capital is a powerful, powerful way for people from all around the country to offer that witness and that advocacy. And as we always say, we do so joyfully and peacefully because we have the truth. And again, we begin with prayer. That Mass at the Basilica last year and previous years, the Basilica shrine is completely filled, mostly with young people-

Billy Atwell ([13:11](#)):

Truly unbelievable.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:12](#)):

As well as downstairs, below.

Billy Atwell ([13:16](#)):

It looks interesting from the audience side. I can only imagine from where you are, presiding over that Mass, to look out and see the sea of people worshipping God before they go march. That must be a surreal experience.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:26](#)):

It really is. It's very--I remember last year was my first time as the celebrant and homilist, and just to look out, after I said "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, peace be with you." I looked out and I literally had chills. I was so inspired. How wonderful that we know that our witness, our march is

rooted in the grace and the strength that we receive from first, being with the Lord, the one who strengthens us to go forth and to offer such witness.

(13:55):

Then as you know, throughout the night, the Adoration and Eucharistic Holy Hours throughout the night, young people and all who gather in front of the Lord and the Blessed Sacrament. And then, as you mentioned, in our own diocese, we will be at the George Mason Arena there the night before and the morning of. And our office, Kevin Bohli, his team do a great job providing our young people with a wonderful experience to prepare ourselves for marching in our nation's capital.

Billy Atwell (14:29):

Absolutely.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (14:29):

So I look forward to that. It's a reason for optimism and joyful hope.

Billy Atwell (14:35):

And I love the theme for this year's march, which is "with every woman, for every child," it really balances out the message that I know you've been promoting. We've done a number of interviews, national and otherwise, where you've really championed the idea that yes, abortion is about saving the life of a preborn child, but we must also walk with the mother. Abortion should be unthinkable if we're providing the resources necessary so they don't feel coerced, they don't feel like there's no other option. We are responsible for providing that help. And we do. We do.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (15:02):

Which we have always done and continue to do. And unfortunately, the opposition has found "success" in trying to portray us in a different way. In that, because we are adamant about the need to treasure and protect every human life, that means that we are not for women, which as a Catholic Church has never been the case and has been lived out for years and years and years of how we stand and walk with mothers, especially mothers in need. Because we love every person, and we are there, as you said. So abortion does not even have to be a choice. We will assist and support. And so I love that theme. It says it all.

Billy Atwell (15:52):

It does.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (15:53):

In a few words.

Billy Atwell (15:54):

It's well done. So just for everybody to know, the Evening of Prayer--so for Life is VERY Good, the events leading up to the march, the Evening of Prayer is on Thursday, January 18th. That's the day before. It starts at 7:30. It ends around 9:45. Doors open at 6:30. But we're going to have Katie Prejean McGrady, who's got a Sirius XM radio show that Bishop Burbidge has actually been featured as a guest on and that

went so well. And musician John Paul Von Arx is going to be performing. You'll want to RSVP, or register for this, excuse me. Go to arlingtondiocese.org/livg, that's Life is VERY Good.

(16:31):

Then the morning of the march, that's Friday, January 19th, doors open at 8:00. From 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., we're going to have keynote speaker Chris Stefanick, Katie Prejean McGrady's going to be there again. The musician, John Paul Von Arx will be there as well. But there's also going to be a Mass. And what a beautiful way to begin before we go and enter that march. That includes actually a Chick-fil-A lunch. So it's a good deal.

(16:55):

Again, to register, go to arlingtondiocese.org. That's all at the arena there at George Mason, the Patriot Center. So 4500 Patriot Circle in Fairfax. We hope that you attend. It's a wonderful rally. It's great for young people, but it's good for everybody. Everybody enjoys it. And the energy, Bishop, of that event is always unparalleled.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (17:18):

You're right, Billy.

Billy Atwell (17:18):

There's nothing else like that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (17:21):

Another two beautiful aspects of that night, before the march itself at the arena, is we have like 40 priests available for the Sacrament of Confession.

Billy Atwell (17:32):

They're so generous with Confessions, the diocese.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (17:35):

And every priest is there. And our young people and those who gather, celebrate that sacrament. What a beautiful witness that is. And then of course, as you know, I always say that at that event there's young people there, so we got to keep them focused. The speakers and musicians you mentioned have them fired up in a good way and with music, and they're hooting and hollering and dancing, all those things. And then all of a sudden we have our Eucharistic procession with me walking with Our Lord and the monstrance throughout the arena. And I always say, "Only the Lord could bring all those thousands of teenagers from all that excitement to silence, to falling literally on their knees. Only the Lord can do that." And it's just such a beautiful experience. I hope many can attend.

Billy Atwell (18:26):

Yeah. So again, Life is VERY Good. So arlingtondiocese.org/livg. We want to thank those who have contributed to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal. We're gearing up for this year's BLA, but we want to thank those who have given in the past because you have made the ministries here possible. So when you hear about Life is VERY Good, what we're doing at the march, our pro-life activities, how we walk with moms in need, it's because people have contributed to the BLA. That's where the funding comes from, and we are so grateful for that.

[\(18:51\)](#):

You also provide the ability to produce this podcast and to tell you all the great things that are happening in our diocese. We just want to say thank you to those who've given to the BLA. We are so appreciative of your generosity. Sign up for our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org, and you can follow Bishop Burbidge on X, formerly known as Twitter, [@BishopBurbidge](#). Every day, he provides a short Gospel reflection of that day. That Gospel reflection can also be found on his Instagram account, as well as other quotes and reflections from Bishop Burbidge [@BishopMichaelBurbidge](#) on Instagram. The diocese is on Facebook, Instagram, and X. Bishop, any final thoughts?

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

No, Billy, just echo your words. A thanks to everyone for their goodness, for the generosity, for the support they give us. And to reassure every one of my prayers, especially as we begin this new year. May God fill all of you with his choicest blessings and with his grace. May we continue to walk humbly with our God.

[\(19:44\)](#):

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