

Bishop Burbidge (00:00):

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

Billy Atwell (00:06):

Welcome to the Walk Humbly Podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, chief communications officer for the diocese and your cohost. I first want to start off this podcast by thanking everyone who has supported the Bishop's Lenten Appeal, both this year and in years past. The support that you've offered has made it possible for this podcast to exist here in the diocese, so I want to say thank you.

Billy Atwell (00:26):

And if you haven't already, please rate this podcast or write a review wherever you're listening. We're on Spotify, Stitcher, Overcast, iTunes obviously, and you can also listen on YouTube. And if you are, make sure you subscribe and ring the bell. Sign up for our e-newsletter at [ArlingtonDiocese.org](http://ArlingtonDiocese.org). A lot of our biggest announcements are emailed first. It's a lot of times the head of the spear for us. And then you can obviously follow us on social media on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. You can also follow the bishop on Twitter at Bishop Burbidge, where every day, you can read a short reflection of the gospel of that day. And you can also send questions for this podcast to [info@ArlingtonDiocese.org](mailto:info@ArlingtonDiocese.org). Again, just email us [info@ArlingtonDiocese.org](mailto:info@ArlingtonDiocese.org). I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you doing?

Bishop Burbidge (01:08):

I'm doing well, Billy. Thank you. Hope everyone who's listening is doing well, and their families are staying safe and healthy. My prayers are with all of you.

Billy Atwell (01:17):

Very good. Bishop, it flew a little bit under the radar, but you just celebrated your 18th anniversary of the ordination as a bishop. When you look back over 18 years, what are some of the lessons or things that have happened that might stick out to you?

Bishop Burbidge (01:29):

Well, thanks for reminding me, Billy. 18 years.

Billy Atwell (01:33):

18 quick years.

Bishop Burbidge (01:33):

When I was named bishop, auxiliary bishop in Philadelphia, I was actually the second youngest bishop in the country.

Billy Atwell (01:41):

Oh, wow.

Bishop Burbidge (01:42):

I can tell you that is not the case right now. So no, it's been a great blessing. I would say if I would summarize 18 years as a bishop, I guess one of the words I would use is surprise. God surprises us. As we

know in the Catholic Church, you don't ask to be a bishop. You don't interview to be a bishop. You don't volunteer to be a bishop. There's another discernment process that takes place, and you're told you're a bishop. So of course, hearing those news, you're very surprised that you... You certainly don't feel worthy, and you feel overwhelmed. But yet, God who gives us the call also gives us the grace that we need.

Bishop Burbidge ([02:21](#)):

And same thing when I was asked to leave Philadelphia and become an ordinary and a diocese of Raleigh, again, a sense of overwhelm, leaving that which was familiar, that which I love. How am I ever going to do this? And it all turned out beautifully. Then when I was asked to come to Arlington, same thing, leaving behind... "Lord, what are you doing? Where are you leading me?" And yet, the Lord always provides. I think if our listeners look back on their own lives, I bet you, they could say the same. God threw some surprises at them, and asked them maybe to do things they never thought possible. And yet, they were able to do it, with God's grace and all too. So, I'm truly blessed to serve the church and truly, truly blessed to be serving as the Bishop of Arlington.

Billy Atwell ([03:08](#)):

That's wonderful. And you've celebrated a couple of really beautiful liturgies lately. One was just yesterday. Actually, it was a mass at Saint Leo's Parish. It was for members of the military, as well as first responders. For those listening, if you want to watch the homily from that mass, you can go to our YouTube channel and check that out. But Bishop, for those who haven't seen it, what was the message that you shared? And what was it like getting to see a lot of these military members and first responders?

Bishop Burbidge ([03:31](#)):

Sure. And that's what we try to do throughout the year. We have special days to lift up our priests, our deacons, our consecrated religious, our married couples, our educators. And so, this was another day to look at a particular service to our community, that of the police officers, firefighters, all first responders, and those serving in the military. So, we certainly began today by honoring them, and recognizing the great contribution they make to our society. And we thank them. At mass, every mass is an act of thanksgiving. So, at that mass, in a special way, we thank God for their service, and we pray that the Lord will protect them. What they do as first responders in the military is heroic. I mean, every day, putting their lives at risk in order to protect our nation and our communities and each one of us. And so, profound thanks to all of them.

Bishop Burbidge ([04:24](#)):

And we know these are difficult days. I mentioned in the homily at the end that certainly, individuals within any group or organization, bishops, priests, first responders, those in the military, sometimes individuals fail to uphold their sacred duty. And we can't condone that or accept that. We have to make sure that doesn't happen. But we have to be careful not to connect the failure of an individual to the entire group, to these people who are holding up their sacred duty every single day. So, I wanted to reassure our first responders and those serving in the military that we realize what they do every single day, to be faithful to what they promise. So, deep thanks to them, to their spouses, and also to their families who share them with us.

Billy Atwell ([05:14](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, and to share a lot of those burdens that they bring home with them, I'm sure. Again, if you want to see the full homily, Bishop's message to that community, you can go to our YouTube channel and check it out there. Bishop, we also celebrated our holy hour recently. We called it Uplift Arlington. It was, you had dedicated it to those who are experiencing stress and anxiety at these times. And the response was wonderful. I mean, thousands of people tuned in online. We had, I counted about 120 actually in the cathedral. It was beautifully lit. Talk a little about what that experience was like for you as well.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:45](#)):

It was very powerful. It was really very powerful. In fact, when we concluded the holy hour and went back to the sacristy, I was going to say to the director of the ceremony, "Why did we stop so short?" It just went so fast. It was just such a powerful moment because we were in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord. And in his presence, we always find calmness and serenity, and how much that is needed for, I know for myself, but I'm sure for many of our listeners in these days where there's a great deal of anxiety about the uncertainty of, when and how is this pandemic going to end? When are we going to get some peace in our nation and in our own lives? So, it was really just an opportunity and invitation to invite people, put everything aside for the next hour and just relax, rest in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord, because from that, you will always find serenity and that's the gift for which we're all longing.

Bishop Burbidge ([06:50](#)):

And so, it's a great lesson for all of us. When we're trying to handle all the pressures and demands of life, relying on our own resources, and it all depends on me, it's always going to be stressful. But when we realize, God's in the boat with us during these storms, and he'll calm us or calm the seas, and we're not alone. So, it was just, I would say, it was just a very prayerful, spiritually enriching experience.

Billy Atwell ([07:19](#)):

You've talked many times about the importance during stress and anxiety to be quiet and to look up. And to look up to our Lord. He's there with us.

Bishop Burbidge ([07:26](#)):

Yeah.

Billy Atwell ([07:29](#)):

Recently, you stopped by one of our conferences for the engaged. So for those who are listening and aren't familiar, if you're in the Diocese of Arlington, you want to get married here, we have these, one of the requirements that are there, in addition to some spiritual direction from the pastor, from your priest, is to go to a conference for the engaged. It's a one-day conference, and this one took place at the Cathedral of St. Thomas More. So, you swung by and talked to some of the couples that were there. What did you speak to them about? What did you hear from them?

Bishop Burbidge ([07:56](#)):

Yeah. Then, like you said, while it's a requirement, what the engaged couples, I mean, usually find out is, adding another commitment to your day may seem like a burden, but once they get there, they're just, they leave on cloud nine, with other engaged couples. And there's some really great talks that they

receive and it kind of uplifts them. But no, I thank them. Here they are, preparing to get married in the church, to get married sacramentally. I reminded them that as a sacrament, they are a sign of the love that Christ has for us. I always say that that's our church teaching. When we look at a married couple, we're supposed to say, do you see how these two love one another? That's the way Christ loves us. That's why marriage is forever. It's faithful. It's life-giving.

Bishop Burbidge ([08:44](#)):

So, a word of thanks, not only to our engaged couples, but to all of our married couples, and our diocese for the faithful witness that you give each and every day, and which had really been a beautiful thing, and I've heard other pastors say this too, in doing weddings. I know couples that I... I have had a wedding last month and next month. And it's really beautiful to see them, because they had, many of them were engaged a year and a half, two years ago. So, they have these gigantic plans for their wedding, with all the big guest lists in the reception hall. Well, a lot of that has to be tailored back because of the pandemic. And what the married couples are saying is, actually, this is kind of freeing.

Billy Atwell ([09:29](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([09:30](#)):

We've been worrying about all these non-essentials. And now all of a sudden, we're just focused on the fact that God's going to be there. Those we love, our closest people are going to be there. And this is actually becoming a really beautiful experience. So, in the midst of some disappointment, no doubt, I think getting rid, a great lesson for all of us, getting rid of the non-essentials, focusing on what really matters is a great lesson.

Billy Atwell ([09:53](#)):

That's wonderful. Yeah, I'm sure they appreciated that. And I've heard the same thing from people about the simplicity is actually freeing, which I'm sure the Franciscans out there are like, "We've been saying this for hundreds of years."

Bishop Burbidge ([10:02](#)):

Right.

Billy Atwell ([10:03](#)):

That simplifies your life, and you'll be much happier.

Bishop Burbidge ([10:05](#)):

Exactly.

Billy Atwell ([10:06](#)):

So, this is a surprise for the listeners, but it's an exciting day for your ministry. Today, you're officially publishing a pastoral letter called In Tongues, All Can Hear: Communicating the Hope of Christ in Times of Trial. You begin by talking about the message of scripture that we're called to live out the faith in word and deed, and really focusing on that communication, part of the words that we use. You talk about what you call a revolution in communication, starting with the sermon on the mount, and then

tracing it all the way to the revolution of print communications, radio, TV, and the internet. Start from the beginning of, why did you want to write a pastoral letter? What made you want to do that in that form?

Bishop Burbidge ([10:51](#)):

Yeah, sure. Well, first, just to point out what a pastoral letter is.

Billy Atwell ([10:56](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge ([10:56](#)):

It's an official document sent by the bishop to the clergy and the faithful of his diocese. It usually addresses a specific issue of importance to the bishop and faithful, relevant to the times. For instance, Bishop Loverde issued a very popular pastoral letter in the dangers of pornography that we still get requests for this day.

Billy Atwell ([11:17](#)):

Yeah, we really do.

Bishop Burbidge ([11:18](#)):

Because it's still sadly such an issue. So, I wrote this pastoral letter because, after I'd written a message about the coronavirus in the Arlington Catholic Choral, I thought more and more about the larger issues that relate to communications and social media in our modern times like, what are we learning from this experience? Things will not be the same, God willing, when we get out of this pandemic, but what have we learned? What have we learned as a family? What have we learned as a people? What did we learn as a diocese, as a church? There may be some new ways of doing something. We've learned a great deal of how we can communicate even more effectively. So, that's the reason why I want to share that with the faithful.

Billy Atwell ([12:00](#)):

Yeah. And you provided great context. We're talking about kind of a larger storage context that you shared in that. And you talk about modern tools of communications as being remarkably democratic, and that everyone has access to the tools of communication. That certainly wasn't the case years ago. Not everyone owned a printing press. They didn't have the ability to get the word out. And that power of communication was limited. But now it's incredibly diverse. What are your thoughts? Just expand on that a little bit. Because that is one thing that's very unique about, we're in a pandemic now where everybody has a publishing tool in their hands.

Bishop Burbidge ([12:34](#)):

Right, exactly. And as you mentioned earlier, we begin, the pastoral letter with the sermon on the mount. We have the truth, we have the teachings of our Lord Jesus that bring us happiness, both now and forever, and how we are to live our lives. Now, how do we communicate that truth? How do we communicate that truth in an inspiring way, to our faithful and to those who have wandered away, or to those in need? And so, we do have many tools to do that.

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

But as I always say, there are blessings with those tools and there are dangers. And so, we have to be careful with our social media in this day and age, that we never use it to bully, to disrespect others, or to consume us. If all we do is use social media, but we forget the importance of the encounter with another human person, whether it be in ministry, whether it be in families, whether it be in the circle of friendship, well, that's a very much a missed opportunity. So, these tools are only to enhance the encounter that we are meant to have as human persons. And so, I think that's always something to be very mindful of.

Billy Atwell ([13:53](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. There's a lot in the pastoral letter, so I encourage people to go read it. Just go to [ArlingtonDiocese.org](http://ArlingtonDiocese.org), and you can see it right there on the homepage. But I wanted to draw out one other point that you talk about, the danger of social media being manipulated, not just by people, but also by bots and what you call shadowy influencers. And that's a very astute observation for the time that we're in, because we see so much more of this, especially as there's kind of automated technologies and artificial intelligence.

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

Right.

Billy Atwell ([14:19](#)):

It's changing the game, and that can have a lot of influence on the culture.

Bishop Burbidge ([14:22](#)):

Yeah. And we can't be naive to that. That's why I'm glad you raised that. It's a major concern. And it's obviously been most publicly demonstrated through political campaigns, both here in the United States, as well as internationally. This reality is not limited to one ideology or philosophy or another.

Bishop Burbidge ([14:40](#)):

But Billy, when social media is no longer truly social, but controlled by the technology itself, we are in danger of losing our identity as a culture, and our voice can then be manipulated and the impact can be devastating. So, thank you for that, for that warning. And I guess if I could summarize the pastoral letter, not summarize it, but probably since we're talking about just one quote that I do think, I hope in some way reveals the major point I was trying to make. If I just could just read a quote from that. And yeah, I don't... Yeah, maybe this pastoral letter where we give it to the people, I hope it doesn't help them... It's not meant to help them at night to sleep better or anything. I hope it's a help to-

Billy Atwell ([15:23](#)):

No, I've read it and that is not its purpose, I promise.

Bishop Burbidge ([15:26](#)):

All right. So, just this one quote. "The trauma of the pandemic, as well as economic upheaval that has followed, has been and continues to be an opportunity for the church to seize the moment. 2000 years ago in Pentecost, the apostles locked themselves in the upper room because they were afraid. But quickly, the Holy Spirit descended upon them and inspired them with a vision of how they could

communicate in a bold and a new way. The spirit has and will continue to enable the church, even in a time of lockdown and isolation, to overcome our feelings of fear, loneliness, and vulnerability, by reminding us that God is with us always."

Billy Atwell ([16:08](#)):

And those are things from your homilies. That's very beautiful. Again, to read the pastoral letter, go to [ArlingtonDiocese.org](http://ArlingtonDiocese.org). Bishop, thank you for that. So, we have a couple of questions from the faithful. You're ready?

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

I'm ready.

Billy Atwell ([16:19](#)):

All right. We've gotten a number of questions, so this isn't from one particular person. But people are just asking essentially, where's the McCarrick report?

Bishop Burbidge ([16:26](#)):

Yeah, I get that a lot too. I get that a lot. Whenever I'm at a parish, I'm asked that question. And as a bishop, I do not have any insider information about when the report will come out or what it will contain. So, I really don't know. The investigation has been led by Rome, at the request of the Bishop of the United States. We ask Rome to do this and they have. Holy Father accepted that recommendation. And so, like the faithful, I am eagerly awaiting its publication.

Bishop Burbidge ([16:55](#)):

No matter what is contained in the report, we already know a few important things to remember. The Archdiocese of New York already concluded that Mr. McCarrick is credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor and the entire church acknowledges, and we mourn, we really mourn that reality. And we know there are also other allegations, and we renew our commitment to pray for victims of abuse, sexual abuse, especially by members of the clergy, as a diocese, as a church to assist them in every way possible in our prayers and our encounters with them, to see what ways we might be able to help.

Bishop Burbidge ([17:35](#)):

And I meet, as you know, with victims of abuse quite a few times a year. After reviewing the information available at the time, the Holy Father, this is one of the things that happened. So, I think it's important to remember that the church has already done something. The Holy Father not only took away his status as a cardinal, which I mean, how often does that happen? It's so serious. He laicized the former Cardinal McCarrick. And this means the gravity of his sins and crimes were so scandalous, he could no longer function, even as a priest. So, this is one of the severe punishments that can be levied against the priests. And so, I mean, I think it's important for people to remember that Rome has already acted.

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

Yeah.

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

But here's the key. And I know this is what people say to me all the time. The purpose of the report is to understand how he could have continued.

Billy Atwell ([18:27](#)):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge ([18:27](#)):

Functioning as a bishop and archbishop. And how did he move up the ranks? Did other people know and do nothing? This is the accountability that the church needs. And why I like the report sooner than later, we have to exercise patience and continue praying for the victims of McCarrick until the report's published. But when you start an investigation, it's like dominoes. One statement or one interview or anything leads to another, and it gets a lot more... To be just and to be fair to everyone involved, it takes time. So, I'd rather... Sure, I'd rather it be out sooner, but I'd rather get it right.

Billy Atwell ([19:12](#)):

Yeah.

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

So, I don't know what the report will say. When we get it, we will review it, and we will certainly comment on it in a statement and also on this podcast.

Billy Atwell ([19:26](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. All right, so, Jim from Manassas is asking, what are your thoughts about NFL players staying in the locker room during the national anthem? And on a lighter note, any predictions for the 2020 season?

Bishop Burbidge ([19:37](#)):

Okay. So, Jim, your question's not coming on a very good day for a very grumpy bishop, whose Philadelphia Eagles lost the Washington football team yesterday, after leading by 17 to nothing. So, [inaudible 00:19:51] a little spark. And it was very kind of many of my priests who are Washington fans to text me after the game last night. [Crosstalk 00:20:02] appreciated their comments. So, yeah, it's great. I mean, it's great that we're able to get back to doing some things that we're accustomed to, not the same, just like going back to our schools, at least we're going back. But it's not the same, but we're doing the best we can. So, I see some of these professional sports saying, "Okay, we can't have the fans, we can't do this, but we can at least provide this sort of entertainment."

Bishop Burbidge ([20:29](#)):

So, I'm happy to see the NFL getting back to that. Their priority, just as it is with our schools, just like it is with the workplace, must always be the safety and health of all those involved. That's why you have to be vigilant. And every day you're looking at the evidence, is everything we're doing the right to do, so we can continue? Or do we need to adjust something? So, that's what we'll be doing in our diocese. And it's good to see professional sports trying to do the same. What was the second part of that question?

Billy Atwell ([20:58](#)):



It was, what are your thoughts about NFL players staying in the locker room during the national anthem?

Bishop Burbidge ([21:01](#)):

Oh, right. Yeah, it's kind of a sensitive issue and I know it's a... Everyone has a different opinion on this, so I'll just share mine. It's just my opinion. I'm disappointed that players would stay in the locker room during the national anthem. We know that the singing of the national anthem has a long tradition, and everyone always knew what that was about. It was to be honoring those who gave their lives and service for all that that flag represents, namely our freedom, and some of them who gave the ultimate sacrifice. I've never stood at the national anthem at a sporting event without remembering that. And I'm sad that that cannot happen, or some are choosing for that not to happen at this time. So, I don't think that's a good idea. Maybe there's... But I'm not in any way downplaying the social issues of our times.

Billy Atwell ([21:58](#)):

Right.

Bishop Burbidge ([22:01](#)):

Some of this is because of, hey, listen, we cannot tolerate or ignore that there's racism and that there's discrimination and other injustice in our world. We have to find many ways to speak out against that, to change that. And athletes have a platform where they can do that, I think, in other productive ways. Also by bringing good to the community, and so many of the teams, and so many of the individual players are doing that. And I like that kind of response. One of the things I saw one team do, and I thought it was okay, was they came out for the national anthem and they locked arms. So, they were all standing during the singing of the national anthem, so that's a respect to the flag. We all knew why they were locking arms.

Billy Atwell ([22:49](#)):

Right, right.

Bishop Burbidge ([22:51](#)):

First of all, to show the unity that we should have as a nation, to stand up against evil and injustice. And so, I think something like that's a really good compromise. It sends both messages, so.

Billy Atwell ([23:01](#)):

They're showing unity, but also respect.

Bishop Burbidge ([23:03](#)):

And reminding us that we need to be united more than ever because there are evils, social injustices going on in our country right now. How are we going to combat it unless we do it together?

Billy Atwell ([23:15](#)):

Absolutely. Any final thoughts? And then, if you would close us out with your blessing.

Bishop Burbidge ([23:20](#)):

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Right. No, that, I just want to reassure all the faithful that I do know that this is a time of stress and anxiety for all of us, and so much for our families, and increased pressures and demands. And I do, with all my heart, want you to know, I am praying for you every day. I want to remind you that you're not alone, as we celebrated in that holy hour. Even in the midst of all these things that seem so demanding, God will give you the strength you need. Just don't try it alone. Let God help you. And come into his presence as much as you can. So, I do pray that our Lord will bless all of our listeners and their families, that he'll give them strength and perseverance, and that he will keep them in health and safety, and that we can all renew our commitment to trust him, to walk humbly with our God.

Bishop Burbidge ([24:18](#)):

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