

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

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

Tom Shakely ([00:08](#)):

Welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast, from the St. Clare Studio in the Diocese of Arlington. We are back. I am Tom Shakely, chief communications officer for the Diocese of Arlington, and I'm joined by our host, Bishop Michael Burbidge. Welcome.

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

Thank you, Tom. It's great to be here. Just as I was coming across the campus today, I saw all of our students coming back to school. So I'm so happy. It's always a wonderful sight. I know we're going to talk a little bit about back-to-school later in this podcast.

Tom Shakely ([00:38](#)):

It's hard to believe it's already here, but that's right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:40](#)):

It is. We are back.

Tom Shakely ([00:41](#)):

But before we get into back-to-school season, we've got some exciting news. After many months of collaborative work across the diocese in many ways, the Catholic Diocese of Arlington has a beautiful new website at ArlingtonDiocese.org. We'll link to the site in the show notes, and if you haven't visited, you'll discover many new features as well as an overall emphasis on witness, especially through photos and video. It's beautiful, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:08](#)):

It is really a wonderful website. I'm hearing so many positive comments when I'm out, from the office, visiting the parishes, and so many people are very complimentary. And the words that you hear right away are, attractive, user-friendly, practical, exciting. So I really do want to... As you mentioned, Tom, this is a lot of hard work for a long period of time with our communications team and so many other offices. And yeah, I just really would like to thank everyone, because this is a... We renewed our website shortly after I arrived here, but it's just a reminder that communications, you got to keep your eye on that ball.

Tom Shakely ([01:55](#)):

Things change fast, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:55](#)):

The change is fast, and there's always new tools and new ways of communicating the Good News. And with this website, I think we are availing ourselves of a very valuable resource, and very practical. I think the wayfinder and the home page is a good improvement, because right away, you see links to some of the most frequently sought information like the Parish and Mass, Confession finder.

Tom Shakely ([02:21](#)):

Yes. Probably the most in demand.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(02:23\)](#):

People go right to that, and it's so easy to find. And marriage prep, youth ministry vocations, faith formation, school finder. We have a simpler events page for our diocesan-wide events, our news and our announcements and our presence on platforms like Instagram and X. All of this brings us to greater visibility. And the new site also has built a translation tool. I think this is amazing.

Tom Shakely [\(02:47\)](#):

It's a fun thing.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(02:48\)](#):

Yeah. Allowing the site to be instantly translated to Vietnamese, Spanish, Korean. That is incredible. Don't ask me how that's done, but it's incredible that it can be done.

Tom Shakely [\(02:58\)](#):

The wonders of Google and big tech. Yeah. It's not perfect of course, but it's a pretty darn good auto-translation feature. And yeah, any who've been involved with a website launch or even a refresh, know it's a daunting project. It's a bit like a home renovation in a sense, or at least a serious spring cleaning. You've got, in our case, thousands of pages and so much of this is really evergreen content. Stuff that needs to be out there, that's witnessing, that's serving the faithful, that's serving those curious about the faith. And so we really hope that this refreshed website at ArlingtonDiocese.org can be a way, not just to learn more about the diocese, but for all really to draw closer to the sacramental life of our community.

[\(03:37\)](#):

Speaking of which, of course, we've got the Golden Jubilee Celebration Livestream event on Thursday, September 5th. All the faithful are encouraged to participate virtually in a special Golden Jubilee livestream event, featured on our website, under "Events." And this will feature a premiere of many good things.

[\(03:57\)](#):

Bishop, do you want to walk us through what the-

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(03:59\)](#):

Sure. As we know, we've used this Jubilee celebration for a three-year preparation, renewing our focus on the Holy Eucharist, the protection of our Blessed Mother, focusing on the New Evangelization. So it's been a very spiritual journey, but now we're at the point to celebrate. To celebrate our 50th anniversary. And during the Mass, we will have the Rite of the Dedication of the new altar in our cathedral, which is so beautiful. People are going to be so touched when they see that. The Jubilee Fest that we had in June at the campgrounds there, we invited the entire diocese, and I was so thrilled. So many people came-

Tom Shakely [\(04:44\)](#):

7,000 people, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:44](#)):

7,000 for the Mass and events. Now, I wish I could invite 7,000 to the cathedral, but we only hold 1,100. So every parish will be represented. Pastors have received at least four tickets where they could have their parish represented at the Mass on September 5th at two o'clock, along with our multicultural communities and all the various organizations, our high schools, our cathedral school.

([05:15](#)):

So the diocese will be reflected. Not everyone can be there in person, but like you said, Tom, they can be at the Mass, participating and celebrating with us via livestream on that day, or if they're unable to do that, certainly in prayer, on September 5th. We need to be united on that day. But you mentioned the schedule. I'm really pleased with this schedule too, that 12:30, prior to the live streaming and the Mass, there'll be a historical documentary, about 30 minutes, commemorating the 50 years as a diocese. And again, this documentary was done in-house with our wonderful communications team, and it is absolutely wonderful. It's a documentary, it's 30 minutes, but it goes by so quickly. It is beautiful footage, such a great overview of our diocese. I think people are going to be fascinated by it. And I think it's appropriate for, I was telling our teachers and religious educators, from middle school and above, just to learn about this diocese that we are blessed to belong to. And then at 1:15, there'll be an exclusive video tour of the renovated cathedral, which I'm so excited to share with our listeners and parishioners, because the cathedral is the mother church.

([06:32](#)):

Every parishioner is a parishioner of St. Thomas More Cathedral, because it's the mother church. So it's your cathedral. And you will be fascinated, my friends, as Father Hudgins, the pastor of St. Teresa, walks us through the tour and explains some of the significant features. And then as you said, Tom, the Mass at two o'clock, I'm so pleased that the Apostolic Nuncio, who represents our Holy Father, will be with us, a couple of cardinals and about 30 other bishops from around the country. And I say that because it's a reminder that this is not just a celebration for the Diocese of Arlington, it's a celebration for the church in the United States. This is a significant moment, and having bishops from around the country is a reflection that the church in the United States is rejoicing with us. So it will be wonderful to welcome so many people, and so excited about the Mass on September the fifth.

Tom Shakely ([07:25](#)):

Absolutely. Well, thank you so much, Bishop. And again, yeah, you can go to ArlingtonDiocese.org/events to find the information for the Golden Jubilee Celebration Livestream event. And as you mentioned, that historical documentary and that video tour by Father Hudgins are exclusive to this livestream. We'll make those videos available later and on different platforms, but they're going to be premiering there and exclusive there.

([07:49](#)):

So you mentioned, Bishop, back-to-school season. It is back-to-school season. We've got another month of summer ahead of us, still, on the calendar, but it's nevertheless time to head back to school. And today, in fact, as we're speaking, more than 18,000 students are heading back to school, across the diocese in preschools, elementary schools, high schools. It's a beautiful time of year.

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

It is. Our Catholic schools have seen, as you just mentioned, the numbers, such an increase in enrollment. And I had the opportunity already to celebrate Mass for all of our educators in our Catholic schools, and as I often say, as bishop of this diocese, I am so proud of our Catholic schools. I have great

confidence in the excellence in education that our students receive and also in our strong Catholic identity. I have utmost assurance that our schools are very Catholic, teach the truth of the Gospel, the virtues and the values of our Lord. And our students are receiving that in such a compassionate way and given opportunities to live their faith, practice their faith, learn their faith, and live their faith, through various service projects and retreats throughout the year. So a word of thanks and prayers for our educators in our Catholic schools, as well as our religious education formation programs. I met with them as well. And I know the same is true. Our parishes for those not attending a Catholic school, provide excellence in formation, faith formation.

[\(09:22\)](#):

But in both our Catholic schools and our faith formation programs, we know that we are only partners with our parents. We have always believed and taught, and the Church makes this very clear, from the moment that parents have their child baptized, that you, dear parents, are the first teachers of your children, in the faith. You are the first teachers and we are only there to assist you and to support you. And then as the students go to school, go to religious education, they come back home. And there, there must be that consistency in teaching and learning and living the faith. So thank you parents for the trust you have in our teachers and our educators and faith formation directors and catechists. It is truly a privilege to help you, but renew your promise, dear parents, to be the first teachers and the best of teachers of your children, in the faith that we are so proudly professing.

Tom Shakely [\(10:25\)](#):

It's such a challenge. It's such a challenge. I know as a father of a young child myself, to think that and the gravity of it. But to know that the Church, the whole Church is here with us as parents and as a family is such a blessing, such an encouragement.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(10:40\)](#):

And I always mention too, Tom, that the beginning of a new school year is a wonderful opportunity for our students especially to realize that's what the Lord does for us. He gives us a new year. A new academic year is a new opportunity. We are not the same person we were, this time last year. God allows us to grow. God allows us to learn from our mistakes. So put behind what was last year learned from anything, lessons God taught you, but move forward. This is a new year, a new opportunity, a new blessing. And I've encouraged our students as well as our parents to be very mindful that we educate and form the whole person. So we are very interested in the academic progress of our students, but we are also very interested and concerned these days about their emotional health, mental health, and well-being.

[\(11:33\)](#):

And so while we don't have to lower our standards, I think it is very, very important to make sure that we remind our students that all the Lord asks is their very best and he blesses their efforts, and life is to be enjoyed, especially at this time in their lives, they're to have a balanced life. And we cannot be unreasonable in what we ask of our students. And sometimes I worry about that, that as our high school students are looking their eyes at college, "Well, you have to do this, you have to take all these classes and work from seven o'clock to 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock at night," and then we wonder why sometimes our students are stressed and anxious. So we as the educators, as the parents, I think have to be, yes, keeping the bar high, keeping excellence in education, but also be mindful of the whole person. I want our young people to enjoy this time in their lives and to look back on it with fine memories, not as a stressed and troubled time in their lives.

Tom Shakely ([12:34](#)):

Amen. Amen. And one of the ways that that might bear out, is through something that I know has been in the news recently because Governor Youngkin here in Virginia recently issued an executive order on cell phone-free schools. So this has been in conversation in the public. And the upshot is basically that all Virginia schools are to be cell phone free throughout the day. I think that's great. Arlington Catholic schools have already been strong in this area, so it's not new to us necessarily, but we'll now get even stronger. Can you walk us through that briefly?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:05](#)):

Yeah. And again, we've been ahead of that game. We've understood that really ever since Covid reminded us of that also, of how we can, in a time when we're not with community, we can just find all of our security in social media and the cell phone, texting, all those kind of things. But we learned clearly that we're meant for communion and we can live without a cell phone for a school day.

Tom Shakely ([13:38](#)):

Is it true?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:39](#)):

It is true. Our students learn that as well when they go on retreats. They hand over their cell phone and they think, oh my goodness, how am I going to survive 48 hours without my phone? They come out of it saying, "I never felt so free. I never felt so free." And I think one of the things that we were seeing is that in between classes, students are walking the hallways with their heads down, texting one another, and we're like, wait a second, this is the time for engagement, to engage one another, to accompany one another. And now we see without the phones during the school day, that's what's happening. They're engaging, they're noticing one another. They're enjoying one another-

Tom Shakely ([14:24](#)):

Building good relationships.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:25](#)):

... and they're free. They're free from the stress. Hey, we have it covered if God forbid there's an emergency or something, that we can get hold of our students. And I really do thank the governor, because I think this is good for children. I think this is good for young people. And I'm really glad that he has recognized what we know to be true, even through our experience.

Tom Shakely ([14:46](#)):

Yes, 100%. I know that was certainly my experience in high school. The iPhones and things weren't out at that point, but there were phones and they were away, and it was so defining of the experience to actually get to meet people, to make relationships, to make friendships. And so it's a good thing. So Bishop, I know this isn't the only highlight, the only change that's impacting students this year. There are other good highlights that we should talk about, with Arlington Catholic schools.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:11](#)):

Yeah, you hinted at that, a little bit earlier. There's been an increase in enrollment in our Catholic schools, at 50% of our diocesan schools, including a 4% increase at our diocesan high schools. So...

Tom Shakely ([15:24](#)):

Growth is good.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:24](#)):

... people recognize that in our Catholic schools, there will be excellence in education, but in an environment where truth is celebrated, where virtues are honored and values safeguarded. I'm also very, very proud that all of our high schools and 19 of our other schools have programs for students with intellectual developmental disabilities. And that number may go up. As part of our strategic plan, I want to be able to say all of our schools are able to do that, but there are challenges to get to that point. But we're going to embrace those challenges. And when we say that we have schools and programs for students with intellectual developmental disabilities, that is, the students are fully immersed in the school, in the daily activity, the daily life of the school, they're part of everything that occurs in that school, as a member of the student body, which is so, so wonderful to see.

([16:31](#)):

I often talk about how proud I am of the Catholic identity in our Catholic schools. And one of the ways that is reflected is the chapels. I look at our four Catholic high schools, the beautiful chapels, St. John Paul the Great, as soon as you pull up, it's at the center of the school, where it should be because it's the center of our lives, the Lord and the Eucharist. And to watch kids moving quickly from one class to another, but stopping to acknowledge the Lord and the Blessed Sacrament. Our new school, St. Paul IV, very clear from wherever you see the school, what is our priority, there is the chapel, the light of Christ shining. Bishop O'Connell has just done recently a beautiful renovation to their chapel, and Bishop Ireton is in the process of that. So we want to say, we've also done academic resources, athletic facilities, all those kinds of things. All those things are important, but what is at the heart of what we do, also deserves that kind of attention, and I'm proud that our schools are doing so.

([17:36](#)):

And I do want to say, Tom, we cannot have Catholic education, we cannot have religious faith formation, without our devoted educators and catechists and teachers. So a word of thanks to all of them.

Tom Shakely ([17:51](#)):

Amen. Well, Bishop, you got me excited. I kind of wish I could go back to school.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:53](#)):

Yeah, I know.

Tom Shakely ([17:56](#)):

But wonderful, too. Especially if you're listening and you think you might have a vocation as a Catholic educator. I don't think there's any better place than the Diocese of Arlington.

([18:04](#)):

So an encouraging development as we shift away from the topic of schools, was from the Baltimore Orioles. Did you see this, Bishop, that there was this faith night hosted just last week, I think August 13th?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:17](#)):

I did not, but I can't believe you're making me talk about the Baltimore Orioles, though.

Tom Shakely ([18:22](#)):

Well, they played the Nationals.

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

Okay. What is that, Tom? What is that development?

Tom Shakely ([18:28](#)):

So the faith night featured a number of players, including the pitcher, Trevor Rodgers, and they basically just publicly shared testimonies of faith. So the Orioles were playing the Nationals, and so it was kind of a hometown game, so it was a special witness, I think, for all of us here about the importance of faith and reliance on God and in all that we do, really. And it was interesting to see that they kind of took this from another team that did a similar faith night, I think in Minnesota a year or two ago. So that's kind of an encouraging thing, it would be interesting to see that take off.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:59](#)):

It really is. It really is. I'm really happy to hear that. Because our young people look up to athletes, and when they can witness to their faith and talk about that priority in their lives, who knows how God's using that to touch someone, a young person's heart? So good for them. Good for them doing that. That's excellent.

Tom Shakely ([19:17](#)):

Well, Bishop, we are already at the time for questions from the faithful. Today we have a very good question, and before I mention it, as a reminder for anyone listening who has a question, Bishop Burbidge is excited to answer them. We get so many good questions and we do our best to answer them in a timely fashion. You can reach out to us via email, communications@arlingtondiocese.org, or direct message on any of our diocesan social media channels. So our question for today, "I'm a 75-year-old woman, I don't have a car, and it's a long walk to and from the bus stop. I hear daily Mass and Sunday Mass on TV. Is that all right? Am I receiving grace through TV Mass? Am I committing a sin?"

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:03](#)):

That's a very good question, and it certainly reflects the holiness of the person asking the question, of wanting to do what God is asking. Yeah, we have to remember that while, yes, we are obliged to attend Sunday Mass, full active participation, if sickness or ill health or extraordinary circumstances prevent us from doing so, of course we are not committing any sin if we miss that Mass. And it may include someone who's older, may just have mobility issues, or just transportation. So in this situation, we want to do whatever we can to help people to get to Mass. Even riding with a friend or neighbor. Maybe we could be mindful of that. But if it's physically impossible, then we should not be worrying of offending God or committing a sin. But a good question, I think maybe we could ask as parishioners, fellow parishioners, whatever, can I perhaps find someone that I could bring to Mass, who maybe is dealing with this issue? I know a number of our parishes do that. They provide some transportation. People go and will pick up people at their homes and bring them to Mass. And that's a ministry I think I would like many of our parishes to consider.

([21:25](#)):

It's also a good opportunity. Many of us got comfortable in Covid, to the convenience of staying at home and watching Mass. And at that time, that was the closest that we could do to participating. But now

that we are in our churches and celebrating the Mass, it is asked of us to keep holy that Sabbath Day, to be at church, and to actively and fully participate. And the only way you can actively and fully participate is to of course hear the word of God being proclaimed, but also to receive the Holy Eucharist, to receive Jesus himself, his precious body and blood. And so nothing can replace that. And if we're able to do that, that is certainly what the Lord asks of us. And he does so because he wants to give us what we need the most, the Bread of Life to sustain us and to nourish us and to help us as we go forward to another week. And anytime we can spend in prayer, of course, as we prepare to do so, is also a great way to put ourselves in a position of being with the Lord and receiving the graces he offers to us.

Tom Shakely ([22:44](#)):

Thank you so much, Bishop.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:45](#)):

Sure.

Tom Shakely ([22:46](#)):

Well, I know we're going to speak again, just after Labor Day, and we'll look forward to it.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:50](#)):

Okay. Is that before the September 5th? Or-

Tom Shakely ([22:55](#)):

It is. It's September 4th.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:57](#)):

Oh, wow.

Tom Shakely ([22:57](#)):

The hours before.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:58](#)):

I will be very wound up, I'm sure.

Tom Shakely ([23:03](#)):

We'll look forward to it.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([23:04](#)):

All right. I'm looking forward to it, also. And thank you dear listeners, for allowing us to have this moment with you. And I think whether we're in school or have children in school, it doesn't matter, this time of year is a reminder that we're kind of back to the routine, the normal routine. And as we do so, I just ask God's blessings upon all of you, that he will sustain and guide you, fill you with his grace and mercy deep in you, and your faith and trust in him as together we walk humbly with our God.

([23:37](#)):

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