

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

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

Tom Shakely ([00:07](#)):

Welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast from the St. Clair Studio here in the Diocese of Arlington. I am Tom Shakely, Chief Communications Officer for the Diocese, and I am joined by our host Bishop Michael Burbidge. Bishop, welcome.

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

Hi, Tom. Hope you're doing well and all of our listeners, it's a happy feast day that we're recording this podcast. Very dear to my heart, St. Charles Borromeo. I spent 15 years of my life at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary as student and faculty member, and many of our seminarians are studying at St. Charles Borromeo now, and this is the big feast and I have such great memories of celebrating his feast on St. Charles Day, we would call it. So we would begin with such a beautiful mass, just a glorious mass, and then there would be the upper side, lower side football game that day. Flag football, so the younger guys against the older guys, and then a big feast day and the cardinal would come out. So just a beautiful day. St. Charles Borromeo gives us sound advice. He always told us that before and during and after everything we do: meditate. Because when we pray we understand, and so what a great advice. Before we make any decision today, before we carry out any work, just pause and pray. We can't go wrong then.

Tom Shakely ([01:31](#)):

Beautiful Bishop. Beautiful. That segues so well into maybe our last conversation for a while on faithful citizenship, the importance of prayer before voting for those who are planning to vote but maybe haven't done so yet. It's just hours before election day. And we spoke in our most recent conversation about the importance of faithful citizenship. You've written about it in your Arlington Catholic Herald column, especially on the need to properly form one's conscience in accord with God's revelation. But do you want to tell us a little bit about your column and maybe some of the things you've heard since our last conversation?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:06](#)):

Sure. And as you said, Tom, we've been highlighting the fact that we are citizens and because of the sacrifices of so many people, live in a country that's free and are able to vote, it's a privilege, it's a sacred duty. And so we are to vote, but we're not just citizens. We are called to we be faithful citizens, and that means we form our conscience, which always must be in accord with God's plan and the truth that he has revealed to us in his son Christ Jesus. And forming conscience involves knowledge and reason of course, but we cannot properly form our conscience unless there is discernment, unless there is prayer.

([02:51](#)):

And so as we cast our votes, I know many have already done, but for those who have not and moving forward of faithful citizenship requires discernment and prayer, so that we are bringing our faith into the public arena, which we always must do. We can't separate our faith from the way we live, from the way we shape, from the way we form our public arena and a society in which we live. And we must get it right from the beginning. We must uphold the sacredness of all human life and the respect that belongs to every person as a child of God.

Tom Shakely ([03:33](#)):

That's beautiful. Yeah, I know there's many opportunities for those who are still looking to go and maybe do a little bit of the last-minute early voting, almost just on time voting as we're having this conversation. But yeah, I think that importance of prayer and discernment, but also I know you've spoken about the importance of unity and peace as well.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:53](#)):

Well, exactly. And we know that the presidential election is very, very close, is what people are saying. So that means nearly half the people from one candidate and the other half for another candidate. So on Wednesday there will be that sense of the person I voted for is the next president or person that I did not vote for, but that's Wednesday now. It's a new beginning. We entrust the future no matter who our next president is or our next senators, our next elected officials. We entrust our nation, we entrust our commonwealth to God. And if we live according to God's ways and we allow him to be our leader and our guide, then our nation will know peace, we'll know success, we'll know unity for which we all long.

([04:52](#)):

But no matter what happens with the election, we can wake up Wednesday and still know that we are one nation under God. And it is our call to live that way, one nation under God. So we have to be peacemakers in our nation, in our homes, in our families, in our communities to bring peace. That's what our nation needs more of than never. Peace that we also pray for our world, but under God, and allow our hope to rest in him. He's already proved victorious and we share in our victory so we can be peaceful, we can be hopeful if we remember that we're one nation under God. And to pray for all our newly elected officials that their hearts and their minds will be shaped according to God's plan and God's will. We pray for them. We want all of our elected officials to be successful in carrying out what is good, right and just.

Tom Shakely ([05:56](#)):

They need that all the time. I mean, I think there's so much heat around election day, there's so much gearing up for it, but what about after election day as you're pointing out, not just the Wednesday but every day to come. Those elected leaders need prayers. They need our solidarity, don't they?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:09](#)):

Exactly, Tom.

Tom Shakely ([06:10](#)):

Well, it's National Vocations Awareness Week celebrated November 3rd to the 9th, so we're in it now. It's an annual week-long celebration of the Catholic church in the United States. Dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood, the diaconate and consecrated life through prayer and education. National Vocations week is all about renewing our prayers and support for those who are considering any of these vocations. And here in the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, we decided to mark Vocations Awareness Week in a particularly special way. I know you've seen the video that we put out a day in the life of a Priest Bishop, but why don't you tell us about it?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:46](#)):

Yeah, it's a great video that your team did and I thank them and commend them. It is a wonderful video that captures a day in the life of a Catholic priest and it's very real. I watched the video was 16 minutes

long. And in 16 Minutes really captures a day in the life of a priest. There's no day that's the same. There's no day that's typical, but this is a pattern that a Catholic priest would live in. It's really well done following Father John Paul Heisler of St. James Parish in Falls Church. Starts with morning prayer early in the morning, then celebrating mass and then visiting the school children in meetings, in prayer with someone during a court proceeding, and all the way through night meetings and prayer, at 9 P.M. is engagement and directory. And you look at it and it reminds me of something I always say, the one thing I have never ever been as a priest or a bishop is bored. I have never been bored.

Tom Shakely ([07:48](#)):

That's a gift.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([07:49](#)):

It is a gift and it's really beautiful. Again, I thank your team for this because it really does for maybe men who are discerning the priesthood, we get asked that all the time, so what do you do Monday through Friday?

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

They know what Sundays look like, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([08:10](#)):

Yeah. And this really answers that question. And so I would really, anyone discerning a call to the Catholic priesthood, I really would encourage you to look at this video and for all of our parishioners to do, I think it gives you a great glimpse of how hard our priests are working, the zeal, the joy they bring to their ministry. It's really well done. And again, as you mentioned, it's National Vocations Awareness Week. We know that God has a plan for each one of us. He knows who we are. He has a plan for us. And pray in a special way for all those discerning, Lord, where are you leading me? What is it you're asking me? Know that our prayers are with you? Stay close to the Lord. Keep your hearts open. The Lord will let you know. He'll let you know what his plan is for you. Whenever we say yes to his will, it leads us to holiness and brings us the joy we're seeking.

Tom Shakely ([09:03](#)):

That's wonderful, wonderful encouragement. And so yeah, all are encouraged, if you're listening to this, to go to our YouTube channel. We'll link to it in the show notes for this episode as well, but you can always visit our YouTube channel and subscribe and watch and share this important video. And well actually, let's take a moment to listen into just a bit from this video from Father John Paul Heisler's Day. What we're about to hear is actually his reflection after the full day is coming to a close toward the end of that 16 minute mark. So let's listen to what Father John Paul Heisler has to say.

Fr. John Paul Heisler ([09:35](#)):

One of the things that I've been most surprised about since becoming a priest is that my life as a priest is far more similar to the dream that I had than I would've thought possible. There's a lot of things that happen throughout the day, but each in their own way actually is very life-giving and refreshing even. I spend time with people who want to be close to Jesus, and there's nothing that's exhausting about the people that I spend time with. At the beginning of today, I had certain things that I asked for today, for Christ to use me for. And at this point, I've tried to give myself to him and it's a relationship of

friendship, of love, and of trust. And so I really can rest and sleep and be at peace, easy, just continuing to live this life with him day in, day out.

Tom Shakely ([10:55](#)):

Wow, that was beautiful. So Father John Paul Heisler, they're speaking of God, right? He's saying a relationship of friendship, of love, he says, of trust. You can hear in that clip in his voice the combination of joy, the true love that he clearly is showing, but also the fatigue, the good fatigue that comes with a day well spent, when you're tired, but you've earned it.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([11:19](#)):

Yeah. I always refer to what Pope Francis said that when he would say bishop of the diocese, sometimes priests would come to him and he would say, the priest would say, "Oh, I'm really, really tired." And he would look back at the priest and say, "Good, you should be tired." But then he would say, "but not exhausted." And so the difference is as stated that at the end, for all of us at the end of a day, we should be tired. We put in a good day's work, we gave the Lord our very best, and then we entrust it all to him and we sleep peacefully so that we can wake up the next day refreshed and renewed and ready to begin again. Exhausted would mean that I just work till I collapsed, just happened to fall asleep and then wake up the next day and try and talk myself into doing it again. See the difference?

Tom Shakely ([12:20](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([12:20](#)):

So being tired is good that we worked hard, but if we believe it's all the Lord's, then we're going to wake up the next day excited, ready to go.

Tom Shakely ([12:29](#)):

Yeah, and that's a great encouragement too as we're talking about National Vocations Awareness Week, obviously vocations for the priesthood and religious life, but also for any of us in any of our states in life, any of our vocations.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([12:40](#)):

Any vocation, Tom.

Tom Shakely ([12:42](#)):

Well, Bishop, November, the whole month, is National Adoption Month. It's a month that we in the diocese and in the pro-life community certainly are recognizing, especially since Catholic Charities here has been providing adoption services for a long time, since even before the formal establishment of our diocese.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:02](#)):

And this is a beautiful topic to talk about, and it really shows us how we are embracing the gospel of life. Sadly, we know that millions of abortions occur each year where life is lost, but adoption is about encouraging a mother and father to bring this life into the world and trusting that that child would have everything he or she needs through various means in the way that we support the parents or in the

ability to provide a child with a beautiful home, a mother and father through the ministry of adoption. There are more than 100,000 children in the United States who live in foster care systems and are awaiting adoption.

Tom Shakely ([13:49](#)):

I don't think people know that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:50](#)):

I know it is an astounding number. And I was told that on average they wait in foster care for almost three years, and the average age of these children is eight. I learned a little bit about this myself in preparation for our discussion. Children in foster care may have experienced multiple traumas and loss. They're likely wounded. And adopting an older child can be a special calling because it will bring challenges with it as well. But if listeners are believing God is calling them to adopt, and again, adoption can take place at various ages, younger and maybe older, maybe a newborn. But if the Lord is calling you to adopt, to provide a child, the mother or father gave birth to this child, want them to have a loving family, please consider whether the Lord might be calling you to adopt a child. It could be an older child, it could be a child with special needs. But as Catholics, we believe that every life is sacred. Foster care adoption is a pro-life response. So I would encourage our listeners to keep their hearts open to this possibility of God's call.

Tom Shakely ([15:05](#)):

Yeah, that's so wonderful, Bishop. Thank you. And of course, again, Catholic Charities here in our diocese can assist those looking to adopt from foster care, particularly through our Waiting Child program. And if you want to learn more about adoption and the Waiting Child program, just visit the website at [Ccda.net](http://Ccda.net) for Catholic Charities. Well, Bishop early November means that we've marked All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. That was November 1st, a Holy Day of Obligation for All Saints' Day and November 2nd, All Souls' Day where you celebrated mass. That was Saturday at Fairfax Memorial Park. It was a beautiful day, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:42](#)):

It was an incredibly beautiful day, and there was something really special on All Souls' Day of celebrating the holy sacrifice of the mass on sacred ground outside. It was a beautiful day. You could hear the trees just moving slightly, just kind of felt the spirit of God present. We had over 750 people there and it was just sacred. It was a solemn day. When we gather in All Souls' Day, whether it be at the cemetery or in church, there's sorrow. All Souls' Day, there's sorrow in our hearts. We miss the physical presence and company of those we love because we loved and we were blessed to be loved by them. And so that missing of them is a good thing. It shows that the power of love. But we're also grateful because on All Souls' Day, we are given the word of God and the Lord's promises that the souls of just are in the hands of God and grace and mercy are with them.

([16:46](#)):

And Jesus said, there's nothing the Father has given me that will not be raised up on the last day, that promise of eternal life, the fullness of peace and joy in the kingdom of heaven to all who united him. So that gives us the spirit of thanksgiving. And then I think it's always an opportunity to, we love our faithful departed those who have gone before us and we want to honor them. And so it's a good day to promise to say, what were some of the good qualities of my beloved husband or wife or child or grandparent or parent that I'm going to practice more and more in my life as a way of honoring them?

[\(17:23\)](#):

So we gathered in faith, we gathered in joyful hope, and so many people at the end of mass that day just told me that it just brought so much healing to them. We had students of Saint Paul, the sixth Catholic high school, provide the music for us to see the young people there doing that. I really do want to thank our Fairfax Memorial Park who provide all the chairs and the outdoor set up for the altar, sound system, provided the reception afterwards, just so gracious, welcoming all the people to that sacred ground. So it was very, very inspiring.

Tom Shakely [\(18:02\)](#):

Yeah, I know both priests and religious are buried there. And you spoke Bishop in your homily, particularly about your mother. It touched me maybe if you want to recount that a little bit. I think growing up for me, Pope John Paul II, both his life and his death was really a key moment as a young man for me. And seeing that people have said of him that he showed us how to live, but also how to die as a Christian despite his Parkinson's and his ailments toward the end. And of course, I've lived that in my family experience as well with grandparents and loved ones. And you spoke about your mother.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(18:36\)](#):

Yeah, I did. I recall my mom's, her final moments here on earth, being with her, my brother and his children and my mother kind of looked to us and she said, "It's okay. Let me go home and let me go to God." And because we love and we want only all that is good for her, we were able to say yes, okay. And it was the faith that led us to do that. And I'm sure some of our listeners here their loved ones say the same thing. And it's a beautiful way that this is the moment that my mom been waiting for her. She reassured us that she was ready to go to God, and we surrender and we say, yes. We still miss her, but we said yes because we loved her.

Tom Shakely [\(19:33\)](#):

Even on that threshold of eternity, a mother still teaching her sons, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:38\)](#):

That's right.

Tom Shakely [\(19:39\)](#):

It's such a beautiful thing.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:40\)](#):

That's very true, Tom.

Tom Shakely [\(19:41\)](#):

Really stunning.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:41\)](#):

Very true.

Tom Shakely [\(19:43\)](#):

Well, Bishop, a beautiful and happy thing that's coming up very soon is the Centenary, the 100th anniversary of The Diocese of Raleigh. Tell us about that. You were Bishop in Raleigh for a good stretch of time. What is it going to be like going back to Raleigh for that?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:00](#)):

It's really great. I was 10 years in the Bishop of that wonderful vibrant diocese, 10 years, 10 very happy years. And I feel so blessed this year here in Arlington, we celebrated our 50th anniversary and now we're celebrating Raleigh's 100th anniversary. And it just like all of our listeners, sometimes you go back to where you were and you recall, wow, God, that's where God wanted me at that time. And you think of the joy and the blessings that came your way to prepare you for what was next. So returning to the Diocese of Raleigh, I'll see some wonderful priests and great friends, and it just reminds you of a special time in your life, happy for the diocese that they get to celebrate this occasion and thankful for the Lord for where he has me now and look forward to a bright and promising future in Arlington.

Tom Shakely ([20:55](#)):

Thanks be to God. Well, you're also going to be going next week, the week of November 11th, you're going to be traveling to Baltimore to confer with your brother bishops from across the country for the USCCB meetings. I want to hear about that, but I also want to hear at a high level for those who have not followed this closely, what is a USCCB meeting like? What do you do?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:18](#)):

Well, actually, I really enjoy going. Sometimes people are like, look at me, really? I actually enjoyed going to bishops' meeting, and we're there for almost a week. And I love it because I get to be with brother bishops, friends who do the same thing I do. And for all of us, I'm sure our listeners know this as well, when you're with colleagues, it is a certain bond because they do what you do and not everyone who loves you knows exactly what that's like. And so it's really good to be together and to share our experiences and how things are going well and maybe some of the challenges that we all share, and we kind of talk to each other through it. So it's a time of great fraternity.

([22:00](#)):

I always say I wish the people of God could see us in the way we are together. It's really a beautiful fraternity. We begin with a day of recollection. We begin the morning with prayer. We have mass before we begin the official meetings in the Basilica, in Baltimore. So we pray together, we eat together, we bump into each other in hallways together. So it's really, it's a good thing. And I guess most organizations, a lot of the work's done before the meeting begins with committee meetings, so there's really actually committee meetings on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and then the official meeting begins on Monday, but by the time you get to Monday, I feel like I've already been through meetings.

Tom Shakely ([22:49](#)):

So your week really is starting later this week.

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

Yeah.

Tom Shakely ([22:52](#)):

Okay.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:52](#)):

Well, so I told you the great part about the meeting, but here's the reality too, that Monday through Thursday, basically, you're in a conference room and there's different agenda items and presentations and votes, but you're actually there from nine in the morning, the meeting after mass to five at night, and there's no windows or anything like that.

Tom Shakely ([23:14](#)):

Oh, no. We got to fix that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([23:17](#)):

It's kind of a long day. When I can, I always skip lunch just to get outside and walk around the harbor just to get some fresh air and things like that. You have to be back at two and two to five, but it's fine. It's a great week. But please pray for us asking all of our listeners, please pray for us. There's nothing real, any major issue we'll be discussing, but there's a number of issues that will be discussed, will be voted upon, and it's reported in the media. You can follow along through the coverage that's provided.

Tom Shakely ([23:53](#)):

Does something like the presidential elections and all the elections, does that figure into the conversation as well?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([24:00](#)):

It probably will. Yeah, it probably will. Post election, how do we move forward and what will our relationship be with the new administration and things like that? But please pray for us that the Holy Spirit will inspire and lead and guide us.

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

That's beautiful. It sounds like a wonderful blend of retreat and business meetings, which you need both.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([24:19](#)):

Yes.

Tom Shakely ([24:20](#)):

Well, Bishop, thanks very much for this good conversation. We're already at our question from the faithful, and so of course, as a reminder to all listening, we welcome questions for Bishop Burbidge. We do at least one each episode. You can email questions to [info@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:info@arlingtondiocese.org) or you can reach out to us via direct message on Facebook, X, Instagram, or LinkedIn. Today's question from a parishioner at St. Leo's in Fairfax. Is football season, and I enjoy when the network show pregame locker room shots of the players preparing for the game. You get to see such intensity and focus. What is it like to be a priest or a bishop before a liturgy? Do you ever get anxious, nervous, and with celebrating masses every day, the person asks, how do you get fired up?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([25:07](#)):

Yeah, that's a great question. St. Charles Borromeo I referred to earlier, always cautioned priests that if you're finding yourself celebrating this sacred liturgy or praying and you are constantly distracted, to

take a look at the way you prepared before you began the sacrifice of the mess or that time in prayer. And if you haven't prepared well, then obviously there will be some distractions. And so it's very, very important. The person asked the question referred to the pregame locker room shots. Sometimes you see them, what do you see usually? They're usually alone before that game with the headsets on and things like that to kind of focus. And I think the priest must do the same. You have to focus and prepare to have that quiet to say, what am I about to do? To be reminded I'm offering the sacrifice, the holy sacrifice of the mass, making Jesus present and to recollect. So it's very, very important to have that time of prayer and recollection.

[\(26:24\)](#):

About getting anxious or nervous, I think there's always a little bit of that in preaching. The Lord sometimes puts thousands of people in front of you and you are the one to preach or to talk. I still get nervous about that, but I think that's a good thing because it helps you to remember, this is important what I'm about to do. And so a healthy nervous, but not anxious because anxious would be because I am thinking this all depends on me, and it doesn't. I always pray, "Lord, may this word be your word." And if you realize that you're just the instrument, you don't get anxious, but it's okay to be a little nervous. It is a little intimidating, but in a healthy way, in a good way. Before a big game, you practice hard, you worked hard. Now you're getting ready. Maybe nerves are there a little bit, but not anxious. You're going to go up and do your job. And so it's a great question, and it's the same thing for people are listeners and faithful who attend mass.

Tom Shakely [\(27:39\)](#):

I was just thinking about, yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(27:40\)](#):

Yeah, right. If you find yourself distracted and all those things, well, what were you doing right before mass? Did you just run right out the door and last minute just get in into the thing and then, oh, I'm distracted. Well, yeah, or you take time the night before to read the readings or before you left to get in the car, was there a moment you just pause, okay, what am I about to do? Where am I driving? Why am I going there? Maybe get to church a little bit earlier just to sit and be still. That preparation makes our participation even more fruitful.

Tom Shakely [\(28:13\)](#):

Thank you so much, Bishop. Well, we've covered a lot of ground in this conversation, a lot of good things, a lot of exciting things coming up with the USCCB meetings and that centenary and the Diocese of Raleigh. But Bishop, any final thoughts for us as we go?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(28:27\)](#):

No, thank you, Tom. And thank you to all our listeners. I pray that this beautiful time of year is a source of many blessings for you and for your families, and that we're renewed in our promise to draw ever closer to the Lord and with his grace and help to walk humbly with our God.

[\(28:47\)](#):

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