

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

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

Diana Snider ([00:08](#)):

Welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast from the St. Clair Studio in the Diocese of Arlington. I'm Diana Snider, Deputy Communications Director for the Diocese, filling in for Tom Shakely, Chief Communications Officer. And I'm joined by our host Bishop Michael Burbidge.

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

Good morning Diana. Thank you for co-hosting the podcast today. We have good news to share with our listeners.

Diana Snider ([00:29](#)):

Yes, you do.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:30](#)):

Tom Shakely and his dear wife, MaryKate, had just welcomed their new daughter, Charlotte Gloria Rose Shakely. What a beautiful name. Who was born November 12th, weighing eight pounds. And congratulations to Tom, MaryKate, and big brother, John.

Diana Snider ([00:46](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:47](#)):

So we're very happy for them. God bless them and keep them a happy and holy family.

Diana Snider ([00:51](#)):

We are so excited to see that little girl. Bishop, since your last podcast, we've had national and local elections. So where do we go from here?

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

Well, we first of all, as I said before the podcast, we're grateful to God. We thank God for the gift of our freedom and all those who have made that freedom possible by their own self-sacrifice and some who offer the ultimate sacrifice. So we enjoy freedom and democracy in our country. We live in a nation where every vote counts and the people have voted, but one thing has not changed, we're one nation under God. That's always the truth. And to the extent that we live according to God's ways, God's laws, God's commands, that is where we will know the freedom, and the unity, and the peace for which we are all longing. So now is a time for us to pray for all of our newly elected officials that the spirit of God will grant them wisdom and prudence to lead us in all that is true, and all that is just, and all that is holy.

Diana Snider ([01:59](#)):

Right. Okay, we'll keep praying. Bishop, you've just returned from the annual fall meeting or plenary assembly of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore. At the meeting, bishops heard from

Cardinal Christophe Pierre the Pope's nuncio to the US and elected new chairman for five standing committees of the conference. What more can you tell us about the meeting?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:20](#)):

Well, the meeting is always a great opportunity for bishops. Every bishop from around the country who's able to attend is present. And so it's really a wonderful opportunity of fraternity, first of all, to be together with Brother Bishops. I'm sure all of our listeners appreciate that opportunity. When you're with colleagues who do what you do, you learn a lot from each other in the informal conversations, in the time you spend at meals, and sharing some best practices and challenges.

([02:54](#)):

What is really very beautiful about our assembly, we begin with prayer. So before we begin any official discussion or meeting, we have a morning of recollection. We have a morning prayer in front of the blessed Sacrament. There's adoration, we have a speaker. Throughout that time, there are confessions. Seeing all the bishops, as many, so many bishops availing themselves to that beautiful sacrament because all of us, every person, is in need of God's love and mercy. But we're praying, "Lord, maybe your spirit who leads us and guides us throughout our discussions and deliberations so that we do your holy will."

([03:36](#)):

At this year's assembly, there were really no major topics or decisions made. A lot of the routine protocols were followed. And it was just at the end of the meeting, the bishops really appreciated that time together. And I always want the faithful to know the unity of their bishops. We have different opinions. We agree and disagree on certain things, but we're united in trying to be the best shepherds possible in leading God's holy people to truth and most especially to a deeper relationship with him. So how we improve our evangelization efforts, how we improve the teaching of our faith, how we increase our service through the most needy in our midst. All those were part of our discussions and pray God as a time of renewal for all of us.

Diana Snider ([04:30](#)):

Absolutely. Bishop, do you want to talk about your pro-life address?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:37](#)):

Well, I had the opportunity, I concluded my term as pro-life chair, and so I had the opportunity with two other bishops to address the body of bishops on our pro-life issues. And so it was a great way, actually, to conclude my term speaking to all of the bishops, which is a bit intimidating-

Diana Snider ([04:59](#)):

Yes.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:59](#)):

... at the same time I may say.

Diana Snider ([05:01](#)):

How many we talking?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(05:03\)](#):

Yes. And so I did speak about our renewed efforts in reflecting the gospel of life. We reported on the Declaration of Dignitas Infinita, which I encourage. It's a beautiful document, declaration for all of our listeners to read the dignity of every human person, as a child of God, created in his own image and likeness. So I was able to speak about how our pro-life committee, as a body within the conference of Bishops, are implementing all those important lessons.

[\(05:36\)](#):

And I guess the major point I emphasized was it's not enough for us to transform laws. We also have to transform hearts and minds. And the best way we do that is that we continue to proclaim and to show how we reflect the reality that we are for every woman. We are for every child. And we are there always to help a mother who is in a difficult or unexpected pregnancy. So she will never feel alone or feel in need. And I spoke about the beautiful Gabriel Project where we have, we call them angels, who assist the mom. What do you need for your child? Do you need car seats? Do you need diapers? Do you need food? Do you need housing or assistance? We are here as a church, as a diocese to help you.

[\(06:26\)](#):

And the same with the Walking With Moms, another parish-based program that is throughout our country. Walking with Moms in need, accompanying mothers. So that decision, that great blessing of welcoming life is supported by the parish community and especially for mothers who need us the most.

Diana Snider [\(06:47\)](#):

That's wonderful. It's a wonderful to think you can knock on a parish door and the parish is there to help you.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(06:53\)](#):

Yeah. And I'm so grateful to our parishes throughout this diocese in particular.

Diana Snider [\(06:57\)](#):

Talking about life is a great segue into yesterday, which was World Day of the Poor. The Universal Church observed the seventh annual World Day of the Poor. It was declared by Pope Francis as a day to pray for and encounter the poor in our midst.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(07:15\)](#):

Yes. And it always occurs on the 33rd Sunday in ordinary times, as you mentioned, since 2017. And those readings, as we end ordinary time, are speaking often about the end of times. And when the gospel proclaims those end of times vivid imagery is used to proclaim that the world as we know it, one day will end. We don't know when. We do not know the day nor the hour. And that proclamation is not the Lord's way of frightening us or trying to scare us, but calling us to be vigilant.

[\(07:59\)](#):

So every day we should see as God's gift. Every day we should ask ourselves, "If it was today that the Lord called me home, would I be ready? Would I be prepared to meet God?" I think it ties in so beautifully to the World Day of the Poor because I think we can all assume, in fact, Jesus told us, that in the end we will be judged to the extent we loved him, but also to the extent we loved our neighbor, especially our brother and sister in most need, the poor, the suffering, the hungry, the homeless. To what extent did you love them? Because that is the way you have loved me.

[\(08:44\)](#):

Pope Francis encourages us on this day to make sure that every day of our lives, people recognize us as friends of the poor. Isn't that beautiful?

Diana Snider [\(08:56\)](#):

That is beautiful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(08:57\)](#):

Friends of the poor, and we are friends of the poor when we use our gifts, our talents, the resources, the blessings that God has given to us to serve our brothers and sisters who need us the most. And again, I just commend and thank everyone throughout this diocese and our parish. I look at our parish bulletins and so many outreach programs to do exactly this, to help the poor and the needy as well as our Catholic Charities efforts. So I think we're trying our best here in our diocese to follow the mandate, it's not an option, to follow the mandate of the gospel to love one another, especially the poor and suffering.

Diana Snider [\(09:39\)](#):

Yeah, that's beautiful. If you'd like to learn more about how you can serve the poor, please go to your parish website or go to the Diocesan Council of St. Vincent de Paul at SVDP.org or to CatholicCharities@CCDA.net.

[\(09:57\)](#):

Bishop, last week, you and Bishop Barry Knestout of Richmond signed a letter through the Virginia Catholic Conference about a move by the Virginia House of Delegates Committee to advance proposed constitutional amendments on abortion and marriage, which you oppose, and restoration of voting rights which you support. Can you elaborate on what's going on here?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(10:20\)](#):

Sure. And that's why I always encourage our listeners to make sure they're receiving the newsletters, the updates from the Virginia Catholic Conference, the very important messages. Sometimes things happen, as this did very, very quickly.

Diana Snider [\(10:35\)](#):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(10:35\)](#):

It was almost in the dark of the night in some ways.

Diana Snider [\(10:38\)](#):

Yes.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(10:38\)](#):

So we need to be alert. And Virginia Catholic Conference does that. So please make sure you're signed up for that. Yeah, and last week, as you mentioned, Diana, the House Privileges and Elections Committee took a very unusual step of fast-tracking a proposal to amend our Virginia's constitution.

Again, to me it seemed like it was in the dark of the night, and that's not always a good sign. The committee voted to advance an extreme right to abortion amendment. Adding a right to abortion in Virginia's constitution would enshrine a fundamental tragedy, not a fundamental right, a fundamental tragedy.

[\(11:16\)](#):

And this proposed policy appears to allow virtually unlimited abortion at any stage of pregnancy. Isn't it so unsettling, even just to hear that? The measure could endanger Virginia's parental consent law and its prohibition against partial birth abortion and may foreclose the possibility of any future measure to protect babies from abortion, the most vulnerable. And rather than further expanding our Commonwealth's already very permissive abortion laws, we urge all lawmakers to work instead for policies that affirm the life and dignity of every mother and every child.

[\(11:54\)](#):

Now, this process is multi-year, but we've seen enough that we have to be proactive-

Diana Snider [\(12:00\)](#):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(12:00\)](#):

... in our vigilance and to stop this as early as possible. The second proposal is for an amendment to repeal the one man, one woman marriage provision. We also oppose, of course, the effort to remove the constitutional provision regarding marriage that Virginia voters approved in 2006. We affirm, as I mentioned earlier, the dignity of every human person as a child of God. We always must respect that and uphold that. And we affirm too, that marriage is exclusively the union as God designed it, as one man and one woman. Marriage, as we know, was created by God with an original design and purpose that each of us is called to preserve and that predates any nation religion or law.

[\(12:46\)](#):

And so finally, a proposal for an amendment to restore voting rights to convicted felons who have served their sentences. That was the third thing that you mentioned. We continue, that is something we support of this initiative, to ensure that all people who have completed their sentences will have their voter rights restored.

Diana Snider [\(13:04\)](#):

Right.

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

We always believe that God, there's a consequences to our sins and to our actions. But for all those who want to begin anew, especially after serving sentences and as a consequence of their action, should be given that opportunity. And this is the policy of the vast majority of states, and it reflects the teaching of faithful citizenship that each person should participate fully in a political process. So as you mentioned, Diana, these actions send the measures to the house floor where they may be voted on very early in the 2025 General Assembly.

Diana Snider [\(13:42\)](#):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:42](#)):

So it's not too early for us to be talking about this.

Diana Snider ([13:44](#)):

No, it's not. Definitely not.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:45](#)):

The process to amend Virginia's constitution, as we said, is multi-year and involves numerous steps, but vigilance, urgency, is so important, and continue communication with our elected officials and bringing our faith and all that is good and true into the public square.

Diana Snider ([14:03](#)):

Right. Absolutely. And Bishop, I think we heard that there are elections coming up in Loudoun County that may have an impact on these issues, which you just discussed. One way to continue to follow these measures is to join the Action Network for the Virginia Catholic Conference. You can sign up to receive alerts and other news at VACatholic.org.

([14:24](#)):

Bishop, we have a holy day coming up in December, and there continues to be a little confusion around the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:33](#)):

Yes. But we can clear up that confusion very, very quickly, Diana. December 8th is a Sunday.

Diana Snider ([14:40](#)):

Yes.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:41](#)):

We usually celebrate the solemnity, Immaculate Conception. So is transferred to the next day Monday. There has been some clarification based on past practice. Is this still a day of obligation? In the past, sometimes it was not. But we've received clarification from the Holy City that December 9th is a solemnity, it is a holy day of obligation.

Diana Snider ([15:07](#)):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:07](#)):

Now, some bishops for pastoral reasons, have dispensed that obligation in their own diocese. You can't suppress, you can't suppress the Immaculate Conception. But some bishops for pastoral reasons may have dispensed it as an obligation. Here, in our diocese, it is a holy day of obligation. But I'd rather us not think of it as an obligation.

Diana Snider ([15:34](#)):

Right. No.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:34](#)):

I'd rather think of it as a privilege. And so what a great privilege to honor our blessed mother, especially now the patroness of our country-

Diana Snider ([15:43](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:44](#)):

... where we need Mary more than ever in this time of transition for the peace for which we are all longing. And so what a great day to honor her, the patroness of the United States.

Diana Snider ([15:56](#)):

Amen.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:57](#)):

And really, at this time in our life of our country, with so much transition, we need her help and her prayers more than ever. So I think it's a beautiful, I would like to see as a beautiful opportunity to go to mass on December 9th in honor of our blessed mother. Of course, as the church always teaches, if hardship or impossible circumstances, you can't do that, you're automatically dispensed. We don't ask the impossible. But on those days, you could do something different. But we're going to embrace this as a privilege, as certainly an obligation, but what a privileged obligation we'll call it.

Diana Snider ([16:43](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah. Bishop, Thanksgiving, it's still a little over a week away, but people are planning now. They're looking at their menus. They're getting gas in their car. Do you have any plans? Do you have anything you want to share with us?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:59](#)):

Well, one of the things that I love about Thanksgiving Day, it's not a holy day of obligation, right?

Diana Snider ([17:04](#)):

No.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:05](#)):

But so many people begin their day with Mass.

Diana Snider ([17:07](#)):

Yes, they do.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:08](#)):

It is incredible. And that has been growing over the years. And pastors tell me, I see it at our own cathedral. It is wonderful that so many people say, "This is a day of Thanksgiving. Why not participate in the perfect act of Thanksgiving, the holy Eucharist, and give thanks to God who is a source of all good gifts?" So I would really encourage that as families to begin your day, I know it's a busy day, but begin it

with mass or at least in prayer together. And so I'll be celebrating mass at the cathedral that morning. And like so many others, I'll have the opportunity to travel with my family and have dinner that evening.

[\(17:49\)](#):

I always tell a funny story about Thanksgiving Day that happened, I think it was like 40 years ago. But my family continues to tell the story and continues to give me a hard time. Especially my nephew just did that the other day because-

Diana Snider [\(18:06\)](#):

Listen up folks.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(18:06\)](#):

Yeah. Because when I was first ordained, I was a newly ordained priest, and the youth group was selling pies for fundraising. So I called, I was going to my parents for Thanksgiving with the family that day, later that day and said, "Don't worry about dessert. I'm going to bring the pies." Because I wanted to purchase them from the youth group and support them. And so I bought the pies for Thanksgiving dinner. And so we get done this great dinner and it was time for dessert. And my mother comes in and she's just staring at me. I'm like, "Oh no." I go, "What's wrong?" The pies were frozen. I didn't know you had to cook them. I thought they were just ready to go.

Diana Snider [\(18:49\)](#):

That's a cold dessert.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(18:50\)](#):

So yeah, there was no dessert that day. So every time, every Thanksgiving, my family reminds me, don't worry about the dessert-

Diana Snider [\(18:56\)](#):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(18:57\)](#):

... we had to cover this year.

Diana Snider [\(18:58\)](#):

Turn the oven on now. So you're-

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:00\)](#):

But I hope it's a great day for people to reflect on God's blessings. We don't deserve any of these gifts. They are all gifts to us from a loving God. And as I mentioned earlier, we show our thanks to God for these gifts by using them in service of Him and those who need us the most.

Diana Snider [\(19:17\)](#):

Right. I like what you said about the tradition of going to mass-

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:20\)](#):

Yes.

Diana Snider ([19:21](#)):

... on Thanksgiving.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:21](#)):

Yes.

Diana Snider ([19:22](#)):

That's a good one. So Bishop, we are now ready for questions from the faithful. And we have this question from a listener in Dumfries: "The holidays, Thanksgiving in particular, can be a contentious time for some families. I've even heard stories of families not wanting to talk to each other because of their political affiliations. What is your pastoral guidance for families as we approach the upcoming holidays?"

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:47](#)):

Yes, and you do hear that.

Diana Snider ([19:48](#)):

Yep.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:49](#)):

I mean, that's a reality in families. We understand that. And so we can only do our part. And so I think that as we were mentioned earlier in the podcast, each day is a gift. Right? Tomorrow's not guaranteed. But we have each other today. We have each other today. And how important it is not to let anything separate us and divide us, especially politics. Don't let politics separate us. We all have our opinions. We all have different views and things like that. And sometimes it's good just to put them to rest and not even talk about them. To talk about the good things, the things happening in our families and the lives of our children and grandchildren, the things that we have to celebrate.

([20:34](#)):

But we only have a short time together. We should make the best of it. Thanksgiving is right before Advent. It's a beginning of new life. It's always the time to forgive and to put behind the grudges and truly be thankful for the special people that God has put in our lives. I know it's not always easy because there's hurt involved sometimes and things like that, but it's always possible-

Diana Snider ([20:56](#)):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:57](#)):

... with the grace of God to allow other people to begin anew and to just enjoy the company of one another. And I think Thanksgiving provides us a good opportunity to kind of renew those commitments.

Diana Snider ([21:11](#)):

Put those strong feelings aside for the day.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:13](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Enjoy football. Enjoy the Turkey. Enjoy each other's company.

Diana Snider ([21:18](#)):

And the pie, especially the pie, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:20](#)):

But it's best probably not to talk about politics on that day. We don't need to.

Diana Snider ([21:25](#)):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:26](#)):

Let's just talk about the things that unite us.

Diana Snider ([21:30](#)):

Yeah, that sounds great. So Bishop, we've had a great conversation here today about a lot of pretty heavy topics. Do you have any final thoughts?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:40](#)):

Well, no, just, again, this is a beautiful time of year to be thankful, and especially as we prepare for Advent to make sure our heart is free from any of those obstacles that will prevent the Lord from being born anew in us, to open hearts that are pure and loving. And so as we continue these days, I pray for all of you dear friends, and hope you all have a great Thanksgiving and ask the Lord for that grace so that we may continue to walk humbly with our God.

([22:09](#)):

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