

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 Saint Clare Studio here in the Diocese of Arlington. I'm Tom Shakely, Chief Communications Officer for the Diocese of Arlington. I'm joined today, of course by our host, Bishop Michael Burbidge. Bishop, welcome.

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

How are you, Tom? I hope you and our listeners are all doing well these final days of preparation for the celebration of our Lord's birth. We all know it's a busy time, I'm sure there's last-minute tasks and chores for everyone.

([00:36](#)):

But we also know that the priority is allowing, at least some time, during these sacred days to slow down a bit. To make sure our hearts are ready and serene and peaceful to await the blessings that the Christ Child will bring to us. So praying for everyone in these final days of preparation, that you will know peace and serenity and reflect the joy that so much our Lord wants us to share with others.

Tom Shakely ([01:03](#)):

You have calmed my heart a bit, just there. That was wonderful, thank you, Bishop. No, it's truly what we need.

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

I think I was speaking to myself as well.

Tom Shakely ([01:11](#)):

Well, Bishop, on that note, you'll soon be celebrating a very special Mass for all those incarcerated at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center. We know that all of our priests and bishops throughout our community and across the country, bring our Eucharistic Lord to the faithful in all sorts of circumstances and environments. But I think you doing this here at the Fairfax County Detention Center is a pretty powerful moment.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:35](#)):

Well, yes. Like so many of us at this time of year, we are well aware of many people who at this time feel alone, feel forgotten, or maybe abandoned. It can be right within our own families, our own parishes, our own communities. But we're also certainly mindful of those in hospitals and assisted living and nursing facilities, and of course, those who are incarcerated.

([02:04](#)):

It's really the call of our Lord himself, which Pope Francis reaffirms in so many ways, "Go out." Go out to where people cannot necessarily come to you to remind them that Jesus is Emmanuel. That He is God with us. With each and every one of us, no matter where we are. In a prison, in a hospital, on a battlefield, wherever, God is with us.

([02:32](#)):

Anything we can do to extend his love and mercy to those who need us, it's a gift. It's a privilege. I always find, whenever I celebrate Mass for those incarcerated, to be a great privilege. To see how so many of them are each and every day persevering. Trying to keep their faith alive. To encourage one another in faith. When I celebrate this Mass, I always leave inspired. So many in the midst of what we would think, of course would be extremely challenging circumstances, filled with joy and hope still. It's an inspiration for me.

[\(03:18\)](#):

It's just a reminder for all of us if we're not able to visit those who are feeling alone or abandoned, but at least to be holding them close in our hearts and certainly in prayer.

Tom Shakely [\(03:26\)](#):

Yeah, that's wonderful, Bishop. I think especially those works of mercy that we can all do. My commute takes me right past an assisted living facility. You see that and you have that pull of the conscience, the whisper the spirit that says, "Stop in, visit."

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(03:42\)](#):

Exactly.

Tom Shakely [\(03:42\)](#):

So that's on our list of things to do now.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(03:44\)](#):

Exactly.

Tom Shakely [\(03:44\)](#):

We can all do that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(03:46\)](#):

Be an instrument of the Lord's healing presence to people who just... That visit or that phone call or that note, we never know how far that will go.

Tom Shakely [\(03:56\)](#):

Amen. Well, as you mentioned, Bishop, we certainly hope all those listening are experiencing a fruitful Advent. Of course, we're looking forward to Christmastime. Although, I guess technically we shouldn't say Merry Christmas yet. Although maybe when you're listening to this podcast it will be the time. But Bishop, you'll be celebrating two Masses at Christmas at the Cathedral of St. Thomas More, will you tell us about those?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(04:17\)](#):

Yeah, it's like all of our parishes, there's that early Mass where many families come. I think it's a convenient time, whether it's 4:00 or 5:00 at the cathedral. I think it's at 4:00.

Tom Shakely [\(04:31\)](#):

Oh, yes.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:32](#)):

It is 4:00, yeah. It's the family Mass, the children...it's for everyone, but so many families are there, and the children's choir is enhancing our prayer with their beautiful voices and joyful spirit and music. I know many of our pastors will tell us that that first Mass there of Christmas is very lively, very vibrant-

Tom Shakely ([04:55](#)):

All the energy.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:55](#)):

... You have the excitement. Yeah, all the energy. The excitement of the children. I always love doing that Mass in addition to the Mass at 10:00 or Masses at midnight. It's the same Mass, of course, but they're two different vibes in a sense. One is very... You just cannot help but to feel that excitement and the joy of the children. Jesus tells us to, "Be childlike." Because they have that spirit of innocence and joy that all of us should have. I love that Mass; I love seeing so many families together. It lifts my heart.

([05:35](#)):

As does the Mass later in the evening at night, very beautiful Mass. Again with our cathedral choir enhancing our prayer so beautifully and so reverently celebrated. I'll be at St. Ann's parish the next morning. So it's just great to be together on Christmas celebrating the birth of our Savior. Especially as we gather around the altar, to give thanks to God for his greatest gift, the gift of his son, Son of God, Son of Mary.

Tom Shakely ([06:08](#)):

I remember as a child the 10:00 P.M. or the midnight Masses, those were always, especially like you were mentioning, as a child, you feel something otherworldly about them. Because it's so out of the norm, first of all, on a practical level. But you feel that hush going into Christmas.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:24](#)):

You really do. I do wish, again, all of our families who are able to be together, especially going to Mass together, what a beautiful gift that is to be together. Not only around the table with our presents and meals, but around the table of the Lord, together as a family, as a holy family.

Tom Shakely ([06:44](#)):

Of course, this is the first Christmas in a few years that you'll be able to celebrate it at the Cathedral of St. Thomas More, that's got to be good, right?

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

It is nice being back in my home.

Tom Shakely ([06:51](#)):

Yes.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:54](#)):

In the home of our mother church.

Tom Shakely ([06:56](#)):

Also, for the first time we should mention, we will be livestreaming that 10:00 P.M. Christmas Eve Mass for all those locally who may not be able to be present in person. Or maybe if you're traveling and you want to tune in before going to Mass with your family. Or whatever your circumstances are on Christmas Day. You can tune into that livestream of the 10:00 P.M. Christmas Eve Mass.

([07:16](#)):

Well, Bishop, we have our annual report for the Diocese of Arlington. Some may have already received it online. Some may be receiving it in print right now as we're speaking. Or maybe you have it on your kitchen table and you should pick it up again. But it of course is distributed to all those who receive the Arlington Catholic Herald, the print newspaper. Again, it's on our website at [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org). But it captures this past year of 2024, in the words of one of our team members as, "A year like no other," for the diocese. I think that's really well said.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([07:51](#)):

No, it's very true, Tom, it is. I always like this practice of the annual report. This is our diocese. So to give this report to all the faithful in our diocese, of the life and the vibrancy of our diocese, of the statistics, of the information, of the initiatives. It keeps everyone not only updated, but hopefully involved in saying, "I can be part of this. I can be part of this by my contributions that allow so many ministries to be carried out. By volunteering. By assisting in my own parish. By my prayers," whatever, because we share in this work together.

([08:32](#)):

So the report of the diocese is a great way of capturing what we've been able to do in the past year. Of course, with the grace of God, we can't do anything without His grace. But also through the dedication, the goodness of our priests and religious and deacons and lay faithful. So whatever we report...and it's a vibrant document here.

Tom Shakely ([08:57](#)):

There's so much.

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

It really is, there's so much and great photos. It just reminds us the way you look back sometimes you forget, did we really actually do all this?

Tom Shakely ([09:05](#)):

Was that this year? Yeah, right.

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

It just shows you how much God is alive in our lives in our diocese. I agree with your team members saying, Of course, this was a unique year, our Jubilee Year. I was just so happy. It reminded me of that Jubilee family fest that we had in the summer, remember that? Then we had the beautiful dedication Mass of the cathedral and our pilgrimage to the shrine. All the course, the annual events with the ordinations and the March for Life. We had a unique pilgrimage to England. Our diocesan participation and the Synod of Synod, new priests being honors. The Chaplains to His Holiness. Then there's a lot of statistical information that sometimes I think is really helpful for the diocese by numbers.

Tom Shakely ([09:59](#)):

Yes, right, all those pie charts.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:00](#)):

It's good to see though. It shows you that we are a growing diocese. We are vibrant diocese. You look at the number of registered households continues to increase. Vocations, both to priesthood and religious life. Our deacons, our baptism, marriages, those entering the faith. So many great signs.

([10:22](#)):

Our strategic plan, and again, that's not sitting on a shelf. It's being worked on every day and implemented every day. We try to give reports to let people know, "This is what we identify after listening, as our priorities. Here's what we said we were going to do and here's what we are." It's an ongoing process both throughout the diocese, but also in each and every parish.

([10:44](#)):

In our financial statements. A bishop is guided by... Is entrusted with the resources of the diocese through the generosity of our people. But must be transparent and be a good steward. I am served very, very well by our Chief Financial Officer, Tim Cotnoir and his great team. A very gifted and talented finance council representing expertise and wisdom from around our diocese, lay faithful. Priests who are just really good at finances and contribute so well to the life and vibrancy of our diocese. We are accountable to the faithful. "Here's our resources, here's what you've given us, here's where we stand, here's our..." I can report, to summarize, that we're in very good financial stable situation here through the generosity.

Tom Shakely ([11:40](#)):

Thanks be to God.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([11:41](#)):

It's all so we can do God's work and do it as good stewards. So, I hope people... I think you'll enjoy the report, it's lively, it's just not a text. It's pictures and numbers. But anyone wants to know, "Where are we in the Diocese of Arlington?" This will show you with God's grace what we did this past year.

Tom Shakely ([11:59](#)):

Well, thank you, Bishop. Again, you can download that on our website if you want to take a look right now, we'll link to it in the show notes. You'll receive it if you receive the Arlington Catholic Herald.

([12:07](#)):

Well, Bishop, on January 5th, you're going to be celebrating the opening Mass for the Holy Year 2025. At the Cathedral of St. Thomas More, here in Arlington, at 11:00 A.M. Again, another special moment. Pope Francis is celebrating similar Masses; I think a number of Masses in Rome for the opening of the Holy Year around this time of year. Of course, our Diocese is marking the Holy Year, it's taking place throughout the Universal church. Can you share a bit with us about this Mass and what makes it distinct, so special?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([12:35](#)):

Yeah. As you mentioned, the Pope will be inaugurating our Holy Year. We do every 25 years, Jubilee Year. Our Holy Father will be inaugurating on Christmas Eve. As you mentioned, given Sundays going to

different churches in Rome. The Holy Father has asked bishops to be in their own cathedral with a formal ceremony. We will be doing it on January 5th where most people will be back in the diocese after the vacation time away.

[\(13:07\)](#):

It unites us, it reminds us we are part of a one holy Catholic, apostolic universal church. So we celebrate this Universal year together. As we know, the theme is Pilgrims of Hope. Our Holy Father is praying that this Jubilee is a Holy Year marked by the hope as St. Paul says, "That does not disappoint." Because it's not rooted in the empty promises of the world. But in a person, Jesus, Immanuel, Son of God, Son of Mary. Who is always with us, who brings us new life and invites us to share in the fullness of that life with him. So we'll open it on January 5th at the cathedral. It's a very formal rite, it's very beautiful. I hope people will be able to [inaudible 00:13:53]

Tom Shakely [\(13:53\)](#):

Really once-in-a-lifetime type of hope?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(13:54\)](#):

Yes. We will be livestreaming of course. There's a special gathering, an introduction rite. Opening prayer, proclamation of the gospel. Pilgrimage into the cathedral to remind us we are pilgrims of hope.

Tom Shakely [\(14:07\)](#):

That's beautiful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(14:08\)](#):

We walk together in procession to the entrance of the cathedral. This part is led by the Holy Year Cross and the cross has been used by the cathedral at the Passion Liturgy on Good Friday for many years. It will be used for veneration of the faithful during that liturgy. I take the cross, I hold it up for all to see and say a special invocation, "Hail cross of Christ, our only hope," isn't that beautiful?

Tom Shakely [\(14:31\)](#):

Wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(14:32\)](#):

"Hail cross of Christ, our only hope." Then that cross that is used will be displayed in the cathedral throughout the entire Holy Year for the veneration of the faithful. Because as Pope Francis teaches, Tom, "The content," he says, "Of the bread broken, is the cross of Jesus, his sacrifice of obedience out of love for the Father."

[\(14:53\)](#):

The next part of the entrance is commemoration of baptism, which includes the blessing of water and sprinkling rite.

Tom Shakely [\(14:58\)](#):

I love that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(14:59\)](#):

Then I go throughout the cathedral to sprinkle the people. Then the Eucharistic celebration begins. So it's going to be a beautiful celebration. It, again reminds us that we are indeed pilgrims of hope and pray God will be messengers and instruments of hope as well.

Tom Shakely ([15:16](#)):

Thank you very much, Bishop. We're looking forward to that. Again, as we mentioned, that'll be livestreamed as well for those who can't participate in person. Or who want to just look back on it, at [arlingtondiocese.org/events](http://arlingtondiocese.org/events), you can find it there. As well as all of the other good events coming up in the life of our diocesan community.

([15:33](#)):

Well, I should mention briefly, we talked about this in our last conversation, but I'll mention it again for those who may need to still get their tickets. We've got Life Fest coming up as a part of the National March for Life later in January. Mark your calendars, it takes place January 24th. Of course, the National March for Life—Life Fest—is a two-day event, 23rd and 24th. We're partnering here in the diocese with the Knights of Columbus and Sisters of Life. It's a two-day event that leads into the March for Life. For all those participating, it's got a night of praise, a morning rally that takes place just prior to heading over to Washington, the National Mall, for the March. Tickets, speaker information, all sorts of things about it are available at [lifefestrally.com](http://lifefestrally.com).

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:14](#)):

I encourage everyone to please consider participating in this beautiful celebration. Again, we also, especially the night before the march in our nation's capital, we've done this for years. Our youth ministry, youth office, welcoming pilgrims from around the country for that rally the night before. To be excited that we know and we're going to be offering witness for life in our nation's capital, peacefully and joyfully. Because we have the truth proclaiming the sacredness of all human life. Because it is God's gift as his children, his spirit living with us, gives us that inherent dignity and value and work that we must celebrate and protect.

([16:57](#)):

So the rally is a great night that our youth office runs. Priests are there for confession. There's beautiful adoration. As you mentioned, this year, the Mass, the next day we'll be joining with the Knights of Columbus and Sisters.

Tom Shakely ([17:09](#)):

Something to look forward to.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:10](#)):

Yeah. So it's not too early to start thinking about January as offering prayer witness and advocacy on behalf of all human life.

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

Well, Bishop, we've arrived, believe it or not, at our question from the faithful. We welcome questions all the time for Bishop Burbidge and Bishop responds in our conversations here. Email [info@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:info@arlingtondiocese.org). Or reach out to us on Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, wherever you can find the diocese, you can reach out.

[\(17:37\)](#):

Here's today's question; "I heard at Mass that Pope Francis declared 2025 as a Jubilee Year for the whole church. I remember the Jubilee in 2000 fondly. I traveled to Rome that year on pilgrimage for it. But I cannot travel overseas this time and I imagine there are others in my situation. How can I mark the year to come? "

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(17:56\)](#):

This question makes my day! It means we're talking about it. Is announcing the parish that people are aware of what is coming up. So yeah, making a pilgrimage to Rome, we have, I know, some parishes, youth groups, college campus ministries, some of them making their way to Rome. What a great gift that is. But of course not everyone can do that. So that's why our Holy Father is encouraging us to participate locally across our diocese.

[\(18:21\)](#):

We are inviting, I hope we continue to promote this, all people to participate in a Holy Year tour. Jubilee Year tour, marking pious visits to eight churches. Which are on our Holy Year site in our diocese. Which is a great site that we're keeping people updated on the progress. They're listed on the site. We're trying to spread these sites out throughout the diocese so people can make a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is not always meant to be the most convenient, it makes us travel.

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

So I think we have our diocese well represented. Those sites in our diocese, of course, are the Cathedral of St. Thomas More, Arlington. The Basilica of St. Mary's in Alexandria. Corpus Christi in Aldie. Our Lady of Hope in Potomac Falls. St. John Bosco in Woodstock. St. John the Evangelist, Warrenton. St. Paul in Hague. St. Patrick in Fredericksburg. So these are designated churches in a way to make intentional time for prayer and growth.

[\(19:18\)](#):

Also, you obtain a plenary indulgence. So that's all on the website. I don't mean to rattle that off so quickly, but it would be great-

Tom Shakely [\(19:24\)](#):

Good to know.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:25\)](#):

... for people to refer to that.

Tom Shakely [\(19:26\)](#):

That's a wonderful thing. To be able to do this locally, these eight pious visits that we can make as a part of this Holy Year tour, I love that. Saves me some airfare too, thanks, Bishop. Well, all information about our Holy Year 2025, as you mentioned, Bishop, is available at [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org). We'll link to that in the show notes, that particular Holy Year page that you can bookmark throughout the year as events are added and updated. Of course, as we'll talk more about some of those keystone moments in the year to come.

[\(19:55\)](#):

But Bishop, this is great. I feel kind of a whirlwind as we head toward Christmas, still in the season of Advent. Thanks very much for your time. Do you have any final thoughts for us?

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

Well, sure. This is literally a week, I think we're recording this a week from Christmas. So it is a wonderful time to me to wish sincerely, all of our listeners and all the faithful in this beautiful, vibrant diocese, abundant blessings in these final days of preparation.

([20:24](#)):

Especially at Christmas and throughout the Christmas season, that we will come to know the peace that only Christ can give us. I know we're all longing for that in our own lives. We all experience so much distress and anxiety and busyness and so many pressures. We so much want peace in our nation and throughout our world, especially. That peace is only found in relationship with the Lord, following his ways, his commands. Doing what he asks, that's what leads to peace. So I am praying for that precious gift for all of our faithful, especially at this very holy and sacred season. Pray God that we can be instruments of that same gift, the gift of his peace to others, especially those who need us the most.

([21:10](#)):

So although Father Weston, our liturgical director, may be upset at me for saying this, I'm also going to wish everyone a Merry Christmas. A time that you are together as a holy and happy family and with all those you love. Many blessings of the Christ Child be yours. Most especially the gift of his peace. As continue as we are pilgrims of hope and walk humbly with our God.

([21:36](#)):

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