

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

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:21](#)):

Thank you, Tom. Great to be back on our first podcast of the New Year, so I hope everyone enjoyed the blessings of the Christmas season and that the new year is filled with the peace that only Christ can give, my prayer for all of our faithful and their families and so many blessings to everyone, and I began the new year with a retreat with my brother bishops.

Tom Shakely ([00:47](#)):

Oh, that's beautiful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:48](#)):

It really was. It's a perfect way to begin the new year. It's wonderful to be with brother bishops, not for a meeting, but simply to pray together, and there's such unity in fraternity. I always say I wish the faithful could see how well the bishops support each other and encourage each other, time for quiet, and I certainly brought with me the intentions of our diocese.

Tom Shakely ([01:14](#)):

That's a beautiful reminder too for what we should all be doing as Christian brothers and sisters and as families.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:19](#)):

That's right.

Tom Shakely ([01:19](#)):

Even if we're not going on retreat, I guess especially important now, Bishop, because you've seen, I know it's affected some people locally in terms of family or friends or other relations, but the recent tragedies, both in New Orleans over New Year's and of course the recent fires devastating in Southern California.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:36](#)):

Yeah, devastating. Really devastating to see the horrific act of violence in New Orleans. And so sad to see the fires in Los Angeles and the loss of life, people suffering, people losing things that are so dear to them. And as you watch the news, at least when I watch the news, there's a sense of feeling helpless like this is happening right in our own country, and it's so devastating.

([02:06](#)):

But you're reminded, we are reminded, that there is something we can do, and it is, and it's not a trite thing. It's a powerful thing to entrust, to bring all those going through these experiences so sadly to

prayer. We saw in the gospel even today that the disciples brought those who were suffering to Jesus. That's what we can do in prayer. That's the power of prayer. We can bring others to Jesus. And so we entrust all those of these horrific acts who are experienced and are going through it now to his healing power, the one who promises, and this is where our hope is. He promises to turn suffering to glory and even death to life, and so we renew our faith. We ask for that faith as we bring our brothers and sisters, both in New Orleans and in California to the Lord.

Tom Shakely ([03:07](#)):

Thanks be to God, Bishop.

([03:08](#)):

Well, as we bid farewell to the Christmas season, as you mentioned, we're turning our hearts to what lies ahead in this Holy Year of 2025. And so I know, Bishop, you recently celebrated our opening mass for the Holy Year. This is the church's universal jubilee that Pope Francis announced some time ago. This opening mass here in the Diocese of Arlington occurred as many listeners probably know because the cathedral I think was full on January 5th, and so this is a time for connection with our faith, renewed connection, time to seek spiritual renewal and to see how we might fill our new year truly with hope.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:48](#)):

Exactly. And we were. It was beautiful to see our mother church filled with people from all around the diocese together. We were united as a local church, the Diocese of Arlington. But really in that beautiful ceremony, we were united with the universal church and our Holy Father because our Holy Father had asked all the bishops to inaugurate in their own diocese this jubilee year, so we were very much united with our Holy Father, the universal church, beautiful theme for this jubilee year, the Pilgrims of Hope, reminding us that we are pilgrims, that this life here on earth is a journey, and along the way we discover the hope, as St. Paul says, that does not disappoint.

([04:34](#)):

And so I was saying in the homily, what is that hope? Sometimes we don't think about that as Catholics. We pray, "Lord, increase my faith." But we should also pray, "Lord, increase my hope." But what is that theological virtue of hope? It is, as the Holy Father is teaching so clearly, it's not just optimism or positive attitude or a dream. Not that those things are bad, but that's not the theological virtue of hope. Hope is not rooted in empty promises of the world, but in a person, the person of Jesus Christ, the son of God, the Son of Mary, who, as we just said, came to bring us life, who has by his own birth and life and death and resurrection has transformed darkness to light, suffering to glory, death to life. In Him rests our hope. And he never disappoints because he's ever faithful to his promises.

([05:33](#)):

So I encourage that during this jubilee year for our faithful to try to make it different. And we only do this every 25 years as a church.

Tom Shakely ([05:40](#)):

It's incredible actually.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:41](#)):

Yeah, make it special. Yeah, make it special. We were asked to carry a cross, a jubilee cross, in procession as we opened our mass in the cathedral. That cross, which was blessed, will be in the cathedral throughout the entire jubilee year, right in front of the ambo, the word of God. So focus on

that cross, unite our sufferings to the Lord knowing that he's never far from us, especially in our time of need. And we also, I've encouraged all the faithful to make a pilgrimage, to make a pious visit to the parishes that our Holy Father said, each bishop should designate parishes in the diocese as Holy Year sites where you can go make a visit, gain a plenary indulgence, and in a practical way get to see part of the diocese you've never seen.

[\(06:32\)](#):

Because the churches that have been designated are deliberately chosen because we wanted them in various regions of the diocese. So just real quickly, the Cathedral of St. Thomas More, Basilica of St. Mary, Corpus Christi, our Lady of Hope, of course, St. John Bosco, St. John the Evangelist, St. Paul Mission, and St. Patrick. And so remember the words as you make these pilgrimages, as Pope Francis tells us, "With Jesus, joy flourishes. With Him, Life changes for the better. And with him hope does not disappoint."

Tom Shakely [\(07:06\)](#):

So beautiful. Bishop, thank you very much. We'll link of course to in the show notes for this episode for how you can make this pilgrimage around the diocese. And I appreciate it too, Bishop, at the end of that opening mass for the Holy Year at the Cathedral St. Thomas More, you held up this beautiful holy card, which is going to be available throughout the diocese at our parishes, and it's got an image of our Lady of Hope from Our Lady of Hope Parish.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(07:29\)](#):

Yeah, it does.

Tom Shakely [\(07:29\)](#):

A local parishioner, Martha Cammack. That's a really beautiful thing.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(07:33\)](#):

It's a beautiful image, and that's made available throughout the diocese.

Tom Shakely [\(07:37\)](#):

Well, Bishop, we also should mention, I guess this is the perfect opportunity to mention that we've got a new feature that's going to be coming to the Walk Humbly Podcast this year as a part of our A Year of Hope. We're going to invite our listeners, all the faithful, to share their messages of hope during the Holy Year. So we encourage listeners to call in. We have a special number set up, (703) 778-9100. Again, (703) 778-9100. And we'll link to that in the show notes. You can call that number anytime of the day or night when inspiration strikes to share your words, your stories, your testimony of hope with us. And throughout the year, we will be checking that number, checking our voicemail, and we'll feature hopeful messages in forthcoming episodes of our podcast with the idea that together we can inspire and encourage one another through both the good and the bad, through times of celebration and hardship.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(08:37\)](#):

I was very excited, Tom, when you and your team mentioned this idea to me because we know we believe the Lord's promises, which I just emphasize, but he reveals that those promises are true, and there's signs of hope around us every single day. There's reasons for us to be encouraged, but we need

to hear and hear those stories and witnesses, and I'm really grateful for this opportunity and encourage anyone who has such a story to share to please do so. You might give me some homily material too.

Tom Shakely ([09:13](#)):

A service to the church.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([09:14](#)):

Yes.

Tom Shakely ([09:15](#)):

Well, Bishop, in other local news, we of course have some exciting news in our neighboring Archdiocese of Washington, a new Cardinal, Cardinal Robert McElroy.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([09:24](#)):

Yes, that news was announced recently with Cardinal Gregory's retirement letter being accepted. He will serve as administrator until the new Cardinal is installed, but we do welcome, as a neighbor, Cardinal McElroy, and we share the Diocese of Arlington and Washington, we share a major media market. And so there's opportunities for us at times, even though we're two different diocese, but there are opportunities for us to work together, especially as we proclaim the Lord and his gospel, as we proclaim all that is true and just and holy. And so I look forward to collaborating with any opportunities that we have to do, so it's a big ask from the Holy Father to the Cardinal, so we're grateful to his yes.

([10:22](#)):

I think he's 70 years of age, so that's the time that most people are retiring, and he's embracing on a new mission. So we thank him for his yes. And also coming to a different part of the country, his whole priesthood and ministry has been on the West Coast, so it's a big yes. And it comes at a time with a new administration in our own country as we pray for the new President and those who will be leading our country. But it's a reminder, it's always a reminder that it's always the Lord's church. He sends different people to different places at different times, at different seasons, but it's always the Lord's. Same thing with our country. It's always one nation under God. Those things don't change. And as particular moments in time, people have the privilege of serving as leaders. We entrust them to the Lord, and we pray that they will rely on him and his wisdom and the grace that he offers.

Tom Shakely ([11:28](#)):

That's a beautiful message and a challenge I think to all elected officials, but particularly I guess to President Trump incoming in just a few days and Vice President JD Vance.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([11:37](#)):

We pray for every presidential administration. We want them to be successful for the good of our country as we promote peace and justice.

Tom Shakely ([11:46](#)):

Well, on that note of peace and justice, of course, we've got also days away, just shortly after the inauguration of President Trump, Life Fest happening in the Diocese of Arlington as a part of our National March for Life activities, so we've talked about this. We talked about this just before Christmas, but now that we're so close, we should do it again.

[\(12:08\)](#):

The Diocese is participating in the national March for Life, of course, as it always does. The folks from all sorts of schools and parishes and communities will be in Washington to witness to life, but there are also some incredible opportunities to stand together, to come together as a community because just marching down Constitution Avenue or whatever, especially on a cold day, not always the most conducive to community, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(12:32\)](#):

That's true.

Tom Shakely [\(12:32\)](#):

To in-depth relationships. And I think that's what makes Life Fest so exciting. It features a day of prayer, fellowship, and celebration that bring us together to proclaim the sanctity of life throughout all stages of life. So Bishop, can you tell us a little bit about the significance of Life Fest, what you're excited for?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(12:48\)](#):

Yeah. As I often say, as we are sent to be witnesses to the gospel of life, I always emphasize that there are three ways we do so, through prayer, most especially, through witness, our public witness, bringing our faith to the public arena, and through advocacy, engaging with our elected officials. We know that every voice, every voice, every vote, everything matters. And so when you mention these opportunities, Tom, they all give us a chance to do all three, prayer, witness, and advocacy.

[\(13:18\)](#):

Life Fest is a dynamic two-day pro-life event at the Eagle Bank Arena. When I go to that arena and just see young people on fire for the gospel of life, it is just so inspiring. We'll be working this year, the Mass, with the Sisters of Life and the Knights of Columbus. We host people from across the country who come to participate for a March for Life. I'm told that attendees will also have the opportunity to venerate first-class relics this year of Pope John Paul II, among others. And so these two gatherings, the march in our nation's capital, which we do peacefully and joyfully because we have the truth, are just great day for prayer and witness, and also the pro-life, the Virginia Pro-Life Day is a great day for advocacy.

Tom Shakely [\(14:15\)](#):

That's right. That's right. Yeah. The Virginia Pro-Life Day is happening just the week after the March for Life is in Washington DC. It's on January 29th. It will be taking place, of course, in Richmond. This is a part of the general, I think, post-Dobbs movement. These have been happening in some senses before the Dobbs decision a few years ago from the Supreme Court, but especially since then when so much energy and action is now on state houses, state capitals, governors, and elected representatives at the state level. It's a special day when people can come together again for prayer, reflection, and action as we stand united in our commitment today to meet maybe your elected representatives.

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

It takes a special kind of courage to go into those offices and to think ahead of time, crucially, to think, "What am I going to say? Well, how am I going to witness? What am I going to testify to and what am I going to do? Can I do it in a way that moves hearts and conveys love?" But you'll be on the ground, Bishop.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(15:09\)](#):

Yeah, absolutely. And it's wonderful. I mean, just hearing stories from last year of our young people, even our high school students, going into office of legislators. Sometimes they tell me they were warmly welcome, and other times they were not, but they stayed strong, respectful, always respectful. They stayed strong. I was so proud of them. But we know for a fact that those visits, those voices count. They matter, and it does take courage. But what a powerful witness. So thank you for encouraging everyone, Tom, to participate if at all possible.

Tom Shakely ([15:44](#)):

Yes, absolutely, Bishop. And of course, we've also got an amazing thing happening. Bishop Thomas recently, who's the new chairman, your successor, is Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life activities. He and the committee issued a notice of a wonderful new initiative that invites people to come together in prayer. It's called Nine Days for Life. It's a special novena for the protection of human life. And it's taking place this Thursday, January 16, through Friday, January 24th. You can visit ninedaysforlife.com and by going there to that website, signing up, you'll get the daily prayers, the reflections, and more by your choice of either email or text. And so it's very easy way to participate in the novena.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:28](#)):

And I've heard from people over the years who have done, and they just say, not only does it help to bring me peace as I try to do my part to witness to life, but also knowing that I'm helping others through this prayer, a powerful way to entrust those to be born to the Lord and those mothers and fathers. And it's a beautiful novena, and again, for a wonderful way for us to be united. Thanks for mentioning that as well.

Tom Shakely ([17:00](#)):

Yes.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:01](#)):

So we have lots of opportunities here.

Tom Shakely ([17:03](#)):

It's a wonderful thing. Yeah. Well, gosh, the end of January, can't believe we're already looking toward the end of January, but end of January means Catholic Schools Week. So right before Virginia Pro-Life Day in Richmond is the start of Catholic Schools Week, January 26th to February 1st. It's an annual celebration highlighting the significant role of Catholic education in nurturing faith and academic excellence and service. And in the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, it's going to be observed with some special activities and events that showcase our unique life and contributions.

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

Yeah, so I'm very, very proud of our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Arlington, and I consider them to be a treasure in our diocese. They're only possible, first of all, through parents who see the value of Catholic schools and make the sacrifices to allow their children to attend Catholic schools. And of course, only possible through the dedication and faithful service of our Catholic educators who believe so much that it is important every day for a child to learn about the faith, to grow closer to Jesus, to be surrounded every day by religious symbols, to pause for a day for mass or a Bible service or prayer.

[\(18:26\)](#):

And our educators, Catholic educators know that we have a privilege of assisting parents, the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. So our Catholic schools are doing a great, great job. We focus on spiritual growth, formation of the human person, and academic excellence. Just real quickly, the diocese comprises 37 K-8 parish schools, 4 diocesan Catholic high schools, 4 independent Catholic schools, and five freestanding preschools totaling 50 educational institutions. The schools serve more than 18,300 students, Tom, providing education rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. So as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we thank the Lord for all those who make them impossible.

Tom Shakely [\(19:13\)](#):

All right, Bishop, well, we have a question from the faithful for you today. As listeners will know, we always welcome questions for Bishop Burbidge, and we have a special time in each episode for those questions. They can be emailed to info@ArlingtonDiocese.org where you can reach out to us on any of the social networks, Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn with your question.

[\(19:35\)](#):

So today's question comes from a listener who writes, "Traveling the diocese to visit designated churches for indulgences isn't possible for me. With no means of transportation and living in an assisted living facility, how can I actively participate and receive indulgences? I have TV and internet. Please help me gain the holiness of the Holy Year if possible."

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(19:59\)](#):

Yeah, that's a beautiful question because the indulgence is open to all, even those who are unable to make such visits or pilgrimages, so I'm really glad for that question. Our church reminds us that a plenary indulgence may be obtained during the upcoming whole year by other ways, by performing a work of mercy and penance, so there's many ways to obtain indulgence, participation in the missions and spiritual exercises, all those kinds of things.

[\(20:32\)](#):

But also through the spirit of penance, one can gain an indulgence. I refer our listeners and the person who asked the question to the penitential nature of a Friday. What a beautiful day to rediscover through abstaining, at least for one day of the week, from our distractions, maybe even offering up, not offering meat or not having my favorite snack that day or whatever. There's many ways of fasting, fasting from social media even, supporting a religious or social nature in defense of life. We can do that through our prayers, through our generosity, and also can be obtained, the indulgence, by dedicating our time to voluntary activities that are service to the community, even someone living in an assisted living facility. So many opportunities to visit, to console, to comfort, and to offer that to the Lord as a work of charity, so these indulgences are offered to everyone, no matter their ability to travel or not.

Tom Shakely [\(21:41\)](#):

Thank you so much, Bishop. That's really encouraging. Any final thoughts for us today? We've covered so much ground.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(21:46\)](#):

I know. There's lot there out there. Well, it's a new year, lots of to be excited about. But don't forget, it's the Jubilee year, and let's make it special, let's make it unique. And I'm praying for all of our listeners that as you travel through this Jubilee year, you will do so in joyful hope, in joyful hope of the Lord's

faithfulness and his promises, the promises that never disappoint. So let's travel through this Jubilee year together as we walk humbly with our God.

[\(22:13\)](#):

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