

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, and I'm joined of course by our host, Bishop Michael Burbidge.

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

How are you, Tom? Great to be with you and our listeners today. Hope everyone's doing well.

Tom Shakely ([00:24](#)):

Yes, indeed. Bishop, before we dive into a lot of good conversation today, no doubt. As listeners will know, I think, most listeners at least will have heard that Pope Francis has spent much of this week in Rome in the hospital. What can we do?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:39](#)):

Well, certainly I've asked everyone to be united in prayer. Of course, that's the most special gift that we can give when someone is in need and suffering. Entrust them to the Lord's healing love, asking God to keep our Holy Father, to keep anyone who's suffering strong in body and spirit, giving them patience and grace. I know the Holy Father has already conveyed to all the faithful, how much he appreciates those prayers and what a comfort they are to them.

([01:12](#)):

And as we record this podcast this morning, there's some good news, that the Holy Father seems to be improving. So, thank the good Lord for that, but it's also a reminder how often we say to people, "I'm praying for you." And they are powerful words if we follow that, if we keep the promise. And sometimes you don't realize the power of those prayers, and I'm sure our listeners like myself could identify with this, until you're the recipient of it. And when you're suffering or you're going through a difficult time and all these people tell you they're praying for you, well, I think they really are because feeling a strength that I didn't think I would have or the ability to endure this. So, just a reminder for all of us, it's a beautiful thing to say, "I'll keep you in my prayers, I'll pray for you," but it's a promise we really need to keep.

Tom Shakely ([02:03](#)):

That's beautiful. Yeah, thank you, Bishop. Yeah, may we keep the Holy Father in our prayers in the days to come.

([02:09](#)):

Well, on maybe perhaps a slightly happier note, Bishop, I got to offer you congratulations of course, your Philadelphia Eagles on their Super Bowl victory. What an incredible victory.

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

That was an incredible victory. That was an incredible victory. I don't think anyone predicted the type of game it turned out to be and what the score would be. I got more nervous.

Tom Shakely ([02:29](#)):

I couldn't believe it.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:30](#)):

I know, and I got more nervous watching the pregame and the anchors or the sportscasters. It's going to be a close game, and then they start making their picks and most of them pick the Chiefs. I'm like, oh, I was feeling confident until now. But after seeing the dominating performance, especially on defense, I don't think anyone could have seen that. So, I was able to watch the game with family. And all my family, as you know, are in Philly, so I was able to watch it with Eagles fans because I did get the sense, Tom, to be honest, not everyone here, especially my wonderful priests who are... I didn't get the sense they-

Tom Shakely ([03:12](#)):

They might have another allegiance, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:13](#)):

That they were sharing my joy. I just didn't get that sense, and providentially was already scheduled that I was to be in Philadelphia, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary the next day. So, I picked a good time to be in Philly, and-

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

That's God's timing, I think.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:28](#)):

Yeah, so it was good. It was a fun day. I'm sure, but now everyone begins zero and zero and a whole new season will soon begin.

Tom Shakely ([03:37](#)):

That's right, that's right. And now you look back to the fundamentals.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:40](#)):

Right.

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

All right, well, another kind of a joyful thing to discuss here is the recent 2025 Catholic Charities Ball that took place earlier this month. Of course, this is an annual event that's important in the life of our diocese. Many will be familiar with it, even if maybe you haven't attended yet. The generosity of this diocesan community was on full display, a record-breaking 1.7 million plus was raised that night. So, I guess Bishop, first of all, congratulations on such a successful ball. What were your thoughts as the final total was announced and from the evening?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:16](#)):

Well, I think you said it very nicely. It was a beautiful evening of faith and generosity and community. The diocese came together, people from all parts of the diocese in a joyful spirit, because that's what

charity brings. When we serve others, we find joy. And that whole ball was to allow us to serve others and thus the joy in the room, but just the joy of being together. And it was rooted in faith and prayer, and trusting all of our work to the Lord. So it was really a very, very good evening. I appreciate it, and I'm so grateful. It is a lot of work. We have the Catholic Charities Ball Ladies, they refer to themselves as, plus the wonderful team in Catholic Charities, the staff, the volunteers, it takes a lot to pull that off, it's a lot of hard work. And so I really want to express gratitude for all those who work behind the scenes to pull off this successful event.

[\(05:18\)](#):

As you mentioned, we went over our goal, but the number you gave Tom, it's just not a number. It represents real tangible hope for families struggling with housing, for children in need of counseling and nourishment, for individuals seeking guidance and support, for those who lack basic necessities in life. So, every dollar raise will go directly towards Catholic Charities Ministries, and I think that's why the gala is so successful, because everyone knows that all this money raised will go to ministry, allowing the great team of Catholic Charities to carry out these corporal and these spiritual works of mercy to our brothers and sisters and most need. So, well done everyone.

Tom Shakely [\(06:09\)](#):

That's beautiful. Yeah, we'll link to some photos of the ball in the show notes here, and also to the Catholic Charities website because if you haven't been, especially if you haven't been, keep an eye on next year.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(06:22\)](#):

Yeah, sure, sure.

Tom Shakely [\(06:24\)](#):

Well, Bishop, you mentioned just a few minutes ago that you were providentially in Philadelphia for your St. Charles Borromeo Seminary visit. Let's talk about that a little bit more. Why are bishops visiting seminaries?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(06:37\)](#):

Yeah, it's one of the great privileges and joys of my ministry is to walk with our seminarians who are in formation, to accompany them, to support them, to challenge them, to encourage them. We currently use three seminaries traditionally, and we continue. We send our seminarians to Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, St. Charles Seminary in Philadelphia, and also to St. John Paul's II Seminary right in Washington. They are for the men who still have not completed their college degree who will also attend classes at Catholic youth.

[\(07:16\)](#):

So, we have three seminaries, and throughout the year I make a pastoral visit where I can be within the community. So I get to see all the seminaries, not just those from our diocese, but I will meet a half hour with each individual seminarian to see how their progress is going with human formation and spiritual formation, intellectual formation, pastoral formation. And because God willing, one day, if I call them forth for holy orders upon the recommendation of their advisors, I know my spiritual sons. I know who I'm ordaining.

Tom Shakely [\(07:57\)](#):

That's beautiful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([07:57](#)):

And it's a very high priority for me and really for the bishops I know that really, we know our seminarians, we know them well. And again, we're there as a spiritual father. So like any father, we'll support them, we'll encourage them. We'll challenge them, we'll correct them. And that's what the seminarians want, they want the bar to be high and because they want to be good, the good and holy priest that the church needs and deserves.

([08:28](#)):

So, but you know what? The Pope Francis during his Jubilee year says, "Look for signs of hope." Well, I'll tell you, Tom, every time I visit a seminary, I wish I could bring all the faithful with me, just because if you want hope for the church both now and for the future, you have to see these men in formation. The Lord is blessing his church with future priests who are, I believe, are going to be such a great gift to our church, and they already are our gifts. So thank you, dear friends, for praying for our seminarians, for those in formation for religious life as well, and for fostering vocations.

([09:06](#)):

Pray for vocations and not just sometimes we pray for vocations in general terms, pray for vocations in your family, your children, your grandchildren.

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

The people you know, right? This isn't an abstraction.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([09:18](#)):

Exactly. Yeah, sometimes I tease people, I'll say, "Yeah, I bet you weren't praying for vocation." I say, "Yeah, but I want them from your family. I want your grandchild, your son. Oh, okay, we'll see."

Tom Shakely ([09:26](#)):

That's that beautiful universal call to holiness, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([09:28](#)):

That's right.

Tom Shakely ([09:28](#)):

It's the challenging thing. You realize, wait to get to heaven, that means I have become like a saint? Oh.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([09:35](#)):

That's true.

Tom Shakely ([09:37](#)):

All right, well Bishop, I guess on that note, we're rapidly, incredibly approaching the season of Lent, and so it's a good time to highlight an important initiative that's been a good source of grace for many here in the diocese, as well as in our partner Archdiocese of Washington. Of course, that's The Light Is On For You. This is a campaign where in the Diocese of Arlington, throughout Lent, you'll be able to visit any of our churches for confession on Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8:00 PM. And so those specific Wednesdays,

we'll list this in the show notes as well, but those specific dates are March 12th, March 19th, March 26th, and April 2nd and 9th. As I mentioned, it's a joint campaign of the Archdiocese of Washington, Diocese of Arlington. Bishop, why is this so important? Why is the church inviting all of us back this Lent in this way?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:32](#)):

Sure, because Lent is a time of prayer and penance, charity, charitable works. A time of heightening our response to the ongoing call to conversion. We begin Lent by being reminded of the reality that we are sinners, we're all sinners. And we need God's mercy and we need God's love, which are infinite, which are always available to us. Lent, it's a special time to embrace those gifts in our lives.

([11:02](#)):

In our diocese, it is amazing, and I've noticed this from the moment I arrived here. It is amazing to me to see the generosity and availability of our priests for the celebration of the sacrament of penance, reconciliation. I'm amazed at the number of evenings, the number of days that confessions are heard in our diocese. So, guess what happens? Our priests preach about the need for the sacrament and they make themselves available at all different days and times to accommodate the schedules of our people, so the sacrament's available.

([11:42](#)):

There was a time, and maybe there still is in other places, where our confessions will be Saturday 3:00 to 4:00.

Tom Shakely ([11:50](#)):

[inaudible 00:11:52].

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([11:51](#)):

And that's it. Well, that's really difficult for people. So our priests say, "No, we're going to listen to our people. When are the most convenient times and they're so available?" So, that's wonderful but during Lent, we even become more specific. We say to not those who are availing themselves, only those availing themselves currently with the sacrament, but to those who've been maybe away from the church, that this is a beautiful invitation for the Lord to come back. There is no sin. There is no sin for those who are contrite and want to begin anew greater than God's love and mercy. There is no sin greater than God's love and mercy.

([12:32](#)):

And so we want every person to know, from 6:30 to 8:00 on those dates that you mentioned, they can go to any church. It doesn't even have to be their home parish. They can go to any church they want and there will be a priest there to celebrate God's mercy with them. And so I invite all to accept this invitation and maybe dear friends for loved ones and family members and friends that you know have been away from the church, maybe there's just a real gentle, gentle, soft way of just reminding them of this opportunity. And again, what a beautiful way to prepare ourselves for the celebration of Easter.

Tom Shakely ([13:11](#)):

Well, thank you so much, Bishop. Yeah, there's that great quote from Father Mike Schmitz, which some might be familiar with. The idea is he says, "Confession is a place of victory," and I think that speaks to what you just outlined for us about its great value and importance. Of course, we here at the Diocese of Arlington will be releasing basically guides, videos during Lent that should be helpful as we're going

through the season. So, if you're not already subscribed to our YouTube channel, that's worth doing. You can also visit TheLightison.org for more information, as well as information about those dates and times.

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

Right, yeah. Recently, we all need the sacrament because we're all sinners. Recently I celebrated, I went to confession and went into the chapel and it was a good timing because the door was open and the priest was there. There wasn't even a line or anything. And I thought later that night of what a beautiful image that was. That that door was wide open for me to walk in and there's an instrument, the priest and the person of Christ forgiving sins, allowing us to begin anew. And I want everyone in the diocese to know that's what this campaign is all about, the door is wide open.

Tom Shakely ([14:37](#)):

Well, Bishop, let's segue into Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. This year, Ash Wednesday falls on March 5th, and-

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:46](#)):

I thought you were going to say it fell on a Wednesday or something.

Tom Shakely ([14:49](#)):

I think it does. And it marks of course the whole season of Lent, 40 days of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that leads up to Easter. And this is of course some, their favorite time of year is Christmas, others is Easter, as a Christian. Easter is, it's the big deal. That's the moment of Christ's resurrection and his triumph. Can you remind us though, Bishop, as we head toward that, some of the important aspects of both Ash Wednesday and Lent?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:21](#)):

Yeah. Ash Wednesday is a very solemn day, it's a powerful reminder. Even just the words we hear as we receive the ashes, remember, you're dust and to dust you shall return. Just a powerful reminder of our mortality, our humility, our need for God's mercy. That this life is very fragile and each day is a gift, and we don't know how long God's going to give us. And so we always must be ready and prepared for that new life that God is calling us to. It's His life with Him in heaven. So we're reminded of our mortality, we're reminded of the call to turn away from sin and to live the gospel, and to draw closer to Christ. And what wonderful tools, they're time tested, that they work. Every saint talks about them, the time tested tools that Lent will give to us. The need for prayer, right? Prayer, strengthening our relationship with God, allowing time to be with Him.

([16:21](#)):

Maybe one of the things people can give up a little bit is the things that keep you from prayer. And certainly, we all go to our social media and use of that. Maybe just to lessen that a little bit and fill that time with prayer. Fasting, saying that the things of this world will never satisfy our hunger and thirst. Fasting reminds us that that's only in Christ and almsgiving. So many opportunities throughout Lent to share our gifts, our resources with those in need, knowing that whatever we do for them, we do for Christ himself. So, just an invitation for renewal, a renewal to participate more fully in the lifelong call to conversion, which a call we all receive, turn away from sin, and be faithful to the gospel.

Tom Shakely ([17:12](#)):

Well, and Bishop, you're also of course going to be blessing the rice bowls at that Ash Wednesday mass that you're going to celebrate at the Cathedral of St. Thomas More. But there's also a larger CRS Rice Bowl campaign during Lent, and I know our diocese is going to participate in that, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:27](#)):

Yeah, I'm sure many of us remember Rice Bowls from our days as children. I do, as part of our school activities. It's a great opportunity to assist those in need. It's all about local, national, international assistance. With the recent elimination of some federal funds supporting the work of CRS and groups like it, this need is more necessary than ever. We're seeing, I'm hearing from our Catholic Charities team, the need for direct increased financial support is so essential for our times. And the date to plan is Sunday, March 30, 2025, all parishes will have a second collection for the CRS Rice Bowl campaign.

Tom Shakely ([18:19](#)):

And there are also, if you want to go ahead and make a gift earlier than that, directly to that collection, you can do that through the USCCB. They've got information on their website about how to give to the CRS collection. But yeah, it's an amazing thing when I think sometimes people can give into kind of a, we talked about hope. Some people can give into a hopelessness and think, what is my gift going to do? I can only give \$5 or \$10, maybe. Or they think, is this really going to benefit those in need? Is it going to go to some national group, some international group? And it's, when you give to the CRS Rice Bowl campaign, you know that the money's being well stewarded and being thoughtfully distributed. As you mentioned, Bishop, I mean, the local needs especially, we see them in our communities.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:08](#)):

Yes, for sure.

Tom Shakely ([19:09](#)):

And so you can look around and see the impact.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:12](#)):

And the Lord, how often did the Lord show us in the gospel that nothing's too small? Give me your loaves, give me your fish, I will multiply it, he promises in ways you can't imagine.

Tom Shakely ([19:21](#)):

Amen. Well, Bishop, you mentioned as we talked about the changes to policy concerning Catholic Relief Services, kind of in passing in the changing administrative policies. A recent policy change from the White House, the executive branch took place earlier this week when President Trump signed an executive order whose title was, "Expanding Access to In Vitro Fertilization." I know you just issued your pastoral letter on this topic of IVF last month, Bishop. We spoke about it and about the challenging aspect even of communicating about this topic on the podcast just recently. What do you make of President Trump's decision to sign this executive order?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:07](#)):

Yeah, I mean, I think it's a disappointing, unnecessary action from the White House. As I've said previously, Tom, the church proclaims the dignity of all persons and affirms that truth, that every child is a gift from God, regardless of the circumstances of their conception. The church also observes that IVF,

as I outlined in my pastoral letter, has, involves serious moral injustices. And I do ask everyone if they have a chance, to read that in its entirety.

[\(20:40\)](#):

So expanding access, which was in the title of the executive order to IVF as described, will promote IVF in a way that will result serious evils, including the abandonment or death of millions of embryonic human persons, involving all taxpayers with a serious moral injustice, providing federal subsidies for already lucrative IVF businesses, and ignoring the risks to parents and children of America's broadly unregulated IVF industry. And in practice, in principle, IVF is incompatible with the president's stated desire for a truly better culture of family formation. And I speak about that in my past letter as well. As we look at the gift of life and how we cannot talk about that precious gift unless we also talk about the gift of married love and the union of husband and wife.

[\(21:36\)](#):

But there's a lot of good that can be done. This is what we're trying to say. Elected officials should consider concrete ways to encourage earlier marriage and family formation. What are we doing to help-

Tom Shakely [\(21:45\)](#):

Address the elephant in the room, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(21:47\)](#):

Yeah, yeah, let's get ahead of this, let's go right to the beginning. Establish programs to address direct pregnancy and childbirth-related expenses that may act as a barrier to growth of families. And expand coverage for life-affirming fertility care that we would embrace. And we mentioned some of those in the pastoral letter itself.

Tom Shakely [\(22:11\)](#):

Right, yeah. As you mentioned, it's like the church says no to IVF, but it says yes to a whole and much broader range of fertility care. I mean, things like NaPro technology that treat the underlying causes of infertility, and that addresses the problem for many people.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(22:28\)](#):

That's a key point, Tom, and thanks for highlighting that. And at the same time, we're always pastorally supporting, praying for those married couples who are dealing with infertility. We know that's a heavy cross, but we open ourselves to God's plan, to God's providence, to God's ultimate care. He is there in the midst of that difficulty. And we know, we've heard beautiful stories of how God has worked miraculously in the lives of so many people who were praying, were asking for his guidance, his help.

Tom Shakely [\(23:10\)](#):

Thank you, Bishop. Yeah, and if you haven't read Bishop's letter yet on IVF, you can read it, or actually you can listen to it in your own voice, right, Bishop? On this very podcast.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(23:19\)](#):

Right.

Tom Shakely [\(23:20\)](#):

So if you listen to the podcast now, just scroll back a few episodes and you'll find that episode and you can hear Bishop Burbidge on IVF.

[\(23:29\)](#):

All right, Bishop, well look, we're already at the time for Questions from The Faithful, but before that, I should mention, as we've done in the past few episodes, the special thing we're doing this year for the Jubilee Year of Hope, the Holy Year of Hope, we're inviting listeners, all the faithful people of goodwill to share their of hope. So, you can call (703) 778-9100, it'll be in the show notes. You can call anytime and share your words, stories of hope with us to inspire others, and we'll share periodically some of those messages of hope right here on the Walk Humbly podcast.

[\(24:04\)](#):

But Bishop, today's Question from the Faithful relates to what we spoke about at the outset about the Holy Father being in the hospital. The question is, when the Pope is sick and unable to make decisions, who makes the decisions? I know there is no "Vice Pope," so, who's in charge and how do things work?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(24:23\)](#):

Yeah, yeah. Thankfully, Pope Francis is, God willing, has been in communications with his team, his advisors, those to whom he delegates authority of day-to-day operations. So, thank God at this point, the Holy Father is very attentive they said, and very attuned to what's going on. And as I mentioned, he's doing well.

[\(24:50\)](#):

In urgent situations like that where he's not on the scene, he's in the hospital. I'm sure the Vatican Secretary of State will help to manage the daily business and affairs of the Holy See. And as various offices and [inaudible 00:25:06] continually assist in that process. But in such a situation where the Pope is hospitalized, we're not expecting any major decisions or new encyclicals, public pronouncements or doctrinal statements at this time. But the daily, the Holy See, like a diocese is structured in a way where if the Bishop or in this case our Holy Father, is sick or hospitalized, the day-to-day operations can continue. But we're not going to have any major decisions impacting the life of the church until the Holy Father is completely engaged in all that. But we can rest assure the Holy See is well situated to carry out the daily activities associated with the Holy Father's ministry.

Tom Shakely [\(26:02\)](#):

Thank you so much, Bishop. And of course, if you have a question for Bishop Burbidge, can email us at info@ArlingtonDiocese.org, or reach out to us on any of our social platforms. Bishop, we've covered a lot of ground. Any final thoughts for us?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(26:15\)](#):

Yeah, there's a lot, Tom. Thank you, thank you very much. No, we talked about Lent, which is coming close, so not too early to start preparing our hearts for this beautiful sacred season in our lives. I wish all of our listeners continued blessings, that God may in this Jubilee year of hope, grant them an increase of that virtue. Because we are reminded, blessed are they who hope in the Lord, blessed are they who trust in the Lord. So, just praying that during the Jubilee year, we may all grow in that virtue of hope, and that with God's grace, we will continue to walk humbly with our God.

[\(26:57\)](#):

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