

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'm Tom Shakely, Chief Communications Officer for the Diocese, and I'm joined by our host Bishop Michael Burbidge. Welcome.

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

Thank you, Tom. Great to be with you and our listeners today.

Tom Shakely ([00:22](#)):

You know, Bishop, today's kind a momentous day. Believe it or not, the conversation we're having today. This is the 150th episode of the Walk Humbly podcast.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:31](#)):

That is incredible. What's even more incredible is that people are still listening.

Tom Shakely ([00:34](#)):

Oh, come on, come on. What inspired you, Bishop to do this? We know there's so many podcasts out there. There are a lot of people that think "maybe I should do a podcast," but you have done a podcast and you've done these conversations for years.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:49](#)):

Yeah, I think the guidance from our communications team, your team, and those who some of have been here before them. As we always discuss, what is the best way to evangelize? What is the best way to teach? To share our faith? To inspire? There's all kinds of ways to do that, and we should use every appropriate way possible to speak the Lord's message. And our communications team says one way you can do that is through a podcast. There's a certain segment of society that will listen to that and that's the way they gain information.

([01:30](#)):

And we always evaluate what we do. We always take a look at, is this working? Is this something that we should continue to do? And thank the good Lord, so far the responses we get that it is helping, it's only one of many things we try to do. It is helping to evangelize. I like it a lot also because it's my voice, it's my words. And we know that in this day and age in society today, and especially with media, you can often be misquoted. People can only put a segment of what you say without including the whole message. And there've been numerous times where we have referred people back to the podcast and we've said, no, no, listen, this is what Bishop Burbidge said on this issue.

Tom Shakely ([02:20](#)):

Here's the complete thought.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:22](#)):

Right, right. Or sometimes because people limit themselves on how they get information and say, "How come the bishop or the diocese has never spoken on this topic? He said, "No, no, no, we have", and we send it to them. We love to do that. We love to say "Here's some links to the podcast where exactly what you're asking is what we've done," and people are grateful for that. So I enjoy doing the podcast as a conversation. I try to treat it as a conversation and really appreciate all the people who have served in the communications office and continue to do so who help to make this possible. 150 though, that is hard to believe.

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

It's worth celebrating. And yeah, I think you do provide a special thing in providing that unfiltered perspective, just like you said.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:10](#)):

Right.

Tom Shakely ([03:10](#)):

To be able to hear directly from our Bishop is a great gift.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:12](#)):

Yeah. Well thanks Tom.

Tom Shakely ([03:14](#)):

Well, in a more topical item, Bishop, we spoke last time and we're here again in our current conversation here. Pope Francis is still in the hospital in Rome. He remains in the care of his physicians there. The Vatican is sharing updates. Seems like every few days basically. Some better, some worse. And we know that he's been experiencing trials, but the world's keeping him in prayer.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:39](#)):

Absolutely. And Pope Francis from his hospital bed, as we know, wrote a heartfelt thank-you message to all the faithful throughout the world for the prayers that are coming his way. The prayers I'm sure he's experiencing. Because it is true when we say that we are praying for someone, they're powerful words. And that intention to pray for someone, "I'll pray for you", "Be sure of my prayers." How many times do we say that? But when you're on the other end of that, I know I have and maybe our listeners have, when you're on the other end of that and you're the recipient of those prayers, you're reminded, wow, that's a really powerful gift.

([04:26](#)):

And so maybe this is just a great opportunity for all of us to know that when we promise people our prayers or you're in my thoughts and prayers, we say that so easily, but to make sure we really keep that promise. Because that's a great gift to someone who is suffering, someone who's in need. And it's something that's very special that we can do. And I know we are united in our continued prayers for Pope Francis and what a great example he's giving to all of us as we entrust him to God's healing love.

Tom Shakely ([05:00](#)):

Well, closer to home here, we have a historic moment for our church, Cardinal Robert McElroy. He is here. I saw he was there con-celebrating the Mass with Cardinal Gregory on Ash Wednesday, but he's

going to be officially installed as Cardinal Gregory's successor, as Archbishop of Washington next week on March 11th as the 8th Archbishop. What a special moment.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:22](#)):

It really is. And again, an opportunity to pray for Cardinal McElroy as he begins a very big transition in his life, moving from the West coast to here at our nation's capital. It's a big transition for him and a great responsibility. So again, I'll be present at the massive installation with many other bishops, and it's a great opportunity to give him signs of fraternal support and assurance of prayers. And a reminder to all of us. I'm sure Cardinal McElroy receives that call and not necessarily expecting anything like that, but that's how God works in all of our lives.

([06:09](#)):

Sometimes he asks something very big of us. This is a big ask here. And the only way you can say yes freely to when something big is asked of you is if you have been practicing the small yeses, the little things that God asks you each day. Maybe a certain cross to carry or a desire to go out and give of yourselves in a way you didn't expect in service or the list goes on and on. But every day there's so many opportunities to give the small yeses to the Lord. And if we keep doing that, keep practicing that, then when something big happens, like okay Lord, this is what I've been doing and I'm going to continue to say yes here I am, send me.

Tom Shakely ([06:59](#)):

Beautiful. Thank you Bishop. Well, we'll be joining you prayerfully as that Mass takes place and as your brother Bishop takes his new role. I guess let's turn to an important conversation that's happening here in the Diocese of Arlington soon. This is one that speaks right to what we're called to be as Christians, which is peacemakers in our communities. We all know the right to bear arms is enshrined in the US Constitution, but as Catholics, we're also called to uphold the dignity of all human life and to remote peace.

([07:27](#)):

So there has to be some balance to these rights, particularly with our moral responsibility to use our rights well. And that I think is what's going to be spoken to at the upcoming Peace and Justice Conference here in 2025. That's happening on March 8th, and it's going to be hosted at Nativity. Bishop, can you tell us why this topic is important?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([07:48](#)):

Yes. Each year there's a different topic at the Peace and Justice Conference, and I think this is a great issue to focus upon. And as Catholics Tom, we recognize the fundamental right to self-defense and the duty to protect oneself and one's family. And at the same time, as you beautifully stated, we are called to be peacemakers, upholding the sanctity of life in all circumstances.

([08:24](#)):

So the church, and again, we will explore this a little bit more at the conference, does not call for the elimination of gun ownership, but rather for reasonable laws that balance the need to prevent violence, to protect the innocent and to foster peace. So it's not just, I don't think, and certainly our conference, this will not just be a policy discussion, it's a moral one. And we must ask ourselves how do we as a society make it the safety of our communities a priority while also representing, upholding the rights of individuals? How do we uphold our responsibility to one another? Particularly to those in danger, to those who are most vulnerable? So this conference is an opportunity to bring together voices from

different perspectives to discuss these questions with wisdom and charity and of course from a faith, from a Catholic Christian perspective.

[\(09:23\)](#):

So our goal is not to engage in political debate. This is not a political debate, but to discern through the lens of our Catholic faith, how we can best protect life while ensuring public safety. It's always that balance. We've talked about this with so many other moral issues as well.

[\(09:38\)](#):

So we begin with Mass, what a perfect way to begin. We go to the one who is the Prince of Peace, to celebrate Jesus, to receive him in the holy Eucharist. And it'll be at Nativity Church in Burke where we'll pray together for peace and guidance. And then we'll have the conference after the Mass.

Tom Shakely [\(09:56\)](#):

Well, that sounds like a great day, both spiritually and conversationally and morally. So we'll link in the show notes to that event. If you would like to attend, there's still an opportunity to sign up and do so.

[\(10:11\)](#):

All right, well we are in Lent. Bishop, you celebrated a wonderful Ash Wednesday Mass and we've shared clips of that on our social media accounts. And I know they've been moving a lot of people, speaking to them and helping ground us in what are we doing in Lent and reminding the fundamentals. Prayer, fasting and alms giving and what that looks like.

[\(10:31\)](#):

But we've also got here in the Diocese of Arlington, an inspiring journey to invite people on. The Office of Evangelization and Faith Formation and the Office of Youth Campus and Young Adult Ministries is working together with others, including the DAS and Peace and Justice Commission and Catholic Charities to offer a five-week series that starts soon, March 11th, and it's called A Holy People: Living the Scriptural and Social Teaching of Our Faith. Pretty amazing. This is a great way to do Lent.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(11:02\)](#):

Oh yeah, definitely. I think it's a great idea. We knew, as you mentioned, our promises to live our faith courageously, but also Lent's a great opportunity to allow the word of God to touch us and to maybe go a little bit deeper in learning our faith. And learning our faith is a lifelong process. We can't let it end at the end of our high school education or faith formation program. And so a holy people living the scriptural and social teaching of our faith is a guided in-person formation experience that I think will enrich your Lent with prayer and scripture. And enrich social teachings of the Catholic Church.

[\(11:48\)](#):

During five weeks, the Lenten series will teach us, basically it comes down to living the universal call to holiness. By exploring the ancient roots of our Catholic social teaching and how we can live them in this day and age, right? The teachings on justice and peace are consistent, they remain the same. But the issues of the day and the moral complications of the day change with every different age. So how can we put into practice all the beautiful, the true teachings of our church in our modern world? So it's another way of making this Lenten journey together.

Tom Shakely [\(12:33\)](#):

Well, if you're listening and you are interested in signing up to be a part of this, just as you're listening, you don't even need to pause, just scroll down in your app or pull it up on your screen and you can click a link in the show notes to get information for this series.

[\(12:47\)](#):

Bishop, we've also got a really important thing and something I know that's particularly special to your heart. We talk often about the importance of building a culture of life, broadly speaking, that upholds human dignity. But as a part of that in particular, there's a thing that the diocese is doing in partnership with Porto Charities on March 15th, and it's a conference called From Inclusion to Belonging. This conference is all about helping families, caregivers, and educators and advocates navigate all that's related to this challenge of inclusion. And I know this has been something that's been special to you for a long time.

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

Yeah, and it's great. It's what I love about our diocese. It is such a vibrant diocese. There's so much going on. We just talked about the Peace and Justice conference. We just talked about the educational series, and now we're talking about this beautiful event as well. So our faith is so much alive here in our diocese and many opportunities to grow in it, including this Inclusion, the Belonging conference.

[\(13:48\)](#):

Yeah, it is, absolutely. This is such an important topic. It all centers around the dignity of every human life, which as Catholics, we believe every person is made in image and likeness of God, unique gifts, but inclusion is not enough. We must move toward, and Pope Francis tells us this all the time, true belonging. Where every person is valued and supported and empowered and embraced. And faith, family and caregivers navigating disability related transitions often feel isolated and certainly at times, no doubt, overwhelmed.

Tom Shakely [\(14:29\)](#):

That feeling that they're doing it on their own.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(14:30\)](#):

Yeah, exactly. So this conference is we want to make sure these beautiful families and individuals know they are not alone. The church is loving them and walking with them and will accompany them in every way possible. So again, this is a faith-centered approach to planning for the future. So that in our diocese, in our church, in our communities, every person has all the resources they need, not just to exist but to thrive. And again, there's a role that education plays in this to empower individuals. Education is not just about academics, it's about equipping individuals for a meaningful, purpose-driven life.

[\(15:17\)](#):

So the sessions at this conference will cover transition, planning, employment and independent living. Key aspects of ensuring that people with disabilities have opportunities to share their gifts with the world. So basically, Tom, another way that we convince all of God's people you're never alone. God calls us to walk this journey together. And this conference is a place for learning, fellowship and encouragement, ensuring that families leave not only with the information that may be helpful in a practical way, but also, most especially, with renewed hope and strength for the journey ahead.

Tom Shakely [\(15:57\)](#):

Thank you so much, Bishop. That's very encouraging. And all these good events and conferences and programs that are going on now during Lent, can also be a reminder if you're listening and you haven't checked it out recently to visit [Arlingtondiocese.org](http://Arlingtondiocese.org). Check out our diocesan events calendar. We don't highlight everything here in these conversations, we wouldn't have time, but it's an amazing wealth of resources there on our diocesan events calendar.

[\(16:22\)](#):

Well, we welcome questions always for Bishop Burbidge and Bishop responds in our conversations here on the Walk Humbly podcast. If you have a question for Bishop Burbidge can email [info@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:info@arlingtondiocese.org) or you can reach out to us on any of the social platforms that we're on.

[\(16:38\)](#):

Our question today comes from a listener who says, "I feel like I'm losing my faith. Life has been overwhelming and I don't know how to reconnect with God. I pray, but sometimes it feels like he's not there and I feel so distant. How can I find my way back to him?"

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(16:56\)](#):

Sure. And the individual asking that question should be encouraged in knowing that he or she is in a very good company. If you read the Lives of the Saints, for example, many, many saints have expressed those same feelings. That there are times when our faith is very strong and vibrant, and there's other times where we don't feel the connection. God feels so distant from us. So that growth to holiness is understanding that faith is never that straight line. There's going to be moments like that. So I guess my first advice, Tom, would be to the person ask the question, don't be afraid. This is understandable. This is part of our lives. This is part of our faith journey.

[\(17:50\)](#):

I think of Saint John of the Cross. He really speaks a lot. That would be a great person. Maybe the person who asked the question might look at some of the readings of John the Cross, 16th century Spanish mystic. He coined the term, "The dark night of the soul." And he reminds us that our journey with God in this life is sometimes clouded in darkness. That is part of our experience as Christians and a reminder of the need to trust in God even when we don't feel his presence. Even though we're not feeling that we know, we know down deep there's something within our heart, we know God is there. So just persevere. Don't lose patience, certainly with God, but don't lose patience with yourself. Persevere. Mother Teresa, Saint Teresa of Calcutta also experienced the dark night of his soul. So don't worry, he is with you.

[\(18:52\)](#):

I have a beautiful image of Jesus, a prayer card in my prayer book, my brewery, and it's just of Jesus. And his eyes are just like I can feel gazing upon me. And I always look at that holy card every morning. Because no matter what I'm going to go through or what I'm going to experience that day, I know the gaze of the Lord is upon me because I'm his beloved. And everyone out there, you are his beloved son or daughter. His gaze is always upon you, always looking out for what is best for you. And so I just say a simple prayer as I look at that holy card. And Lord, help me to keep my eyes fixed on you.

[\(19:40\)](#):

And so to our listener, don't be discouraged. Saints have gone through what you've gone through. It's the path to holiness sometimes to experience the dark night. But pray for that grace to know and be convinced that the gaze of the Lord is always upon you. If you don't feel it, he is with you.

Tom Shakely ([19:59](#)):

Thank you so much, Bishop. We've covered some good ground today. Do you have any final thoughts for us?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:04](#)):

Well, we are recording this podcast today after Ash Wednesday. And how appropriate the gospel for the day is, "if you wish to follow me, take up your cross." And so I pray for all of our listeners that throughout the sacred season of Lent, that you take up your cross. Follow Jesus without grumbling, without complaining, but take up your cross by uniting whatever you're experiencing to the Lord, to his suffering. Because nothing we're experiencing and he did not already experience and take on for our sake and prove victorious. And will give us the grace and strength to carry it. And so if that's the way we take up our cross, then it will not lead to distress, it will lead to growth and holiness.

([20:55](#)):

And that's my prayer for everyone this Lent that we will grow closer to our Lord, our reliance upon him, especially as we carry our crosses. Big or small, letting him help us all the way. And in that way, we truly do walk humbly with our God.

([21:11](#)):

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