

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

Welcome to The Walk Humbly Podcast from The Saint Clare Studio in the Diocese of Arlington. I'm Tom Shakely, Chief Communications Officer for the Diocese of Arlington, welcoming you to a special episode of The Walk Humbly Podcast on the life and witness of our late Holy Father, Pope Francis. I'm joined by our host, Bishop Michael Burbidge, alongside our Diocesan Chancellor, Monsignor Paul deLadurantaye. Monsignor worked in the Vatican Secretary of State for nearly six years and served Pope Francis directly, and will be speaking with us today in our conversation about some of the specifics of what's coming next. Bishop, Monsignor, welcome.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:36](#)):

Well, thank you, Tom. Like you say, this is a special edition of our podcast, an opportunity to be together with our listeners as we mourn the death of Pope Francis, as we are united in prayer and thanksgiving for the gift of his life and ministry, and, of course, in praying for his eternal happiness and peace.

Tom Shakely ([00:59](#)):

Well, Bishop, I know you had encounters with the Holy Father over the course of the past number of years. I'm wondering if you could share some of those memories now and maybe some of the lessons learned.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:10](#)):

I'm most grateful to Pope Francis for he is the Holy Father who appointed me to be Bishop of Arlington, a great gift in my life, and so thankful to him for his confidence in me and trusting me with this great responsibility and this wonderful diocese. Yes, I recall a few encounters with the Holy Father, one was when I was the Bishop of Raleigh. We were completing the new cathedral in our diocese, and I had sought permission if the Holy Father would be willing after one of the general audiences, if he would bless the cornerstone that would be-

Tom Shakely ([01:52](#)):

Wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:53](#)):

... placed in the building there and be there forever. And I got word back that, yes, the Holy Father would do that. So, now, you can imagine what it's like carrying a cornerstone.

Tom Shakely ([02:06](#)):

You get through TSA, yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:07](#)):

Through air travel, right? And so we make our way and then I'm in line after the audience, and then all of a sudden, a couple of the Swiss guards came over and they said, "We will take that from you," and I'm like, "No, no. No, no, the Holy Father said he's going to bless it." "No, he will bless it, but we will take it from you." And so they took it from me, I'm like, "I don't believe this." And then I'm getting closer, I'm the next person in line, and I still don't have the cornerstone. And then sure enough, as soon as it was my turn to go up, they appeared with the cornerstone. The Holy Father smiled. He acknowledged. He knew why he was blessing the cornerstone. I told him I was bringing the prayers and hopes of everyone

from the Diocese of Raleigh with me. He congratulated us and said a beautiful blessing, and that is the cornerstone in the cathedral in Raleigh. So it was beautiful.

[\(03:01\)](#):

And then as Bishop of Arlington, had the great joy, with my brother bishops, what we call the ad limina visit where it's protocol, every certain amount of period of years for the bishops of the provinces and regions to gather with the Holy Father to give a report of the diocese and to spend time with him. An interesting thing happened that day. The day we were scheduled to meet with him, we got word after Mass that morning. We're supposed to meet with him, I think, 8:30. We got word that morning, right after Mass, that, unfortunately, there was a conflict in his schedule, and we were not able to meet with him. So they postponed it for the next day, and later found out that it was a scheduling conflict, administratively a mistake.

Tom Shakely [\(03:48\)](#):

Wow.

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

The Holy Father was double-booked, which human error, of course, happens. But when we met with him the next day, it just shows you his humility, he must have apologized to us three times at least.

Tom Shakely [\(04:03\)](#):

Wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(04:03\)](#):

"I'm sorry this happened. It was an error," and all those things, and I just thought, "That was so..." Mistakes happen, but he apologized personally. And to our benefit, because he felt badly that there was a conflict, instead of spending an hour or hour and a half with us, literally, Tom, he spent, because he felt so badly, three hours with us.

Tom Shakely [\(04:28\)](#):

Oh. Wow, wow, wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(04:31\)](#):

At that point, I was like, "Oh my goodness, this is unbelievable," but that just shows you just his kindness and his goodness. And certainly, I was blessed to be among many in his visits to... when he made his visits to our nation's capital and to Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families, and just to have him on our home turf. And that's who he was, right? He traveled a lot. He traveled around the world to bring the good news, to be the message of Jesus, and love to others. So, just like so many others, have great memories of the Holy Father, witnessing his goodness, his love for people, his love for the church, and his great desire to bring the good news to others.

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

That's beautiful, Bishop. Thank you very much. Was there anything in these encounters or as you're seeing it... It's funny, first of all, as you're telling the story, most people, I think as they're going up to see the Pope, have their eyes on him, probably. You're probably the only person that had your eyes on the Swiss guards, right into that-

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:30](#)):

Right, looking for that cornerstone.

Tom Shakely ([05:32](#)):

Yeah, exactly. But is there anything that you saw in your encounters with him that maybe you think that the cameras didn't see or that maybe hasn't been remarked on?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:42](#)):

Well, no, you just used the right word, he talked about that a lot, encounter. He always spoke about that we have to encounter one another. Not just meet, not just greet one another, but truly to be present to the person in front of you, just like Jesus always was, right? Jesus was always attentive and present to that person in front of him. That's one thing you notice with Pope Francis all the time. Here he is, the successor of St. Peter, but yet, when you met with him... and again, it was only for a short period, but it was like you were the only person in the room. It was eyeball-to-eyeball. It was heart-to-heart. The Holy Father, who preached the need to encounter, to accompany one another, really did that in a very loving, personal way with any person who was in front of him. And he had a beautiful smile, very engaging, I think put you at ease in his company.

Tom Shakely ([06:43](#)):

Thank you, Bishop. Well, Monsignor, as we mentioned in the start of the show, you worked in the Vatican Secretary of State from 2018 to 2024, almost six years, and you served Pope Francis directly as a translator. You were there, I think, at many key moments as heads of state, and celebrities, and brother bishops, and priests are coming to see the Holy Father. What was it like to work alongside the Holy Father in that way?

Monsignor Paul deLadurantaye ([07:10](#)):

Well, first of all, it was a real privilege and a blessing. Many people see the Holy Father at a distance in large public settings, a Wednesday Audience or when he said Mass at St. Peter's. But to me, it was a great honor and a blessing to be right next to him when he would meet with individuals or small groups, and to see how, as Bishop Burbidge mentioned, he acted towards them. Not just a quick meet-and-greet, but a real attentiveness, a real patience, an understanding. Whatever an individual wanted to tell the Holy Father, he listened very attentively, and he always treated them as a brother or sister in Christ, as a neighbor with the heart of a pastor, or the heart of a shepherd, a priestly heart. And that was a real inspiration-

Tom Shakely ([08:18](#)):

That's beautiful.

Monsignor Paul deLadurantaye ([08:18](#)):

... to see that and to be close to that.

Tom Shakely ([08:20](#)):

That's beautiful, Monsignor. Well, look, I know the Vatican has announced that Pope Francis's funeral will take place on Saturday, April 26th. I'm wondering, with your expertise that you're now brought

home here to the Diocese of Arlington, can you walk us through what leads up to the funeral and then what happens after?

Monsignor Paul deLadurantaye ([08:40](#)):

Well, in the days following the announcement of the Pope's death, the cardinals make their way to Rome. Those who are present take part in a series of meetings, which are called general congregations, and those meetings basically deal with primarily the details of the funeral, when it will be, his burial, which the Pope had already left plans for in his will, and then ordinary business of running the church, things that just are routine, or if there's a matter that simply cannot wait until a new Pope is elected, then the cardinals in the general congregation can deal with that, but that's pretty rare. Mostly, it's administrative details, particularly with the funeral.

Tom Shakely ([09:31](#)):

And this is the role of the camerlengo is key, right? I saw photos of him online sealing the papal apartment among other things.

Monsignor Paul deLadurantaye ([09:38](#)):

Right. When the seat is vacant, sede vacante as they call it, it's the cardinal camerlengo who really takes over in terms of administering the affairs of the church, and one of his tasks is to seal the papal apartments, the papal office, in this case, also his residence at the Domus Sanctae Marthae to make sure that nothing gets lost or taken, or anything like that, and that no one breaks in. And then the cardinal camerlengo, together with the Dean of the College of Cardinals, really has a role in these general congregations to, again, plan for the details of the funeral, to take care of the administrative needs of the church, and then to decide when the funeral will be.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:37](#)):

Monsignor, excuse me, but there are protocols regarding the number of days from upon the death when the funeral must be, who the celebrant would be. Could you tell us a little bit about that and also about the Pope's decision where to be buried?

Monsignor Paul deLadurantaye ([10:52](#)):

Right. That's right, Bishop. There are protocols that govern what happens when a pope dies or resigns, as was the case with Pope Benedict. Essentially, in this case, once Pope Francis had passed on into eternal life, the funeral should take place anywhere between four to six days after the announcement of his death, so Saturday would be the sixth day. And then following the funeral, the church enters into a period of what's called the Novendiales, a nine-day period of official mourning where Masses are celebrated certainly in the city of Rome and throughout the world, prayers are offered to the repose of Pope Francis's soul. Many of the cardinals would be the celebrants of those Masses in Rome and the major basilicas. Cardinals have their own titular church, and they would celebrate a Mass there.

([11:50](#)):

At the end of those nine days of mourning, then by law, the conclave has to start anywhere between 15 to 20 days following the death of the pope. If the cardinal electors are all present in Rome, and they agree, it could start earlier than 15 days. But usually, they wait that period for mourning, for time to talk, to discuss what the needs of the church are, what the challenges facing the church are, and then they would enter into the conclave when it's decided, when it would open.

[\(12:30\)](#):

In this case, with Pope Francis, he had also, in his will, left instructions that he is to be buried at Saint Mary Major, one of the four papal basilicas in Rome, and it's the one that he had a great love for because he would go to that basilica before and after every foreign journey that he made. And he would pray before a special icon, the image of Our Lady Salus Populi Romani, it's called the health or the salvation of the Roman people, because Pope Francis had a tremendous devotion to the blessed mother. And I think because of that, he wanted to be buried in a church dedicated in her honor. And he has chosen to be buried very, very simply, much like his life. All that would mark his resting place is a marble slab in the ground, in the floor with just the simple word, Franciscus, Francis, written on it in Latin. So, it's very beautiful in that way.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(13:38\)](#):

Very reflective of how he lived his life, too, close to our blessed mother, simplicity. Now, Cardinal Re is the celebrant. Can you tell us a little bit about how that's determined and who-

Monsignor Paul deLadurantaye [\(13:49\)](#):

Right. For the funeral Mass, it's almost always the Dean of the College of Cardinals, in this case, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, who has been dean for a number of years, and his term actually was extended by Pope Francis about a few months ago, back in January, I think. And protocol always dictates that it's the cardinal dean who celebrates the funeral Mass and who would preach because the cardinal dean is the head of the College of Cardinals at the moment, the senior cardinal. And he would be the one to lead all of the funeral rites, the Mass itself and then the final commendation, and when they take Pope Francis's body to Saint Mary Major for burial.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(14:40\)](#):

Right. And, Tom, on the day that we're recording this podcast, as we announce in our diocese, I'll be celebrating Mass in our cathedral for Pope Francis, his eternal happiness and peace. Monsignor, you mentioned these Masses, not only in Rome, but in diocese throughout the world are being celebrated for our Holy Father. And so we are certainly united in prayer as we go, especially through this period of mourning.

Tom Shakely [\(15:10\)](#):

Yeah, that's right, Bishop. And if you're listening to this, most likely, the time that you're listening to this, you'll be able to go into the show notes and click. We'll put a link in afterwards of your video from that Mass, the live stream, as well as the homily that you'll deliver in memory of Pope Francis.

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

Yes. And in the homily, I mentioned, in fact, that, of course, with anyone that we love who dies, the most special way we can remember them is by our prayers, by being united in prayer, and entrusting that individual, in this case, our Holy Father, to God's love and mercy. But also, I think there's the opportunity not only to pray, but also to honor our Holy Father. And I think we honor him by embracing all that he has taught us in his encyclicals, and exhortations, and homilies, and most especially by his example. I was thinking as I was preparing the homily, there's just so many lessons, and so this will be continuing his memory. What he taught us will live on, of course. But in particular, I would like to mention that I think we can all honor our Holy Father by doing as he did, proclaiming the sacredness of

all human life and reminding others by the way we treat them, that we all have a dignity because we are children of God, God's beloved.

[\(16:51\)](#):

I think our Holy Father taught us that, if we are going to bring others closer to Jesus, a word he used a lot and it's important for us to hear is joy, we have to radiate to others the joy that is ours in loving and serving the Lord and His church, and being in a relationship with Him. How many times did we hear the Holy Father talk to us about being a missionary disciple? In other words, not just keeping our faith to ourselves, by going out. He would use the word, the church is a field hospital, go out to the peripheries. Don't just stay where you are, go out to those who may be lost in life, or feeling alone, or who have wandered away. Inspire them, invite them, encourage them in faith, bring them back to the Lord.

[\(17:41\)](#):

And of course, how grateful are we to the Holy Father that he has given us this jubilee year with our focus on the theological virtue of hope, the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus, our Lord, the hope that does not disappoint? Because by His cross and resurrection, our risen Lord has conquered the power of darkness and brings us new life and eternal life. And so we have to be a people who witness or witnesses of hope. And so I think in all these ways, in addition to our prayers, we honor our Holy Father by embracing in our lives all that he taught us in word and by deed and through his example.

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

That's wonderful, Bishop. Thank you very much. Yeah, I think especially as we think about what we can do locally, the imperative to pray, of course, as you're saying, but what else should we be thinking of as just members of the faithful that we can do here in the Diocese of Arlington in these days to come, both leading up to the funeral, but then as the conclave gets underway?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(18:38\)](#):

Yeah. I think just that, just... I know many of our parishes are having Masses, and rosaries, and novenas. So maybe participate in the ways that your parish is mourning Pope Francis and praying for him at this time, but also to reflect in your own life. Well, what did his ministry among us mean to you? What was it that inspired you the most? Was it his humility? Was it his joy? Was it his courage? Was it the way he taught us how to even suffer, just like our beloved John Paul and Pope Benedict that, in their time of being frail, and suffering, weak, they taught us how to suffer, uniting our cross and our burdens to the Lord's, and assure in certain hope of the glory that awaits us? So what is it in your life, as you think about the ministry of Pope Francis, that inspired you and promise anew to imitate that, to make that a part of your witness that you offer to others?

Tom Shakely [\(19:45\)](#):

Well, Monsignor, thanks very much for walking us through, both in sharing your experience, but walking us through especially what's to come.

Monsignor Paul deLadurantaye [\(19:52\)](#):

Thank you, Tom.

Tom Shakely [\(19:53\)](#):

And, Bishop, any final thoughts for us as we close out today?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:57](#)):

Yeah. I think that what you just mentioned is another point of reflection. We use this time period focused on our prayers and memories of our Holy Father, but it's also a very powerful lesson in the life of the church, in all of our lives that, at this time where our Holy Father has gone home to God, we, as a church, guided by the Holy Spirit, will move forward, and the Holy Spirit will lead and guide our cardinals to give to us the pope that our church needs at this time, the one who will be sent by the Lord. So, we embrace this period.

([20:50](#)):

There's a sense of emptiness, even at Mass, where you no longer say in the eucharistic prayer, "Francis, our pope." You skip over that part and it's like, "Wow, there is a void here," but God fills that void. And so I think that, right now, our focus is on Pope Francis, our prayers for him, our beautiful memories of him, and being united in our gratitude for all he's given to us. And I think that really should be our focus until he's laid to rest, but then we look in joyful hope, the hope he encouraged us to have, knowing that the Lord will do for us at this time what He has done for His church from the very beginning. He will provide for us. He will give us the Holy Father we need at this particular time. And this is a powerful moment in history to remember that one thing never changes, it's always the Lord's church, the one who promises to be with us always. And in the meantime, may we continue to walk humbly with our God.