

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. Clair Studio here in the Diocese of Arlington. This is Tom Shakely, Chief Communications Officer for the Diocese, and I'm joined by our host, Bishop Michael Burbidge.

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

Tom, how are you? It's the beautiful month of May. It's of course dedicated to our Blessed Mother and certainly honoring her as we continue to seek her prayers and intercessions and maybe praying a rosary each day throughout this month as well.

Tom Shakely ([00:33](#)):

Bishop, it's a beautiful time. It's still spring, I guess, but it feels like summer, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:37](#)):

Yeah.

Tom Shakely ([00:37](#)):

How Was your weekend?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:37](#)):

It was a great weekend. I spent Friday night, I was at the Porto Charities Gala. Porto Charities, great partners of the Diocese does so much to help those with intellectual, developmental disabilities regarding trying to find ways as possible to make Catholic education available to them, assisting those who are studying special education and trying to support them in every possible... Finding employment after high school.

Tom Shakely ([01:07](#)):

Wow. That's beautiful.

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

So it's a wonderful organization. The room was filled with so much love. Our beautiful, beautiful families, and our young people were our volunteers, those with the various disabilities who just brighten the room as they always do, our special gifts, and raised a lot of money to support this great ministry and good work. So thanks to all of them. And then I had Saturday night, I was in Virginia Beach at the State Convention for our Knights of Columbus, so certainly all the bishops of the country. We have such great appreciation for the Knights. And in many ways they support bishops, parishes, Diocese in the work of carrying out charity, especially to those in most need. So great time to be with our Knights as well, and opportunity to express our new thanks. So it was a great weekend.

Tom Shakely ([01:55](#)):

That's a full weekend.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:56](#)):

Yeah. [inaudible 00:01:57].

Tom Shakely ([01:56](#)):

That's beautiful. Well, Bishop, as you know, the Cardinals are about to enter into conclave later this week. Naturally, so much speculation about who may be chosen to succeed our late Holy Father, Pope Francis. What are you thinking about right now? What's going through your mind? [inaudible 00:02:13].

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:13](#)):

Just a quick funny story on that though. Last week I was visiting one of our schools and one of the students asked, "Would you ever want to be a Cardinal?" And I said, "Yeah, maybe just for a few days next week," meaning this week, "Just for those two days maybe to get into the Sistine Chapel and participate in that. But not beyond that." But we are certainly praying for our Cardinal electors and praying that they are filled with peace and serenity as they open their hearts to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And prior to the conclave and the Cardinals gather, I invited all the faithful and renew the invitation now to join me in prayer this week.

([02:51](#)):

Perhaps that daily Rosary or time in adoration for this process, but especially for the Cardinal electors, pray the Holy Spirit inspires them. And in light of the Gospel yesterday, it was a beautiful Gospel leading up into the conclave.

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

Amazing timing, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:08](#)):

Wasn't it though? I know.

Tom Shakely ([03:08](#)):

Providential.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:09](#)):

Feed my sheep. And that's the role of the Holy Father. Tend to the Lord's flock, feed His sheep. And we can trust. We all can be at peace because the Lord will provide us the person that we need at this time and moment in history.

Tom Shakely ([03:23](#)):

Well, Bishop, you may have seen over the weekend, a meme went viral online. Now, typically, I know on the Walk Humbly podcast, we're not talking about breaking viral memes, but the poster in this case was the White House. This was on X. and the meme was an AI-generated Pope Trump, right? Did you see this?

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

I did. A lot of texts came my way, showing me as soon as it appeared, I guess. So the first thing you want to make sure of is that this is truly from the White House.

Tom Shakely ([03:57](#)):

Is it real? Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:58](#)):

Is it real? Is it from the White House? You never know. And then of course, that was confirmed, and it has caused a lot of reaction, a lot of upsetment. First of all, it was wonderful to see President Trump and the First Lady attend Pope Francis' funeral, that they were present and in such a dignified manner showed their respects to our Holy Father, which was very appreciated by Catholics throughout the world. But we're still in a period of mourning. We are a family, and we lost our father. We lost our spiritual father. This is a period of mourning. And so even if it was some sort of lighthearted gesture, it was very, very insensitive.

([04:46](#)):

It was not appreciated. It was somewhat hurtful. And so no matter what the intention was, it was not dignified and it was not respectful. And I hope those who agreed to do this, including the president himself, would take a look back at that and say, "You know, that really was not the right thing to do. It was not being sensitive. It was not being respectful." But let's move forward. We got to put our attention on prayer now. As I just said, this is our attention. We got to be united in prayer. And it's not a time for anything disrespectful or lacking sensitivity as a church, as a family, mourn their father. So let's get serious. Let's be prayerful. Let's be dignified.

Tom Shakely ([05:33](#)):

Thank you, Bishop. Well, our own governor, Glenn Youngkin in Virginia, took actions in Richmond last week. He vetoed two bills that were quite bad. The bills that he vetoed would've ended lives, violated religious liberty and conscience rights, and would've involved all of us as Virginians in funding abortion, contraceptives and sterilizations. To underscore how bad these bills were that the governor vetoed, minors would've been granted a so-called right to sterilize themselves, obviously in direct contrast with basic ideas of parental rights and Virginia's very explicit parental consent law for the protection of minors.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:14](#)):

Yeah. But it's troubling, isn't it? That the lawmakers would even bring this kind of legislation to his desk. I just cannot understand it. What a lack of appreciation for the sacredness of life, the dignity that belongs to human persons as a children of God, the role of parents in their lives. So the fact that it even came to the governor's desk is very unsettling. But good news that the Governor stopped these very, very bad pieces of legislation. We came close to a very bad outcome. Again, we're talking about prayer and asking the Holy Spirit to guide all of us, but especially those who are leaders, including elected officials who must do what is right and good and pure and just.

Tom Shakely ([07:04](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Now, those are good things that Governor Youngkin did in stopping those bad pieces of legislation. But unfortunately, Governor Youngkin did sign into law one very bad piece of legislation. The governor signed, it was called HB 1609, and it requires a state commission to consider making procedures like in vitro fertilization, IVF, and so-called embryo banking into what are called essential health benefits. So essentially what this would do if it moves forward is it would mean that these things would be baked into healthcare plans.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([07:44](#)):

Right, right. It was disheartening to see that the governor signed this into law. As I wrote in my pastoral letter, and if our listeners have not had a chance to read that, I would please encourage you to do so. But IVF is fundamentally unjust, and we explain the reasons for that while respecting the cross that those who are unable to have children at this time are bearing. The letter itself speaks to the reasons why we say it's fundamentally unjust. And as you mentioned, embryo banking means that human beings are brought into existence in a lab and frozen in storage units.

Tom Shakely ([08:23](#)):

It's like dystopia.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([08:24](#)):

It is unbelievable. So what we want is a society that promotes marriage and family, the sacredness of human life, the dignity of every person as a child of God. Tom, we want a place where our economy makes it possible for people to feel comfortable growing their families naturally and where healthcare system provide real life-affirming fertility care for those experiencing infertility. That's what we should be working together for. That's what our elected officials should be showing the leadership. So we will continue to advocate for good and just ways to promote healthy families and fertility care. And I am so grateful, as I always mention, those who participate by contacting their legislators through the Virginia Catholic Conference and the opportunities that we offer as a diocese, your voice, your email, your letter make a tremendous, tremendous difference.

Tom Shakely ([09:23](#)):

Yeah, it really matters. I know I was getting those VCC texts and emails.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([09:27](#)):

Yes.

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

As these things were on the governor's desk, and as he was having to weigh his decisions. They do matter and engagement to them matters. So we'll link to the VCC and the show notes as well. Bishop, President Trump established a Religious Liberty Commission at the White House last week. I know this went at least somewhat viral online. It's a twelve-member commission that's been created, and it's responsible for crafting a report on the foundations of religious liberty in America. Pretty timely considering we're coming up on our 250th next year as a country. And the commission is also going to offer suggestions around religious liberty for strengthening it, countering threats to it. It's a pretty big deal.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:04](#)):

Yeah. So it's good to see. The religious liberty is a fundamental right of really, the first of rights that must be protected, in addition to life, and safeguarded. And we know throughout our world, even in our own nation, religious liberty is under attack. And so to be a just society, a free society, religious liberty must be protected. And so for this commission to be initiated is a good thing. Putting some experts around the table and to advocate, to advise, to guide, sharing their expertise is a good thing. An example of how

the government, the state, the church can work together to do what is right, to do what is right. I'm pleased to see that two of our bishops, Cardinal Dolan, Bishop Barron, are part of the commission.

[\(10:58\)](#):

They will bring a great deal of understanding and expertise to this table. In fact, Cardinal Dolan chaired recently the United States Conference Catholic Bishops Committee on Religious Liberty. So he has a lot to offer, as does Bishop Barron. So we'll always work together with people of goodwill, of all faiths to protect the fundamental right of religious liberty.

Tom Shakely [\(11:25\)](#):

On May 2nd, Washington state, not here on the East Coast, but on the west coast, Washington state governor Bob Ferguson signed a bill into law, really, really horrific bill that would require clergy to break the seal of confession. The law is not yet in effect. It would go into effect later this summer, July 27th, and it would explicitly state that clergy do not receive, they do not qualify in this law for what's known as a privileged communication exemption, which others do have, but clergy do not.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(12:00\)](#):

So disheartening, but we see, again, we were just talking about religious liberty, religious freedom. This is attack on the faithful and the integrity of the sacraments, which are core and central to our faith. And so this is a very, very alarming situation. Bishop Daly, my good friend of the Diocese in Spokane said, "I want to assure you that your shepherds," this is what he said to his faithful, "your shepherds, your bishops and priests are committed to keeping the seal of confession. We have to, even to the point of going to jail. We have to keep the seal of confession."

Tom Shakely [\(12:35\)](#):

It was a bold statement.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(12:36\)](#):

Yeah. Yeah.

Tom Shakely [\(12:36\)](#):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(12:36\)](#):

And it's the truth. There is no other way. We can't break the seal of confession. The church's practice of confession comes from Christ himself. The priest is in a person of Christ celebrating that sacrament and that that must remain confidential. It's a penitent confessing his or her sins is between God and the penitent. And a priest, really, a priest who violates the seal of confession can be excommunicated. So it is very, very serious.

Tom Shakely [\(13:05\)](#):

Yeah. It's as grave as it can get [inaudible 00:13:09] the life of the church here [inaudible 00:13:10].

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(13:09\)](#):

Unfortunately, and pray God we never face this in Virginia, but the fact that this in Washington is even being brought forth, but there's every reason to hope this law will certainly be struck down and pray for the wisdom for that to occur.

Tom Shakely ([13:28](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. It's an attack on the church too, I think, right? Because just think about if this were to go into effect, right? Well, what would it do for the sort of people who've got any kind of serious sin to confess?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:40](#)):

Well, no, that's true. Exactly. And always in confession, the priest provides pastoral guidance as well. There's no conditions put on the absolution in that sense, but guidance. And so pastoral guidance, if someone has committed a crime, and if the idea is being this person wants to be reconciled with God and with one another, the community, then certainly pastoral guidance is, now do what is right.

Tom Shakely ([14:08](#)):

Right, right. Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:12](#)):

Do what is just. Confess, bring this out into the light, accept the consequences for what you did. So that's the guidance that would be offered, I'm sure, in that situation.

Tom Shakely ([14:25](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. All right, Bishop. Well, as you know, this Holy Year of Hope, we've been inviting listeners and sharing more widely in the Diocese, our Holy Year of Hope hotline. And so if you're listening, you can call or text us. The number is in the show notes, it's 703-778-9100, to share your words, inspiring words and stories of hope. And so we have a few to share today on the podcast. We're hearing from listeners particularly who shared their reasons for hope with respect to just thanksgiving for our late Holy Father, Pope Francis. So these were all texts so I'll just read them. So our first text came from someone who said, "Pope Francis encouraged me to be more loving, more hopeful, and to have the courage to welcome strangers and the poor." Another person said, "Pope Francis inspired me to join the society of Saint Vincent de Paul when he said that we must be present in the lives of the poor. The hallmark of the society of St. Vincent DePaul is the home visit. We go to the people who call us for help and visit them in their homes and show them respect and friendship as well as assistance."

([15:27](#)):

And one other person said that Pope Francis inspired them from the moment that he was announced with his humility, his compassion, his determination to lift up the poor and the marginalized.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:37](#)):

That's beautiful. Beautiful to hear. And it's a reminder that all of us are called to be recipients of hope, and we receive that hope in the Lord's many ways he reveals himself to us, and also to be messengers of hope. So we're recipients of hope and messengers of hope in this jubilee year to renew those commitments.

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

Yeah, that's wonderful. Yeah, it's really a lasting gift. As you mentioned, Bishop, in your statement at the passing of the Holy Father that he left us having given us this whole year of hope.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:06](#)):

Right.

Tom Shakely ([16:07](#)):

It's really a beautiful gift.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:08](#)):

Very providential.

Tom Shakely ([16:09](#)):

Well, Bishop, we covered a lot of ground pretty quickly. Do you have any final thoughts for us?

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

Just simply, Tom, just to mention that as we, God willing, move forward in a timely way, most likely with a new Holy Father, we will be celebrating that significant event in the life of our church, throughout our Diocese and in our parishes. Our office for worship has already, has all the guidelines that we will be implementing and I will be offering a massive thanksgiving in the cathedral. But this is all in God's time.

Tom Shakely ([16:45](#)):

That's right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:46](#)):

But just ask everyone to stay posted. I'm leaving today for a week. It's called the Convocation. It's a week we, all the priests of the Diocese gather for study, most especially for prayer and for fraternity. Half the priests come Monday to Wednesday, the other come Wednesday to Friday. For me, it's like Groundhog Day because I'm there all week. So what you do on Monday, you actually repeat on Wednesday.

Tom Shakely ([17:13](#)):

You repeat. Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:14](#)):

It's the same breakfast, it's the same talk. But for me, it's a wonderful gift because you know how much I love our priests and how much I enjoy being with them and to watch and see how much they enjoy being with one another. I look around the room and I'm like, this Diocese is certainly blessed with such great priests, and we are also blessed in knowing that all of the faithful are so good to us and pray for us. And we are so grateful for the kindness that you extend to me as your bishop and to all of our priests.

([17:47](#)):

So I wish everyone a blessed week. Let's stay united in prayer. Let's stay focused on what truly matters, being messengers and witnesses of hope as together we walk humbly with our God.

([17:59](#)):

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