

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:02](#)):

We can offer the spiritual nourishment because we point you to Christ, the divine physician who heals our wounds, who transforms us in ways that we can never imagine. And some of the ways, how he does that, sometimes he sends very special instruments into our lives. Those who are experts in the field, counseling and therapy.

Speaker 1 ([00:27](#)):

This is Walk Humbly. We're glad you're here.

Tom Shakely ([00:32](#)):

Welcome to Walk Humbly. I am Tom Shakely with the Catholic Diocese of Arlington joined in our St. Clare studio by Bishop Michael Burbidge. Bishop, welcome back.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:40](#)):

Ah, thank you, Tom. Doing well. Hope all our listeners are doing well and wishing everyone a blessed new year filled with the peace that only Christ can give, but almost mid-January, beyond mid-January-

Tom Shakely ([00:52](#)):

It's wild, it's wild. The days are ticking by.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:55](#)):

Not sure where all that time goes so quickly.

Tom Shakely ([00:57](#)):

Well, you've been up to a lot, Bishop, along with so many in our diocese here. I know just last week, hundreds across the Commonwealth gathered in Richmond and the State Capitol for Virginia Pro-Life Day as a day of advocacy for the human right to life. You were there. What stood out?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:12](#)):

No, it's wonderful. We are all sent forth, as you know, as disciples of the Lord, to be witnesses to his gospel, the gospel of life. And as we know that we not only witness, we pray for the protection of all human life, and we also participate in advocacy. In other words, taking what we know to be true, taking our beliefs and convictions to the public square and to those who we elect as our leaders and officials, both on a national level and certainly within the commonwealth itself. So as you mentioned last week was the Pro-Life Advocacy Day where we respectfully visited with and engage with delegates and state senators and elected officials, sharing with them our convictions. So we're grateful for those who welcomed us, including those who oppose what we believe regarding the right to life and the protection of the unborn, but listening to some of our faithful who were there and great number.

([02:10](#)):

I'm so, so thankful for the priests and the lay faithful and even so many of our young students were there. It was great to see them. So thankful for those who welcomed us and at least had, for the most part, everything is reported, respectful conversations. So it's okay if we disagree, but at least we had this day to listen to each other and to convey to our elected leaders not only what we believe, but why we believe it. And so that's so important. And it was also important too, we stopped by some of the offices

of the delegates who are very much on our side, who are doing everything to protect the unborn and the sacredness of life. And we wanted to stop by and thank them. And that's not an easy job. It's true. To stay strong when they're facing so much opposition and rejection and really, especially the way the legislature is these days, making it really tough for them.

[\(03:08\)](#):

So we want to thank them and say, you're not alone here. We appreciate what you're doing and we're praying for you. And we're praying for all who have been elected to serve, that they serve with truth and justice and are blessed with wisdom.

Tom Shakely [\(03:21\)](#):

It's so important, Bishop. Yeah. Thank you for doing that. And of course, I know many are already, but if you are not, you can go to the Virginia Catholic Conference, look them up and we'll link to it in the show notes and you can sign up for text alerts, email, newsletter announcements and other ways to stay in touch and to make sure that your voice is heard in Richmond and elsewhere.

[\(03:42\)](#):

Well, it's also, of course, the week of the March for Life coming up very soon on Friday. And that means tomorrow, January 22nd is the day of prayer for the legal protection of unborn children. And I know Bishop, you weren't just in Richmond. You've also released a statement on human dignity and the threat that we've talked about here on the show and in past conversations of a Virginia Constitutional Amendment. There's a whole slew of things going on in Virginia politically, but really probably the biggest one for us as a people of faith is the possibility of a constitutional amendment, this extreme abortion amendment.

[\(04:19\)](#):

So can you share a little bit about that and more broadly why you wish you this statement?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(04:23\)](#):

Yeah. I mean, another great connection here, as you mentioned, the day of prayer. Again, January 22nd dedicated to prayer for protection of life advocacy. We just talked about Richmond and we'll be meeting with leaders in the state and in our nation's capital as well. And also the witness that we offer, that we will march peacefully in our nation's capital, united as brothers and sisters, and united in the faith and the convictions that we believe. And that witness is needed more than ever because of the threats that we're seeing. Often, we celebrated for a moment, as I often said, the overturning correctly of the unjust Roe versus Wade. And that was a moment of celebration, but only a moment because now that choice and that decision is being brought back to the states, and as you mentioned, states are seeking to enshrine abortion amendments that are so devastating, devastating consequences.

[\(05:31\)](#):

And we know that right here in Virginia, we are facing probably amendment ballot in November. And it's not too early to start talking about this because the amendment, which will proceed to a referendum for voters to decide later this year would go far beyond what Roe versus Wade previously allowed. It would enshrine virtually unlimited abortion at any stage of pregnancy-

Tom Shakely [\(05:58\)](#):

Incredible.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:58](#)):

... with no age restriction. And among numerous other problems, it would severely jeopardize Virginia's parental consent law, health and safety standards for women. Most tragic of all time, the extreme abortion amendment provides no protection whatsoever to preborn children. So there's a lot at stake. So yes, we got to pray. Yes, we have to witness. Yes, we have to be advocates. And I'm so grateful for so many I know from our diocese will be in our nation's capital because we talk to all leaders who can have an impact on this crucial issue.

Tom Shakely ([06:36](#)):

Thank you very much, Bishop. Yeah. And I know also, of course, as a part of our sort of March for Life week long activities, the Diocese of Arlington is once again preparing to welcome thousands of young people for life is very good, very good happening January 22nd and 23rd in Fairfax.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:54](#)):

Always a special occasion and so grateful to our team and our youth office who is so much work to welcome not only young people from our diocese, but from around the country for our rally the night before the march. Young people, you get together, they got a lot of energy, they got a lot of zeal, they got a lot of enthusiasm. So you got to make sure we provide for them. And so it's wonderful, at George Mason, the arena there. It's music, it's talks, it's engagement with the students, and it gets them, I think, properly prepared for what we're doing the next day. And again, tapping into their zeal and to their joy and energy, we need to see that. But as I always say, what is so powerful about that life is a very good rally is you have all those talks and energies, the music.

([07:50](#)):

I mean, it's really amazing, but then we prepare them the best way possible because the night ends in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. And then there's a procession with the Blessed Sacrament and all these young people who are hooting and hollering, energetic and enthusiastic are brought to their knees and brought to silence. I always say only the Lord can do that, but to see their reverence and then for us to end the night in such a solemn way, preparing for a solemn day in our nation's capital, that's the strength, that's the grace we need. So again, we welcome all those who will be joining us for that rally.

Tom Shakely ([08:32](#)):

That's great, Bishop. And I know with the March for Life and the expansion in recent years of state marches, like the one that takes place in Richmond every year, some people I've heard certainly asking, "Why are we still doing a national march?" As you say, Bishop, with Roe v. Wade gone, what are we marching for? Right. Now to me, I worked in the pro-life movement, so to me it's like we know we're marching for the end of abortion and more for justice, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([08:56](#)):

That's right. That's right, Tom. And we have to take that message everywhere. Yes, more than ever to our own states, but to go to our nation's capital is bring that message on such a high level. And we cannot underestimate that those who work in our nation's capital, but then go back to their states know we're there and it makes an impression and we never know how God's going to use that. So we have to do this everywhere in our nation's capital and in the states and our communities.

Tom Shakely ([09:35](#)):

Well, Bishop, you released recently your fourth pastoral letter, it's called The Divine Physician: A Christian Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing. And in it, you speak to what I think we all know is a reality in our country, which is a growing mental health crisis, especially among young people. I mean, if you've been in DC, you could see they literally advertise about this on bus, on the ads on buses I see about the mental health crisis and what can be done about it and different approaches. And you are speaking about this now to offer, I think, what the church can do, which is offer a distinctively Christian approach rooted in Jesus Christ. Can you share, Bishop, about all this? What inspired you and

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:15](#)):

Why not? Yeah, sure, Tom. Thanks for asking. Yeah, pastoral letter is a response to a pastoral situation and it comes from listening. And I listen to our priests who spend a great deal of time in their parishes trying to offer guidance and spiritual help to those who are dealing with mental health and emotional issues. I listen to our parents who are so concerned about their young people and the extreme levels of stress and anxiety, even despair that their own children are facing as well as our educators tell me the same. I think it's probably safe to say that none of us are spared of this. We all know people we love in our own families, friends, circle friends who are dealing with mental health and emotional issues. And thank God I think we're more and more at a point where we can acknowledge that and there's no stigma.

([11:17](#)):

We're body, soul, and spirit. And so we're going to suffer sometimes physically, we're going to suffer sometimes spiritually and some we're going to suffer emotionally, but that's part of being the human person, our frail conditions. So the first part of the letter is, let's acknowledge. Let's acknowledge those times when we need help, we need counseling, we need the experts to assist and support us, that the level of emotional stress or anxiety or despair have reached that level. And so we want to say to, in this pastoral letter and to the faithful that, and the church is there, we're there to walk with you and we can offer the spiritual nourishment because we point you to Christ, the divine physician who heals our wounds, who transforms us in ways that we can never imagine. And some of the ways, how He does that, sometimes He sends very special instruments into our lives, those who are experts in the field of counseling and therapy.

([12:25](#)):

And so as priests, as a pastor, I'm not an expert in counseling or therapy, but I want to be in a position to say, okay, now the help I can offer, and I know our pastors say this a lot, I don't have that expertise, but let me point you to one of God's instruments, someone who can help you. But what I'm trying to say in the pastoral letter is that that counselor or that therapist needs to be someone who is of faith, who believes that it's not just a science, right? It's rooted in a power beyond us that can help. So we need both. They don't contradict each other. We need to point you to counselors who have a Christian anthropology, who understands the human person as God created us and that we are worthy and creating God's image and likeness the Lord who is always there to heal us.

([13:20](#)):

So what we are doing in our diocese, and this is something I mentioned in a letter, is we are vetting experts and counselors who are well known for the guidance to provide, but asking them specifically their approach to certain moral issues or their anthropology, how they understand the human person, what role of faith does play. And then we hopefully will have a list of numerous, numerous counselors who we can say with the help of our experts, that these are the counselors. These are the therapists who we believe would best assist you and support you, not only from their expertise in mental health, but also with the faith perspective that we think is so essential in this process. So that's the points of the

letter is to say mental health, emotional health, wellbeing. We are at a crisis. None of our families are spared of it. Jesus is there to help us. The church is with you and He sends us instruments that we want to assure you are there to provide the guidance that you need.

Tom Shakely ([14:30](#)):

I think it's encouraging too, Bishop, as I was reading it, two things that stuck out to me. One, you mentioned that as important as it is to seek out the assistance, the help that you might need, one of the things that distinguishes a Catholic approach is that the goal is not to develop a new dependency on therapy itself.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:51](#)):

Exactly.

Tom Shakely ([14:52](#)):

It's to be healed and to go back out there.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:54](#)):

It's exactly right. It's to be healed. It's to move forward. And sometimes it's not the elimination, it's of, let's say, distress or anxiety, but the way to deal with that, right? The way to deal with that, maybe that's a cross that you have, right? That you suffer a little bit from anxiety. It doesn't mean it can conquer you. We can provide tools and all that will help you to deal with that, but to move forward in life and to keep that process going. And we just want to make sure that those to whom we recommend as counselors approach it with the, thank God the expertise they have, but with a perspective of faith and the power of Jesus, the one alone who transforms and heals.

Tom Shakely ([15:47](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And you mentioned also that you quote St. Paul the sixth, that wonderful insight he had, which is he calls the church an expert in humanity.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:56](#)):

Right.

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

I love that. I love that great line. I think one of the reasons I've seen some of the secular coverage even, both of course in Catholic media, but then secular media is some coverage of your pastoral letter already. And I think part of the reason it's kind of turning heads, especially in the wider culture, is just because of that, I think somebody in the secular culture would look at something like this and say, "Well, what does the church have to say?" It's not an expert in that, but the church is an expert in humanity.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:22](#)):

That's right, Tom. Thank you for that. And I appreciate you saying that.

Tom Shakely ([16:28](#)):

Well, Bishop, it's Catholic Schools Week coming up next week and our diocese is going to join Catholics across the country and celebrating this great time where we can look at all the good that Catholic

schools do, not just for those families and children who are directly enrolled, but for the whole diocesan community and the wider culture, time to give thanks for the gift of Catholic education.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([16:49](#)):

Absolutely. And I'm a big fan of Catholic schools, being a product of Catholic schools from kindergarten to college and so grateful to my own parents for providing me with such a strong Catholic education, the women, religious, the sisters, the priests, the teachers I've had along the way, who I remember so fondly and will be forever grateful and we continue to meet them in our own Catholic schools too. And so Catholic Schools Week is a great opportunity for me to thank our Catholic educators. Thank you for all that you do. It's hard work. It's really hard work and it demands a lot of energy and a lot of time. And our Catholic educators see this as a vocation to assist the parents, the first teachers, to assist the parents in the formation education of their children. So I just first of all want to say thank you so much to our Catholic educators.

([17:48](#)):

I want to thank our parents who make great sacrifices to send their children to our Catholic schools and to reassure them of my great confidence. I'm so proud of every Catholic school in our diocese, our Catholic elementary and middle schools, our high schools. Every school I visit, I'm so proud of the strong Catholic identity. Seeing our young people, knowing the faith, celebrating the faith, speaking about the faith in a beautiful, safe, loving environment. So a word of thanks to everyone. And I also understand that there are many ways to deliver Catholic education and we respect them all. I'm so grateful to our homeschool families and the great sacrifices of their parents. We have independent Catholic schools. We deliver Catholic education through our faith formation, religious education. So there's many, many ways to deliver Catholic education, but this is a weak saying. And one of those ways and a primary ways that's been a rich part of our church for many, many years are our Catholic schools and they will always be a treasure to us and I will do everything to continue to support them.

Tom Shakely ([19:02](#)):

That's beautiful, Bishop. Thank you very much. Yeah, it's wonderful to see the Catholic approach to forming the whole person.

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

Yeah. It's one of my favorite things to do in my ministry when you let me out of the office. I love visiting our Catholic schools and spending a day with our teachers and students and they brighten my day for sure.

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

That's so good. And you can of course see, you could see when Bishop is out and about because we post media galleries on our diocesan website. We have a media gallery, as we mentioned in the very beginning of this conversation from Virginia Pro-Life Day on the Diocesan website we'll link to and media galleries certainly coming up from Catholic Schools Week and other events throughout the diocese.

([19:40](#)):

Well, even if you're not enrolled in a Catholic school anymore, there's always learning that can be done, right, Bishop? And so we're proud to share, very pleased to share that we launched our recent course on The Human Person. A broad topic, but an important topic led by Father Paul Scalia, our vicar for clergy and pastor at St. James is the instructor for this course on The Human Person, launched on

portafide.com. We'll link to it in the show notes. As a reminder, this is the new Diocesan catechetical course platform that's now got a number of courses on there. You can sign up. The courses are free, no cost, and a great way to just brush up.

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

Yeah. Tom, I want to thank you and your team for this initiative. We know that sadly, sometimes our Catholic education formation stops in our schools, but our formation in the faith is lifelong. And here's a wonderful opportunity, a wonderful opportunity made so easy for our listeners and no cost either with great professors, including our most recent course with Father Scalia. I'm hearing really positive comments out in the field of people who have participated in the course and they're so, so grateful for this opportunity. So I hope that many of you who are listening will take advantage of this. I think you'll really be inspired.

Tom Shakely ([21:00](#)):

Thank you so much, Bishop. Well, we covered a lot of ground and there's a lot of advocacy left to do this week as we approach the March for Life. Can you give us a final blessing, Bishop?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:07](#)):

Yes. Dear Lord, we thank you for the precious gift of life. Thank you for creating us in your image and likeness for the gift of the Holy Spirit living and dwelling within us. And with your help and grace, may we proclaim the sacredness of all human life and defend the protection of all human life, especially the unborn. May we do so through prayer and witness and advocacy and always through your grace as we walk humbly with our God.

Speaker 1 ([21:33](#)):

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