

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

No matter how far or how long you've been away from the church, in this beautiful sacrament you encounter in the person of his priest, the presence of Christ who's always loving and merciful and forgiving. So please do not be afraid. Don't let fear keep you away. You will be welcomed, you'll be treated compassionately, and above all, you will receive absolution, forgiveness of your sins.

Speaker 2 ([00:26](#)):

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

Tom Shakely ([00:30](#)):

Welcome to Walk Humbly. I'm Tom Shakely with the Catholic Diocese of Arlington. Joined in our Saint Clare Studio by Bishop Michael Burbidge. Bishop, it's good to be with you.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:38](#)):

Tom, great to be with you and with all of our listeners. Thank you.

Tom Shakely ([00:41](#)):

Well, bishop, we are recording just a day before Ash Wednesday. Bishop, I'm wondering if you can give us some advice for fruitful living for a fruitful life as we enter Lent.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:50](#)):

Sure. We begin Lent by hearing the Lord's call for us to return to the Lord our God with all our heart. And he shows us the process, the time-tested spiritual practices that work, prayer and fasting and almsgiving. So we promise anew to embrace that call.

([01:12](#)):

But I guess, Tom, what I would say for a fruitful Lent, speaking to myself as well, is to realize that we always begin Lent hopefully with renewed spiritual fervor and zeal. And so we make a lot of promises about what we're going to do for Lent. And that's good. Pray maybe more fervently, allowing silence in our lives. Pope Leo is suggesting that we fast, not only from maybe a particular food or snack or whatever, but also from harmful words and uncharitable speech. Almsgiving always, finding new ways to share our time and resources. And so we have great intentions.

([01:58](#)):

But I think a fruitful Lent will always be if we realize that it's not reflected merely in our willpower, our determination, our intentions, for we can do nothing without God. So maybe the first promise we make during this Lent is, Lord, here's how I want to experience this call of repentance conversion. But I know I can't do it without you. And so I call upon your grace. I call upon your mercy and realize that take Lent day by day. Sometimes when we see it's a 40 day journey, we get overwhelmed. But day by day just say, okay, here's what I promised the Lord I was going to do. How did I do today? And if I maybe stumbled and maybe didn't keep a promise, it's okay, don't give up. Don't say, okay, now Lent over. I can't do this. No, of course God allows you to begin anew. So my advice is to be realistic in what you promise, and in light of the Lord's call, rely on his grace and take it day by day.

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

That's beautiful. Thank you, bishop. I'm encouraged. Well, one of the things that you produced for Lent is a new spiritual booklet, Reflections for Lent and Easter, offering your daily spiritual reflections for the whole of the Lenten journey, just like we did at Advent and Christmas for those listeners who remember. Anyone can get their free copy of this Lenten Reflections booklet at our website, arlingtondiocese.org/lent. We'll link to it. You can download a digital copy today. Or you can also get, if you want, a physical copy of the booklet via Amazon, and it's also available on Kindle. Bishop, I'm curious what inspired you to put this booklet together and how do you hope it'll help people?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([03:41](#)):

Sure. There's so many beautiful resources out there for our Lenten reflections and meditations and so many wonderful spiritual writers guiding us through Lent. This booklet or this pamphlet that you mentioned is more of a thought for the day. Sometimes that's all we need. We just need a sentence to carry us through a day or just one thought.

([04:05](#)):

So I just wanted, in addition, hopefully to other resources that people will embrace that are more in-depth, this is just one pamphlet which I wanted, where you could just put in your pocket.

Tom Shakely ([04:15](#)):

Literally.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:15](#)):

Your suit coat pocket or your pant... Right, exactly. And then you just go back and just keep a thought for the day. And hopefully that thought is a source of renewal for people. So pray God that the reflections or just a helpful resource will help to make a fruitful Lent.

Tom Shakely ([04:31](#)):

Very good. Well, as Lent begins, of course, the church invites all of us to reflect on how faithful we are and opportunities to grow in faithfulness. And one beautiful opportunity to enter into this season is through our annual Light is On campaign. You might be hearing of this for the first time. The Light is On invites Catholics to come into the quiet of prayer and the grace of the sacrament of confession throughout Lent. So it's starting on Wednesday, February 25th through Wednesday, March 25th. Every Wednesday during Lent, every parish in the Diocese of Arlington will offer extended confession hours 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM, again every Wednesday during Lent. Why is this initiative so important?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:14](#)):

Well, sure the call of Lent is to be reconciled, to be reconciled with the Lord, with his church and with one another. And of course the best way of doing that is to celebrate God's mercy and forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation and penance. We know, and I am always so grateful to our priests who make this beautiful sacrament so available throughout the year and throughout the week multiple times for people to have the sacrament celebrated.

([05:42](#)):

But this Light is On, it's just a good way to just kind of remind people throughout the diocese that, yes, confessions are in your parish. But every Wednesday, you know that opportunity is there. The Light is On, the that allows us, that beautiful sacrament, to leave the darkness of our sinful behaviors and patterns. And I suggest to people, don't wait till the end of Lent to celebrate the sacrament of

reconciliation. I always celebrate it at the beginning of Lent just to say, Lord, I'm going to embrace this journey. I want my soul cleansed. I want to be pure, get rid of all these sins. I just went to confession the other day just for that same reason.

[\(06:26\)](#):

And so I would encourage people perhaps considering a fruitful Lent, maybe by beginning celebrating God's mercy and love for anyone who is sorry, who has a contrary heart, and a desire to begin anew, there's no sin, no matter how serious, no matter how many times committed, greater than the mercy and love of God. All we need to do is just trust in his mercy, express our sorrow, and our desire to begin anew. Our sins, though they may be like scarlet, will become its white as snow, the Lord promises.

Tom Shakely [\(07:00\)](#):

Thank you, bishop. I'm wondering, especially for those who maybe haven't been to confession in a long time, they know intellectually about it, they know that it's important in the church's eyes, but maybe there's that spirit of trepidation and that uncertainty. What would you say to somebody?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(07:16\)](#):

Yeah. And that's understandable, if we've been away from the sacrament for a while. I think for all of us when we approach the sacrament, it's a little unsettling.

Tom Shakely [\(07:24\)](#):

It can be jarring, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(07:25\)](#):

But that's a good thing because we know this is important. But I can assure our listeners that no matter how far or how long you've been away from the church, in this beautiful sacrament, you encounter in the person of his priest, the presence of Christ who's always loving and merciful and forgiving. So please do not be afraid. Don't let fear keep you away. You will be welcomed, you will be treated compassionately, above all, you'll receive absolution, the forgiveness of your sins. Because God's love for us is so great, his mercy is without end.

Tom Shakely [\(08:05\)](#):

All right, the Light is On making confessions available Wednesdays throughout Lent, just like we have a link to the Reflections for Lent and Easter booklet. We'll link to the Light is On campaign information for you at arlingtondiocese.org/thelightison. Well, bishop, you recently celebrated, along with many from our diocese all across the diocese, the 44th, kind of an incredible number, 44th Catholic Charities Ball. And of course each year the ball brings people together who care about Catholic Charities, but who care about the work of the diocese broadly. It's always so remarkable/ what stood out for you this year?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(08:41\)](#):

Yeah, I always compare, and this year especially, I always compare the Catholic Charities Ball to a diocesan pep rally.

Tom Shakely [\(08:49\)](#):

I can see that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([08:50](#)):

Because we're all on the same team. We're all on the same team. Everyone at the ball, and those who are united with us in prayer, we're all on the same team. We want to be instruments of the Lord's compassion, of the Lord's care for his people, especially the suffering, especially the poor and needy. We want to do that. We're all on that team.

([09:10](#)):

And this ball kind of just brings all of us together who share this goal, this vision, and energizes us. Imagine being in a huge ballroom with all the people who share the same desire that you have. And so it was so many good people in the ballroom, energized and rededicated and recommitted to allowing Catholic Charities to carry out their work, especially alleviating the suffering of our brothers and sisters in need.

([09:47](#)):

It was a very, thanks to the hard work of so many people, we surpassed our goal and raise over \$1.8 million, which will directly support the life-changing work of Catholic Charities throughout our diocese. And help those who are vulnerable, struggling, feeling forgotten. And so so many words of thanks to all those who contributed, supported the ball. And to our volunteers, committee members, the ball chairs for their dedication and generosity.

([10:18](#)):

We do not live our faith alone. We share it with others. And I was so happy. A part of the celebration of the ball includes a separate reception at the beginning of the evening for our young adults. And so many young adults were there having their time together, contributing to the ball, and then of course joining everyone else for the rest of the evening. So very, very exciting, and thank the good Lord for the success we experience.

Tom Shakely ([10:48](#)):

It's really amazing. It's like a whole Catholic city coming together.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:51](#)):

It really was. It is really energizing.

Tom Shakely ([10:54](#)):

So stay tuned to the Diocesan events calendar if you are thinking I've got to be there next year. Well, a new controversy has unfortunately erupted at the University of Notre Dame where Professor Susan Ostermann is set in July later this year to be named the director of Notre Dame's Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies. Now the Liu Institute is part of Notre Dame's School of Global Affairs, which on its website says, quote, "exists to advance integral human development through research policy and practice."

([11:27](#)):

Yet Ostermann is unfortunately an outspoken pro-abortion activist, and has even argued that the church's conception of integral human development, something that the Holy Fathers have talked about, as you know, bishop, for more than a century now, in one way or the other, she's argued that integral human development, God's plan for human flourishing, actually includes abortion in her view. She said among other things that the pro-life movement was inspired by white supremacy. So it's a pretty controversial moment that Notre Dame's navigating right now.

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

And it's very unsettling and very disappointing to say the least. I join my brother bishop, Bishop Kevin Rhoades, the Bishop of Fort Wayne in South Bend, he issued a very powerful statement expressing his deep concern and the request, a strong request, for the administration leadership of Notre Dame to reconsider this appointment so it doesn't take place in effect until I think July. So he's saying, we have time to get this right. And this is something I joined my brother bishop, Bishop Rhoades in expressing those same sentiments.

([12:35](#)):

Professor Ostermann's advocacy for abortion, her disparaging characterizations of the pro-life movement, are simply incompatible, Tom, incompatible with the mission of the Catholic church and this institution, Notre Dame. Her views, as you summarize, are in direct opposition to the church's teaching on the dignity of every human life from the moment of conception needs to be protected, welcomed, and celebrated. The consistent ethic of life demands, we defend the vulnerable without compromise.

([13:07](#)):

So when someone is placed in a position of leadership at a Catholic college or university, that institution is saying this is where we want to go. The appointment of a leader is a reflection of who we are as a university, what our mission is, what our mission statement is. It's not a question of academic freedom. It's a question of mission and identity of Notre Dame. And so I don't think the leadership has any choice but to reconsider this appointment. I pray and encourage all our listeners to join me in prayer that that will in fact occur. So-

Tom Shakely ([13:48](#)):

Thank you, bishop.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:49](#)):

... thank you for it. It's very disappointing, very unsettling. I know Bishop Rhoades, other bishops have spoken about this, and I'd like to add my voice to asking the leadership of Notre Dame to rescind this appointment.

Tom Shakely ([14:02](#)):

It's tough in moments like this of public controversy, it can be just kind of awkward to have to intervene. But I think the kind of counsel that you mentioned that Bishop Rhodes and that yourself and other bishops have offered is a great gift to the church to see how even when things are out in public, it's still time to speak the truth.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:19](#)):

Right, exactly.

Tom Shakely ([14:20](#)):

Well bishop, the Lenten appeal is underway. Earlier this month you were here with the lay faithful at different receptions across our diocese for the Bishop's Lenten Appeal kickoff. And of course the BLA reflects, gosh, the generosity of course, but really the faith and commitment of everybody in our diocesan family one way or the other. What are you reflecting on this one?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:43](#)):

Yeah, and that's our theme for this year's BLA, is in Christ we are one. What a beautiful theme. In Christ, we are one. We are one family. God's family. We're one diocesan family. We are one as brothers and sisters in Christ. And we're here to help each other to get to heaven, to encourage, to lift up each other in faith, to alleviate the suffering of our brothers and sisters in need.

[\(15:05\)](#):

And so as our listeners hopefully know the BLA, the funds that are collected, support the ministries that allow us, including Catholic Charities, and all those things that I mentioned, helps us to carry out our ministry and our work, and including the support of our seminarians and their formation and Catholic Charities, Catholic faith formation, youth ministry, the whole list of ministries that directly benefit from the generosity and from the goodness of the people of God here in the Diocese of Arlington.

[\(15:39\)](#):

I'm so grateful to you for your generosity, whatever that may be. There is no gift too small, if you're unable to offer a gift, your prayers are extremely appreciated and powerful. And I thank our pastors throughout our diocese for their leadership of this annual appeal.

Tom Shakely [\(15:56\)](#):

Thank you, bishop. We'll stay tuned. And yeah, it is a beautiful... I've got to think that was a little bit inspired by Pope Leo's motto, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(16:02\)](#):

I think it had something to do with it.

Tom Shakely [\(16:04\)](#):

In Christ, we are one. We'll link to the BLA homepage, if this is somehow the first time you're hearing of it, or if you want to get engaged.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(16:11\)](#):

And again, the Bishop's Lenten Appeal helps us to do this podcast because it also supports the office for communications, which allows us to do so much good work in getting our message out in every possible means possible, including the many social media resources and tools, our WTOP spots. And so again, thanks for everyone for allowing us to do God's work.

Tom Shakely [\(16:36\)](#):

Well, bishop, we covered some good ground today. There's some exciting things coming up, and of course, I think we're all mentally ready for Lent, or at least we're trying to get there. We got a little bit of time left as we're speaking here. So thanks for helping us, especially with your Reflections booklet, and in the discussion about the Light is On Campaign. Will you offer us a final blessing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(16:53\)](#):

And that's my prayer for everyone, Tom, that with the grace of God, this Lent will be a spiritually enriching experience leading to conversion and to repentance, to embracing a new prayer and fasting almsgiving, and above all to a deeper relationship, a more intimate relationship with the Lord who gives us new life by his own cross and resurrection. May this Lent be truly a source of abundant blessings for you and for all those you love as together we walk humbly with our God.

Speaker 2 ([17:25](#)):

Thank you for joining us on Walk Humbly, where Bishop Burbidge shares the joy of the Gospel through conversations on Catholic culture, faith, and family. Connect with Walk Humbly and Bishop Burbidge by texting WALKHUMBLY, all one phrase, to 84576 for occasional alerts and updates. Walk Humbly welcomes listener questions for Bishop Burbidge. Call or text the show anytime at 703-778-9100 with a question for bishop to consider in a future episode. Follow Bishop Burbidge on X @BishopBurbidge, and on Instagram @BishopMichaelBurbidge. Subscribe to our diocesan newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org to be equipped and inspired in your spiritual life as together we strive to do justice, love goodness, and walk humbly with our God.