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Bishop Michael Burbidge (00:00):

This is Bishop Michael Burbidge, and you are listening to the Walk Humbly Podcast .

Billy Atwell (00:08):

Welcome to the Walk Humbly Podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, chief communications officer for the diocese and your cohost. If you're listening to this podcast, then you are benefiting from the generosity of those who have given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal, the BLA supports many ministries throughout the diocese. One of which is the communications office. And I want to thank all those who have made this podcast and this office possible. If you haven't already, please make sure you rate this podcast and write a review on iTunes, Google play, Stitcher, Spotify, wherever you're listening.

Billy Atwell (00:39):

And if you're listening on YouTube, please make sure you subscribe and ring the notifications bell. You can sign up for our e-newsletter at [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org), and you can follow Bishop Burbidge on Twitter at [BishopBurbidge](https://twitter.com/BishopBurbidge), where every day you can read a short reflection on the gospel of that day. And make sure you're following the diocese on social media, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. And if you have a question for Bishop Burbidge, please send it to [info@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:info@arlingtondiocese.org), or you can text it to us, (703) 831-7013. I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how you doing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (01:13):

Doing well, Billy. Thank you. You and our listeners are doing well also and enjoying the new life we're experiencing in this Easter season.

Billy Atwell (01:22):

Absolutely, and the good weather that's come with it as well.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (01:25):

Yes.

Billy Atwell (01:25):

Before we get into our main topics, we had some good news about the COVID vaccine. Our governor announced that in addition to the vaccine being available to adults and those who are in at risk categories, well now it's available to people who are 16 and older, and he's expecting to start lifting some restrictions at the end of the summer, which was certainly good news. He added that more than half of Virginians have been vaccinated to date, which is really, I think really good news for all of us.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (01:50):

It's definitely, definitely good news. And it brings us, God willing closer to a place where our parishes can function completely normally once again. And I want the faithful to know certainly that we continue to monitor the situation and we are planning for how we will face back to normal operations. I think our listeners and parishioners know that just before Easter, we did ease some restrictions of ...

Billy Atwell (02:20):

That's right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:20](#)):

... the protocols just as a gradual let's get back to that point we all want to be, and we'll continue that process in the weeks to come. As always, our priority is keeping everyone safe and healthy, but nothing, nothing replaces us being together as the body of Christ and as the community of faith. So we'll keep everyone updated and posted as we move along.

Billy Atwell ([02:43](#)):

Absolutely. Last week, the trial of Derek Chauvin ended with a three guilty verdicts related to charges of second degree unintentional murder, third degree murder, manslaughter. We're several days out from that decision now, what are your thoughts about that case, especially as we have distance from the immediate reaction. What are your thoughts about that case and what does it mean for the nation?

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

Sure. And I think Billy, when we think about this case, it's quite saddening, heartbreaking in several ways. The action of a police officer led to the death of George Floyd. The pain and suffering Mr. Floyd's family has faced, and it's tarnished the way that some people view police officers. So my first reaction to the verdict was that I hoped and prayed it would bring the Floyd family and his friends some sense of peace that this would be a path of healing in their lives. We know that healing is a lifelong process, but at least a path. In the bigger picture, this case was about more than one murder or act of police brutality, as terrible as it was. For many, this reminded them of many other times when people in official capacity within our nation responded to Black people and other minorities with cruelty and absolute injustice.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:08](#)):

So those wounds are there for many people. And so, of course, we know that will resurface. As we say repeatedly, the sin of racism is fresh on people's minds and we need to be vigilant as a nation, as a people, as individuals to ensure that we root it out whenever we see it. Following the verdict, I hope and prayed that there was no violence because no outcome would justify violence or vandalism. We understand that. But I hope that our nation and pray God, we will continue to find healthy and productive ways of responding to injustices when we see them. So we have to be united in thoughts and prayers for what we're all hoping for or for our nation actually this time and we do.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([04:58](#)):

And we say this with respect and sensitivity, but we also hope, I don't want the majority of those in law enforcement or police officers, I know this is very discouraging for them to see one of their own wherever it may be give a bad face to the good work that so many of them carry out, risking their own lives each and every day. So I do want to offer a word of encouragement and prayers to our police officers and all those who carry out their job with integrity each and every day and to their families who support them.

Billy Atwell ([05:45](#)):

Absolutely. This next topic emanates from questions that we get every once in a while. So it's not one particular person who's asked this, but we get questions pretty regularly about cancel culture. And this is something we've seen develop little bit more in the news and so on. So we've all seen the instances where someone says something inappropriate or disrespectful and following different types of protests,

large and small, they might be fired for their jobs or driven into seclusion. Some instances are related to really egregious acts where we all agree, inappropriate actions and other could have been small offenses. And sometimes what's being deemed as cancelable, so to speak was actually the proclamation of truth.

Billy Atwell ([06:25](#)):

About someone's beliefs about homosexuality or transgender issues following, especially Judaeo, Christian thinking. In cases where a person was definitely wrong, maybe decades ago something surfaces from social media or something that they wrote, or a quote, how do we go about balancing a sense of justice with mercy and forgiveness? Because that's the theme that we see every day from these questions we get about cancel culture is we don't want to uphold bad behavior, but at the same time, how do we forgive people, especially when it's been maybe a long time since they said something inappropriate or whatever it might be?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:56](#)):

Yeah, you're right. And as you said, I hear this question many times also when I'm out visiting our parishes or whatever. And it's sometimes the question comes from the person who has done something like that and sometimes it comes from people who are struggling to forgive or to extend mercy. So it's a very good question. And I think the general attitude around cancel culture as we hear can be very destructive. The impulse to cancel someone is wrong because it treats the other person simply reduction of their actions, right? We all have inherent dignity, no matter our mistakes. And certainly, we look at the example of Jesus himself and how he treated people. So on the one hand, we have to be practical and realistic too, on the one hand, we know that our actions have consequences.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([07:57](#)):

We have to know that. When we do something ill advised or immoral or posts something that's ill-advised, or immoral, even though it was years ago, there is a spiritual and practical price to pay. It's like if you offend your spouse intentionally, you pay the price, right? If you speak poorly about a friend and they find out, it damages the relationship, something happens. There's a consequence to such behavior. But your question, I think, is more about whether we are a society that delights and people becoming more than who they were, or do we permanently reduce that person to their worst action?

Billy Atwell ([08:39](#)):

Yeah, is there a redemption for people?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([08:42](#)):

Yeah, in other words, do we look at someone's a whole life, or is that one action that which defines that person forever? And sometimes you see it even in the priesthood. It's 30 years later and someone says, "Do you remember your third year in the seminary?" And I say, "Okay, yeah, I shouldn't have done that." I'm 30 years a priest, I'm still living with it. A few people can all tell those examples. When we sin, we face the consequences of our sin. When we repent for our sins, here's the difference, right? God forgives us. So we, in turn should forgive one another, but beyond repentance and forgiveness is a word that we don't use a lot. We should though and it's called atonement. Atonement relates to making amends for our sins, making amends for our mistakes to repair the damage of the sin the best we can.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([09:44](#)):

You can't always fully repair the harm done, right? You can't, and you have to live with the scar of that. But of course, we have to recognize that we can certainly apologize. We can certainly take on the radical new way of speaking or acting, compared to what I said or did at many years ago, I would never allow that to become part of who I am now. And so, we have to practice atonement and we have to allow for that, that people who truly, really do want to change as our Lord would say, he would give them a chance, right? He would forgive people's sins, but he would say, "Don't sin anymore."

Billy Atwell ([10:34](#)):

Right, right, right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:35](#)):

Okay, I forgive you. But I mean, that doesn't mean what you did is okay, right?

Billy Atwell ([10:38](#)):

Exactly.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:39](#)):

Now of course we're seeing people being canceled for ridiculous reasons also now it's getting ...

Billy Atwell ([10:47](#)):

[crosstalk 00:10:47].

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([10:47](#)):

Yeah. But if, as a society, we are unforgiving and cancel someone rather than giving them a chance to atone for their sin, we should remember that would we want that to apply to us?

Billy Atwell ([11:00](#)):

Yeah, it's true.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([11:04](#)):

Because everyone knows the golden rule, treat others the way you want to be treated and emulate the mercy and the forgiveness of God while always upholding justice to our brothers and sisters, and always trying our best to bring out the best in one another. So it's very challenging. And it's also going to demand, this reality is going to demand courage, because as you said earlier in the introduction to this question, there's going to be people who want to cancel us out, just because of who we are as followers of Christ or because what we believe. So what are the crosses? The Lord said, "If you want to follow me, take up your cross." Well what does that mean in the year 2021? It may mean you might be canceled out.

Billy Atwell ([11:53](#)):

Yeah, and blessed are those who are persecuted.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([11:55](#)):

Right, exactly. So there may be a price. And I hear people, even my own family members in the workplace just walking on eggshells all the time. You're just afraid. So it's a balance Billy, but let's look always to the example Christ who never canceled out anyone, right? He always gave people a chance to begin anew, those who truly desire to repent, to atone for their sins.

Billy Atwell ([12:24](#)):

Wonderful. All right. A much happier topic, how about it? Mother's Day just around the corner. It's going to take place after or before our next podcast, so we won't be able to address it before then, but you've talked about your mom from time to time on the podcast. And this past year has been especially hard on moms, working moms they're balancing the telework obligations they have with their kids who are home doing school on the computer. And then for people who are stay at home moms, they're 100% all in, never getting a break, so I think they're getting worn out in different ways and something tells me no amount of flowers or dinner is going to quite match what they've done over the past year on Mother's Day. I think you'll agree there.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([13:03](#)):

Yeah, but still send the flowers.

Billy Atwell ([13:06](#)):

Doesn't hurt, yeah.

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

No, it's true. It's great. It's why it's great that we have these kinds of days, right? Every vocation is beautiful and should be celebrated, but every one, it's like a birthday, we should celebrate once a year, the special vocations. So Mother's Day is definitely one of those days to lift up our mothers. And yeah, it brings many sentiments and emotions. I'm sure people like myself who no longer have our mom with us here on earth, it brings back memories, many beautiful memories and happy memories, some sadness. You just wish you could be physically present with one another, but also in faith, knowing that one day, God willing, we will all be together. But I look at moms and parents, but let's just specifically talk about our moms on this topic. I hear their schedule and what they do and their responsibilities and it's just like, "You do this every day?" Wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:18](#)):

And over this past year, certainly, we depend on our moms in a unique way they have that ability to protect and to care. And so, I know moms are probably a little bit tired and trying to take care of everyone. So certainly join with your children and your grandchildren and saying, "Thank you, thank you for all that you do to love your spouse and love your children. Thanks for what you do moms for the church. For a really an imitation of our own blessed mother, the witness of care and compassion and generosity, and know that God looks down on your selflessness and he rejoices.

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

He blesses all your efforts." Sometimes, in our vocation, I'm sure moms are the same way we think of, "Oh, this one mistake I made, or I didn't do this, or I could've done this better, but God rejoices in your efforts or sacrifices and all the good that you're doing every, every day and blesses you and rewards you

for that. And so, know the appreciation of all those that love you. And I do hope our moms are the recipients of flowers and dinners and gift cards and all those things, but most of all love and thanks.

Billy Atwell ([15:40](#)):

Your main column for the Arlington Catholic Herald is about mental health, which is very fitting given that it's Mental Health Awareness Month. But this has been a year where we've heard about the consequence of COVID in the area of mental health. Talk a bit about why you decided to talk about mental health in this May column?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:58](#)):

Sure, sure. Mental health issues have risen dramatically during COVID. We all know that and we hear the statistics and at every age. And May is designated as Mental Health Awareness month. So I thought it was time to do so with the article. Some of our brothers and sisters, and I'm sure most likely that most of our families see up close, whether it be a immediate family member or a distant family member or friend, those who carry depression and anxiety and obsessions and addictions. Dysfunctional relationships and traumatic events and wounds that make life very, very difficult and take a toll emotionally and mentally and it's a daily struggle and it's a heavy burden for so many people. St. John Paul the second, as I mention many times, one of my favorite saints, reflected on the importance of sound psychological and emotional health for the integral development of a whole person, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:10](#)):

It was really beautiful how he does that. That we're body and soul and spirit, we're connected. And so, if we're not doing well mentally and emotionally, we're not doing well as a person. And so, this isn't anything new. The church has always supported the emotional wellbeing of God's people. So my hope and prayer is that for those who struggle with any mental health issues, God sends instruments to help, his instruments. And many times these are the professionals who have expertise, counseling or therapy, so ask for that help. It's like, if we had a stomach issue or persistent headaches, or joint pain, what do we do? In all those cases, we would seek the help of a professional and not feel embarrassed. And the same should be with mental health. And thank God, fortunately, it's not that stigma that it used to be. It's like ...

Billy Atwell ([18:13](#)):

There's been a huge cultural.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:15](#)):

... we're human.

Billy Atwell ([18:15](#)):

Right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:16](#)):

We are dealing with so many pressures, so many demands, and so many expectations upon us, which we're going through a pandemic, life's taken a toll. If that happens, it's life, it's being human. But as you would do for any other situations, seek the help that thank the good Lord is available. Our counselors and therapists and mental health care workers certainly have been extraordinary throughout this time

and continue to do such good work. And I know our Catholic charities offices would be willing to direct people to the assistance that they may need.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:52](#)):

Yeah. And that's what God does for us. He sends his healing love. He promises to heal us, to restore us. Well, how's he going to do that? He's going to do it through other people, his instruments. And thoughts and prayers and those who are supporting those dealing with mental health issues, praying for them too, because that takes a lot of perseverance and patience that God will give you those gifts.

Billy Atwell ([19:19](#)):

And you mentioned Catholic charities and John Paul the second's teaching the whole person. That has been the focus of Catholic charities through the pandemic.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:25](#)):

Yes.

Billy Atwell ([19:25](#)):

If someone's having issues like food security or housing, you have to imagine that's going to have other impacts on their life. And Catholic charities works with them to address the whole need, not just the thing that they came there for, because there's going to be other issues. And that's been beautiful to see play out as well.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:40](#)):

No, that is very, very true.

Billy Atwell ([19:44](#)):

So we have a couple of questions from the faithful, the first one's pretty intense, all right? So you have to put your philosopher hat back on. How do we balance God's will with freewill?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:54](#)):

Yeah. You hear that a lot. That's a good question. And it has been addressed by philosophers and theologians throughout the years. So I want to answer the question without simplifying it too much, but also, try my best to respond. So the first thing I would say is we have to be careful not to place God's will and human freewill in competition with one another, right?

Billy Atwell ([20:27](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:28](#)):

God's will is all encompassing. And by that, I mean, everything has been brought into being by his will, right? It's maintained in being by his will. So our freewill is created by God. It's what makes us unique as human persons. And it's within God's power that our freedom of will is exercised. Therefore, that freedom is never threatened by God's will. In fact, I always say that the proper exercise of our will is true freedom, because it's always according to his will. So I guess what I'm saying, the paradox is the more



we obey, sometimes that's seen as a rigid word, but the more we obey God's will, the more free we become. So I think what's really important for people to remember that freedom does not mean doing whatever we want.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:33](#)):

Even when we say that God can do whatever he wants, we do not mean that he can contradict and act against reason. God can't make a square circle or a three sided rectangle, right? Our freedom means the ability to do what are created and redeemed nature is designed and called to do. It means not being constrained or compelled in our choice for the good. So, I always like to use analogies and sometimes ones from sports. If you look at an athlete, for example, right? An athlete does not exercise his freedom properly when he disobeys the rules of the game. He does not become more free that way. He ruins the game actually. But when an athlete trains himself to play according to the rules, with precision, talent, endurance, then he's more free [inaudible 00:22:35] game.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:35](#)):

And that's what we admire in great athletes, men and women that not that they do whatever they want on the field, but that they are so free in playing the game and observing its rules, they make it look effortless and beautiful. That's what great athletes do, right? And so, we can, in a sense say, "Christians should be athletes for God." We should live according to the [inaudible 00:23:01] God with the same thing I just said, intensity, precision, generosity and it appears to be beautiful. It's in harmony. And this is what draws us to the saints, the beauty of the adhering to the will of God in all things. So never in competition and freedom of the exercise of will that leads to freedom.

Billy Atwell ([23:25](#)):

Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([23:25](#)):

So the person who asked that question is probably saying, "What did he just say?"

Billy Atwell ([23:30](#)):

No, I think it makes a lot of sense. And you used the sports analogy. I think of it with my kids learning the piano. Well, pure freedom is not their ability to just smash their fists on the keys and make whatever sound, what gives them true freedom is learning how to play. What are the rules of music that create a beautiful sound? And out of that comes freedom because within those constraints they're able to excel.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([23:52](#)):

Right, because our freewill is created by God.

Billy Atwell ([23:54](#)):

Right, right, right. That's great. Very good. Thank you. All right. One last, Carol asks, "If you had no monetary restrictions, what would you do for the diocese?" So the sky is the limit.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([24:06](#)):

Wow.



Billy Atwell ([24:07](#)):

Blank check.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([24:07](#)):

Isn't that a great question? It's nice to think about. I'd probably be much more relaxed, first of all. No, I think most of the people listening, I'm sure they would do the same thing. I think you would say, "Who's in most need? Who are the people who are hungry, who are without homes, without the food, without the basic necessities of life? Let's satisfy all their needs. Let's take away brothers and sisters being denied what so many of us take for granted. Let's fulfill all those needs." And so, in saying that, I think it's important to realize, but God asks that we at least do our part. So we may have no monetary restrictions, but we do have resources that we may be cannot do everything I would like to do.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([25:18](#)):

But we can do something as an individual and as a diocese and we have been. We have been since the history of this diocese, we have been doing that in a special way throughout this pandemic to ease the suffering of others, really to do beautiful corporate works of mercy. And again, as you mentioned earlier in the introduction, a word of thanks to the generosity of the faithful, who in so many ways have been doing, I think, what we all dream to do is to alleviate the suffering of all of our brothers and sisters.

Billy Atwell ([25:50](#)):

Absolutely. Any final thoughts, Bishop? And if you would send us off your blessing.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([25:53](#)):

No, Billy, but just to remind our faithful listeners that we are still in the Easter season, and it is a time of new life and new blessings that God promises to all of us. And I do wish those blessings to all of you. It's been a tough year for us, but I think in this Easter season, we're reminded in a special way that crisis conquered the darkness. He will continue to shower his Easter blessings upon us. And don't forget those first words of our risen Lord, peace be with you and pray that our listeners and our families will know the peace that only our risen Lord can give. And that together we will walk humbly with our God.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([26:39](#)):

Thank you for listening to the Walk Humbly Podcast. Make sure you check out episodes on iTunes, Google Play, Stitcher and Spotify. You can follow me on Twitter at BishopBurbidge where I offer gospel reflections each morning and share photos and updates of what is going on in the diocese of Arlington. Stay up to date with news event information, inspirational content by subscribing to our e-newsletter at [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org).