

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

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

Diana Snider ([00:08](#)):

Podcasting from the St. Clare Studio in the Diocese of Arlington, welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast. I'm Diana Snider, Deputy Director of Communications, sitting in for Billy Atwell, who is away on paternity leave, and your co-host for this podcast. 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.

([00:32](#)):

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([00:52](#)):

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Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:21](#)):

Thank you, Diana. And thank you for sitting in the co-host chair here. And thanks for mentioning Billy being on paternity leave. I want to congratulate Billy, Billy Atwell, and his wife Katie, on the birth of their fourth child. So Billy's taking some well-deserved time to be at home with his family and taking care of their beautiful new daughter, who I just saw, met in real time yesterday. Clare Francesca, who was born February 27, weighing six pounds, seven ounces. And Clare joins Billy and Katie's other children, Liam and Anna Kate and Angelina. So, asking God's blessings upon all of them.

Diana Snider ([02:03](#)):

Just want to know if you got to hold her.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:04](#)):

I did, I did. I'm a little nervous holding the babies that tiny, but I did it.

Diana Snider ([02:09](#)):

All right. Well, we can't wait to meet her here in the office. Bishop, for some of us, it's hard to believe that today is the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' election to the papacy. A man from the ends of the earth, as he said that night, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina was elected to the Chair of St. Peter, becoming the 266th pope. Bishop, you'll be celebrating Mass at the Cathedral today for this anniversary. So what are your thoughts about that historic day and about Pope Francis?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:46](#)):

Well, yeah, it is. It's so hard to believe that it was 10 years ago. Absolutely incredible. And, yeah, we all remember that day. We waited anxiously to see who our new pope would be, and out came, as you

mentioned, someone from Latin America, the soon-to-be Pope Francis, as he announced that day. And he was surprised, he was very close to retiring and had his life mapped out there, going to the conclave and thinking he would be retiring and continue to serve the Lord and a new transition. He never anticipated what the Holy Spirit had in mind, but he said "yes", as he has done throughout his priesthood, to God's will.

[\(03:31\)](#):

And I think it's a reminder to all of us that God has a plan for each of us. It's much bigger than we can anticipate or expect, but it's always, as we know, it's always in saying "yes" to God's will that we do find our joy and our growth in holiness. That's the path for sanctification that God has for us. It was a surprise to our Holy Father, but ever since that day, he has served the Church with zeal and dedication, making himself so available to God's people throughout the world in his many, many trips. He has been a staunch defender of life, the sacredness of all human life, calling to mind the dignity and respect we owe to every person as a child of God, reminding us of being stewards, good stewards of God's creation and God's many blessings.

[\(04:21\)](#):

Some of the words I think of when I think of all that Pope Francis has preached and written about these past 10 years - the first is joy. One of his first encyclicals - "The Joy of the Gospel" - knowing that joy that we all seek, but genuine joy is only found in relationship with Jesus. And the best way to evangelize is to radiate joy to others.

[\(04:47\)](#):

Why would anyone want to follow Christ if they don't see our joy in doing so? He talks about being a missionary disciple. It is a fascinating concept. All of us are called to be missionaries. In other words, just don't stay where we're comfortable. Go out, as he would say, to the margins where people in our own family or circle of friends who have wandered away from the Church, from the Lord. Just knock, just gently invite them back home. Maybe for Easter this year. We think of his word, his use of accompaniment, that we're all in this earthly journey together, but we have the same goal, to get to heaven. So we should accompany one another, encourage each other in faith, listen and respect one another. And his simplicity. He took the name St. Francis. Francis after Francis of Assisi in his simple way, his humble way of living as a reminder that we don't need all the things we're accumulating.

[\(05:43\)](#):

In fact, they're given to us to be shared with the poor and the homeless and the hungry and those who need us the most. And so I think we honor him by living as faithfully as possible to the truth, and joy of the Gospel. But also I think, what can we do for our Holy Father on this, the 10th anniversary? Remember what he did at the end of his blessing on that day he was announced to the world? He just bowed and he said, "Please pray for me." So let's promise, everyone. Let's promise to pray daily for Pope Francis - for his health, his wellbeing and his protection.

Diana Snider [\(06:18\)](#):

Yes, absolutely. Bishop, earlier this month and in late February, you celebrated the Rite of Election at the Cathedral of St. Thomas More and also in Ashburn at St. Theresa for men and women who will enter the Church at Easter. A total of 164 adults, or catechumens, from 39 parishes participated in this rite. These adults are now "the elect" and they'll be baptized at Easter and will receive the Sacraments of Initiation. Can you talk about this event in the life of the Church and what it means to those who are participating?

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

Yes. And you mentioned the 164 who formally participate in the Rite of Election, but there are others throughout our parishes. So many people will be coming into the faith at Easter, for them an Easter like no other, as they are baptized and make the Profession of Faith. It's just so beautiful just seeing, being with the people. We call them now "the elect" because that's what happened on that sacred day. And I always look out and I just say, "Boy, if I could hear your stories, how is it that now at this moment in your life that you now are entering into the initiation to the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic church?"

[\(07:39\)](#):

And the stories would vary remarkably from one person to another and who inspired them and how life's events changed for them and how they embraced this invitation at this moment in time. But I reminded them what they all had in common, even though their stories are so different: It's God who called them. he calls them "the elect". he calls them his chosen ones. And with his amazing grace, they, they've embraced that call. So we continue to support the elect as they make this journey to Easter through our own example and especially through our prayer. So please, everyone, join together in praying for the elect of our diocese.

Diana Snider [\(08:23\)](#):

Absolutely. My husband entered the Church that way, so I remember it very well.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(08:28\)](#):

Oh, sure. Exactly, exactly.

Diana Snider [\(08:29\)](#):

Bishop, you just returned from your yearly visit to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, where you visited with the seminarians in formation for the priesthood from our diocese. And then later this week, you'll be traveling up to Emmitsburg, Maryland, where you'll be visiting our seminarians at Mount St. Mary's Seminary. I know you look forward to these visits every day, so could you talk a little bit about why you do them and what you hope to find?

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

Sure. Well, we don't have our own seminary in the Diocese. Most dioceses don't. So, the Bishop is the chief formator of the seminarians, but he has to rely on solid seminaries training and forming our future priests on the human and intellectual and spiritual and pastoral level. And thank God we are so blessed to have such solid seminaries right nearby. St. John Paul II Seminary in Washington where our college seminarians are formed, participating in priestly formation and attending Catholic University of America.

[\(09:34\)](#):

And then for our seminarians who are in Theology, we have three in Rome in North American College and the others, we have 48 seminarians right now. Most of them are at St. Charles Borromeo, my alma mater, in Philadelphia and Mount St. Mary's Seminary. And so as the chief formator, I keep in touch, contact with our seminarians as frequently as possible because, God willing, I will one day be ordaining them, and so I have to know them.

[\(10:02\)](#):

And so we have a good solid relationship, transparency. But nothing replaces being one-on-one at the seminary with them. So I visit with them, pray with them, celebrate Mass with them, but also have a half hour one-on-one interview with them just to see how they're doing. And God bless our seminarians.

They're very transparent. They tell me what's going well, tell me where the challenges are. And maybe, with the Holy Spirit's help, I can guide them a little bit. But as I always say, when I visit our seminarians, I'm so proud of them because just last week when I was in St. Charles Seminary, I can't tell you the number of priests, or the faculty, lay teachers and staff, who stopped me and just said, "Bishop, the seminarians from Arlington, they stand out. They're a gift. They're the first ones to volunteer. They're thankful. They don't complain."

[\(10:57\)](#):

So I was very, very proud of them. And I really look at our seminarians through the goodness of God, the prayers of our people, and just think that our diocese just has such a bright future with so many wonderful priests in training.

Diana Snider [\(11:10\)](#):

So great.

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

So thank you everyone. Thanks for praying for vocations, but thanks for praying daily for our seminarians that God grants them perseverance.

Diana Snider [\(11:18\)](#):

Yeah, absolutely. Bishop, on Saturday, you participated in a special conference at Nativity Catholic Church in Burke. The topic for the conference, which was sponsored by the Peace and Justice Commission, was very weighty concerning the topic of human trafficking. It explored two kinds of trafficking, both commercial sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

[\(11:39\)](#):

The presenter was Bill Woolf, who's a former Fairfax County police officer who worked for the federal government on this issue and then went on to found the Anti-Trafficking International and Just Ask Prevention Project. Bill Woolf summed up his presentation by saying "people think of human trafficking as kids being kidnapped, kids disappearing, but 90% of the kids being trafficked live at home, sleep in their own beds, and go to school every day." Bishop, what were your impressions from this conference?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(12:10\)](#):

Well, Bill is such a powerful speaker who really brings this very horrific evil in front, in front of us, and it's very unsettling because it's not far away. It's right in our own communities. And, like Bill said, there was a time in life where you shut the door, you locked it and you shut the windows and you kept the bad people from entering. You can't do that anymore because why? The technology, the phone. And that's how most people, like you said, who are being trafficked, live at home and sleep in their own beds. And the engagement begins on the phone. And the people who are involved in this human trafficking, they know where the vulnerabilities are. They follow the social media and things like that, and they know where to attack, in a sense. And all the time, in a sense, it's those who are very, very innocent.

[\(13:14\)](#):

But Bill made it very clear, this is a human respect life issue. It's the dignity of the human person just being horrifically violated. And I was shocked, Diana, to learn that there are 50 million victims of human trafficking, modern day slavery, he called it, in the world. And that the United States, the United States is the third highest country of origin of victims. The United States. It is happening right here in northern

Virginia. 50% of those people who are forced into commercial sex are under the age of 18. The perpetrators are master manipulators. That's what they are, manipulators. And they look for vulnerable victims.

[\(13:56\)](#):

Often those who are struggling with self-esteem. And they see it, they see it on the social media. They see it, for example, when they are in a restaurant working there. And they can see maybe that young person who is going through something and they promise them something that's not real and lure them into this. And so I'm really gratified we're working to teach our students about this issue in all our schools through our Office of Child Protection and Safety. But, parents, you have to be extremely vigilant. Extremely vigilant.

[\(14:33\)](#):

Again, this is a reality right in our midst. Most of it is done through the social media, and they attack our young people, who seem like they're doing fine, but maybe are dealing with a little anxiety, a little low self-esteem. And these perpetrators know where to go, so be vigilant. Learn more about this issue.

Diana Snider [\(14:56\)](#):

Absolutely. And to learn more, you can go to the justaskprevention.org. All right. So, Bishop, it was just a year ago that the eyes of the world were riveted on Eastern Europe when Russian forces invaded their neighbor Ukraine. It's a former member of the Soviet bloc, but it's now an independent country. So can you talk about what that event has meant for so many people in that country and in Russia and around the world?

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

Yeah, it's so sad, isn't it, just to think this has been going on for one year? And that's the thing with evil though. And this is evil. This is unnecessary, and it's a loss of lives every day. Loss of property, loss of the basic necessities of life, causing such hardship each and every day. It is just so evil. And the problem is that sometimes with evil, we grow a little numb waking up every day and thinking of this reality. When we first saw a year ago, of course, we were horrified that this invasion was taking place, this violence, this war was taking place, but it's happening every day. And so our sense of urgency in praying for the end of this war and for it to cease immediately should be at the top of our prayer list every day. There are so many people just suffering and the innocent loss of lives.

[\(16:37\)](#):

We welcomed one of the auxiliary bishops from the Ukraine to our diocese about a month ago and he spoke at St. Joseph's Parish in Herndon. And I was able to meet with him one-on-one and when you sit across from someone who is witnessing this every day, who's lost people he loves and cherishes, who have been killed, who have lost everything and it's just so heartbreaking.

Diana Snider [\(17:06\)](#):

Oh, goodness.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(17:06\)](#):

And he just begged. He begged. He said, "Bishop, please, please have your people please pray. We appreciate all the relief we're having and people trying to help us, but we need prayers. This has to end."

So it's a powerful reminder that this continues and that we are called to be prayerful in asking the God of peace to bring the end to this war.

Diana Snider ([17:30](#)):

Yes, absolutely. We will continue to pray for them. Bishop, as you know, this Friday is the third week of Lent, and it corresponds with St. Patrick's Day. Now, you announced earlier this month that you have granted a dispensation for the obligation of abstinence from meat on this day, this coming Friday, March 17. Now, I've heard the expression that "everybody's Irish on St. Patrick's Day" and the faithful can still have a feast day and celebrate with the corned beef and cabbage. But in all seriousness, can you talk about what this means and have you ever done a dispensation like this for any other feast days that fall on Fridays?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:13](#)):

We've done it for Good St. Joseph also at some point.

Diana Snider ([18:16](#)):

Oh, okay.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([18:17](#)):

And it is a dispensation. When I was asked to consider that, the first thing I thought of was my father, who's Irish. Burbidge is actually an Irish name, and he was very Irish. I used to march with him in the St. Patrick's Day parade. And I'm thinking, "If I don't grant this dispensation, he may disown me." He's up in heaven, but he may disown me.

([18:38](#)):

So it is Cardinal Gregory, Archbishop Lori, most of us in the region have granted this dispensation. And it is. St. Patrick's Day has taken on this sense of festivity, which brings people together. I was just yesterday at the Basilica of St. Mary's for an Irish Hooley and great dancing. And like you said, some of the food, corned beef and cabbage and ham. And it's good. It brings people together, it brings joy.

([19:06](#)):

And it was so nice to see so many young families there. And that will happen again on Friday. So that's the reason that we granted the dispensation, but I do remind everyone in my official statement that if you are taking advantage of that dispensation, not everyone is, but if you are, you're also strongly, strongly encouraged to do a work of charity and exercise a piety or a comparable penance on some other occasion during that third week of Lent.

Diana Snider ([19:32](#)):

Right. Right. It still is Lent.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:34](#)):

Yes, it's still Lent. Yes, exactly.

Diana Snider ([19:36](#)):

Okay. So, Bishop, as we wind up here, I know that this is your favorite time of year because of March Madness coming up. Hopefully, you've had an opportunity to look at the brackets. So it's time. We're

going to put you on the spot here. Do you have any observations going into the tournament? And, of course, we need to see or hear who your Final Four are.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:00](#)):

Yeah, no, it's great. March Madness is, after the Super Bowl, for me - I'm a sports fan. The sports I like are kind of on hold for a little bit, but March Madness is like, "Here we go." It's a great tournament. And some of the excitement of March Madness is it's 64 teams start, I think, and it's one and done. You lose one game, you're done. And there's only one team standing at the end. So I say, "Thank God that's not the way in our spiritual lives. One and done." The good Lord-

Diana Snider ([20:30](#)):

Good point.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:32](#)):

...allows us to stumble and fall, but is there to pick us up so that we can begin anew. And that's a great message of Lent, that if we stumble and fall, we're not done. Our God is a God of mercy and God of love, he will pick us up. He always lets us begin anew. But the sporting event is fun. It's enjoyment. And so, yeah, of course, I've done some research and maybe sought some advice here and there to come up with my Final Four, so I'll be happy to share my prediction. But I just encourage everyone, please don't rely on them.

([21:10](#)):

So, yeah, for the men's bracket, I have going to the Final Four Alabama and Duke on one side. So I think Duke is coming on really strong at the right time, so keep your eye on Duke. And then on the other side, Texas and Gonzaga. And Gonzaga is kind of a surprise pick because I have them beating Kansas, who many people have them winning the whole thing. So they're my Final Four. And the women's side, I thought it was a little bit easier. We had South Carolina and Iowa, and I have to put Villanova in there, my alma mater there. But Villanova women are playing really well at the right time. They're like Duke on the men's side. They're getting hot at the right time. And I always think you have to include Yukon there too.

Diana Snider ([21:59](#)):

Sure. Of course.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:59](#)):

So they're my picks on the women's bracket.

Diana Snider ([22:02](#)):

Okay. Good to know. We're going to watch.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:04](#)):

Yeah, don't rely. This is a very unreliable source.

Diana Snider ([22:06](#)):

Okay, so Bishop, one final basketball note, and then if you can take us out with your blessing, we understand that within the Burbidge family, there is a state basketball champion.

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

Yes, thank you for mentioning that. My brother, Fran, is a coach at Westtown in girls' basketball, varsity basketball, and for the second year in a row took them to the state championship. So really happy for Coach Fran there.

Diana Snider ([22:30](#)):

Coach Fran. Yeah.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:32](#)):

Thanks. Well, thank you everyone. Diana, thank you for co-hosting today.

Diana Snider ([22:37](#)):

Thank you.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:37](#)):

You did a great job. And we appreciate all that you're doing. And again, wishing Billy and Katie and Clare and their beautiful children many blessings. And, everyone, we are continuing this Lenten journey. We're recording this on the third week of Lent. And if your Lent, if it got off to a great start and maybe has fallen off a little bit and out now that we're at the third week, regroup. Again, take Lent day by day. It's never too late - saying, "You know what, I maybe have kind of not been living those Lenten practices or promises I made with the prayer and fasting, almsgiving and what we gave up for Lent."

([23:15](#)):

But you know what? It's the third week. God lets us start over and get on track so that we really enjoy and are prepared to celebrate the glory of Easter, and praying for God's abundant blessings upon all of you, so that we may continue to walk humbly with our God. Thank you for listening to the Walk Humbly podcast. Make sure you check out more 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 and inspirational content by subscribing to our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org.