

- Bishop Burbidge: This is Bishop Michael Burbidge, and you are listening to the Walk Humbly Podcast.
- Billy Atwell: Welcome to the Walk Humbly Podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, Chief Communications Officer for the Diocese, and your co-host. If you're listening to this podcast, then you are benefiting from the generosity of thousands and thousands of people throughout the Diocese who have contributed to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal. The BLA, as we call it, supports a lot of ministries in this diocese, one of which includes the Communications Office here at the Chancery. So we want to say thank you to all [00:00:30] those who made it possible this past year.
- And if you haven't yet, please make sure you rate this podcast, and write a review on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, or Overcast. If you're listening on YouTube, please subscribe and ring the bell. A lot of people decide what they listen to or view by the reviews there, so please go and offer that up. You can sign up for our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org. A lot of times that's the head of the spear for major news that we're releasing, is that e-newsletter; the other, obviously, being this podcast.
- You [00:01:00] can follow Bishop Burbidge on Twitter @BishopBurbidge, where every day you can read a short reflection on the Gospel of that day. Make sure you're following the Diocese on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. And if you have a question for Bishop Burbidge, email us at info@arlingtondiocese.org, or call us at (703) 831-7013. The inbox has been a little light lately, so if you have questions, please send them again. It's info@arlingtondiocese.org. I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how you doing?
- Bishop Burbidge: Billy, I'm doing well, thank [00:01:30] you. I had a wonderful weekend, in some beautiful parts of our diocese.
- Billy Atwell: Yeah.
- Bishop Burbidge: And confirmation and celebrated Mass for Cursillo, members of our Hispanic community, celebrating their 48th anniversary. Beautiful mass yesterday for persons with disabilities, and so inspired to see so many people there who, just in so many ways, show us the face of God, and all those who support and help them. And last [00:02:00] night, realized I'm not as young as I used to be. I was at a campus ministry program at George Mason. And Mass was over at 10:00 PM, when we would begin the reception at that time. So I was thinking, "OK, my body clock's a little different here." But I had a blast, as I always do when with our young people. You mentioned our Bishop's Annual Appeal; and our Campus Ministry is supported by that. And I have to say, the Campus Ministry programs we have throughout our diocese are just tremendous, really so present [00:02:30] to our young people, leading them closer to Christ, forming them to be leaders within our Church. So it's always very, very inspiring and energetic.
- Billy Atwell: Very good. Well, hopefully you had an extra cup of coffee this morning.

Bishop Burbidge: I did. I did.

Billy Atwell: Because we have a lot of big topics to talk about. So this week's a pretty important one; you've been a bishop here in this diocese for five years. But you've got an important announcement for us.

Bishop Burbidge: Yes, Billy. This is my fifth anniversary as Bishop of Arlington. I cannot believe it's five years already. And believe me, I thank God every day that he has sent me to this beautiful [00:03:00] diocese, vibrant diocese, with such great priests and faithful and religious... And I could not be happier. And it's a growing, vibrant diocese. So, what we have to work on, is the famous strategic plan for our diocese.

Billy Atwell: All right.

Bishop Burbidge: And I know some people, when they hear "strategic plan," it sometimes becomes this big binder that sits on a shelf; but that's not our strategic plan. This is going to be a playbook. It's going to be a working document [00:03:30] that guides us for the next five years throughout our diocese. We have many, many blessings, but we also have many spiritual and pastoral needs. And so, to address them, I commissioned a Diocesan Strategic Plan with common goals for the next five years.

And my hope that it is this plan that will unite us in our prayer, and our work together. And it came from the diocese, from the faithful in the diocese. It's not a chancery or a Bishop Burbidge plan. [00:04:00] It was the product of broad consultation with priests, religious, and laity over the last year; we held 26 focus groups, and conducted three surveys, and met with all the priests to review it. We received the input of hundreds and hundreds of parishioners throughout our diocese. And we heard about those blessings and challenges as our faithful are striving to grow closer to Christ. And so, it was that input, led by our Chief Operations Officer, Ward Jones, to [00:04:30] whom I'm so grateful.

This plan informs us where we need to direct our prayers and our resources and our efforts, because there's so many great opportunities ahead of us, so many things to do, but we just can't do them all.

Billy Atwell: Right.

Bishop Burbidge: So that's what a strategic plan helps you to do.

Billy Atwell: Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge: And so, to fulfill this mission, we're united in the goals. So here are the goals that I'll be announcing in a video today, and a letter to the faithful; but after lots of consultation and prayer, we came up with these six major goals: to revitalize evangelization and faith formation, [00:05:00] to cultivate authentic discipleship

in Christ, to invigorate Catholic education for all, to strengthen parish and family life, to foster one communion of many cultures, and to deepen our commitment to charitable works. So to achieve our goals, first of all, we need God's grace. We need lots of prayers. And we need time, commitment, unity; and together, I think we can do great things. So, I'm asking all our listeners and faithful in the Diocese to [00:05:30] keep your ears and eyes open, and to help me move this plan forward.

Billy Atwell: And I want to read the mission of it, because I think this really strikes at the heart of your pastoral ministry; but obviously, this is something that everybody can jump on board with. "In communion with the universal Church, we strive to be disciples of Jesus Christ, by proclaiming the Kingdom of God in both word and sacrament throughout our diocese, and by working together in service of charity and mercy, so that all may know the joy of the Gospel." And that joy of the Gospel has been really a hallmark of your ministry; the joy that we should have. If we're [00:06:00] truly living the faith, there will certainly be challenges, but we face them joyfully. I think especially in our chosen time now, that we've been asked to serve Christ in his church, that joy is needed more than ever.

Bishop Burbidge: Absolutely. And a joy and a sense of confidence only though, if we let God lead us.

Billy Atwell: Right.

Bishop Burbidge: And to be open to His Holy Spirit, that he may be leading us in new ways; ways that we did not imagine. So there is joy, but again, led by God, enlightened by the Spirit.

Billy Atwell: And there's information on the Strategic Plan. You can break it down a [00:06:30] little bit more, and see some of the particulars at arlingtondiocese.org/strategy. We didn't get too inventive there with the URL; we wanted to keep it really simple. So arlingtondiocese.org/strategy. Your Excellency, recently Pope Francis announced a Synod of Bishops, titled "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission." Before we get into kind of the basics of what the synod is intended to do, explain what a synod is.

Bishop Burbidge: Yeah. A Synod of bishops is a process, it's a gathering, by which bishops throughout [00:07:00] the world—and it's not uncommon; all of our Holy Fathers have done this in recent history, throughout the world—offer counsel and perspective to the Holy Father regarding pastoral matters in our own diocese, and within our Church. Synod actually comes from a Greek word, which means "common road." It is much like our Strategic Plan.

Billy Atwell: That's right.

Bishop Burbidge: Common road.

Billy Atwell: That's right. Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge: So, it begins with a preparatory document that offers a blueprint of what the particular synod will cover. It can cover whatever [00:07:30] issues the Holy Father wants to explore. And we received this document in preparation for the synod in early September; I began reviewing it with my staff. The process concludes with an ordinary general assembly of the synod bishops in October 2023. So the bishops of the United States will unite bishops to represent us in that general assembly.

And I'm working now to convene a Working Group. I've asked Fr. Don Planty, Pastor of Saint Charles Borromeo, [00:08:00] to be our coordinator of this group.

Billy Atwell: Oh, great.

Who will help us to implement focus groups and surveys of the faithful, which I will coordinate through our pastors. With more than half a million Catholics in our diocese, Billy, most will not be able maybe to participate directly. But my hope is that by gathering a diverse group of Catholics, I'll receive council and feedback from a wide representative body.

We are ahead of the game, because we just, as I said, just did all these listening sessions and focus groups.

Bishop Burbidge: Yeah. And focus groups, right?

Billy Atwell: But [00:08:30] there's some different things that our Holy Father wants us to do, including trying to find ways... And this might be a little bit challenging, but trying to find ways to reach out to good people who, maybe for one reason or another, have wandered away from the Church and are not active. And so, to hear from them, "Well, what's causing that separation? And where can the Church accompany you and help you along this common road together, this common path?" So we're a little bit ahead of the game. And after [00:09:00] doing all of this work, I would have to write a 10-page report, send that to the Holy Father, based on this local needs in this diocese.

Bishop Burbidge: It's kind of coincidental, I guess, for us, that having completed a Strategic Planning process where there's consultation, and we're listening, and trying to respond to the needs, the Holy Father's doing the same with the synod of Bishops. It's just kind of funny timing for us.

Exactly. Right. And you know? And that's the whole thing of consultation and collaboration and a synodal process. Actually, it takes [00:09:30] place in our diocese all the time.

Billy Atwell: Right. Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge: I consult with our deans and with our finance council, our pastors have pastoral councils. We meet as an executive staff, a joint administrative body. Whenever I'm out in the parishes, I'm there to listen. So, Holy Father is just emphasizing it, and just trying to join our efforts together.

Billy Atwell: Yeah, it's like a spirit of listening.

Bishop Burbidge: Yeah.

Billy Atwell: That's great. Very good. Bishop, early voting has begun in Virginia for state and local offices. [00:10:00] One issue that many of us did not expect to be so clearly in the forefront this year, is abortion. Sometimes it seems to be taking a backseat to other issues, from time to time. And at the national level, there's a context for this; the Texas abortion law is expected to go to the US Supreme Court; and Congress, the House, just passed the so-called "Women's Health Protection Act." It's unlikely to pass the Senate, but it's devastating that it was actually passed in the House. It's one that you and Bishop Knestout have been outspoken about, and issued statements about [00:10:30] it. And the Virginia Catholic Conference has been sounding the alarm.

While these issues are at the national level, we have candidates for governor here, and they're discussing the issue of abortion, and talking about how abortion is on the ballot in Virginia. What are your thoughts on how the issue of abortion has been a focal point, in a unique way in this run, both for our own governor's race, but for national conversations as well?

Bishop Burbidge: Yeah. Well, of course, the fact that we're even having to discuss and debate this issue [00:11:00] is very sad. We have the Gospel of life. It's very clear that, in our teaching, as we follow the path that Jesus gave to us, he gave us a Gospel of life. He reminded us constantly that God created us in his own image and likeness; that his Holy Spirit lives and dwells within us, in all of life, from conception to natural death; and every stage is to be revered, is to be cherished, is to be treasured, and [00:11:30] is to be protected. So, to me, that is just so clear. The gift of life is the most precious gift that God gives to us, along with our Faith. And the fact that we're having to discuss that within the womb of a mother is a child; and not only are we discussing the legalized abortion that so sadly exists in our station—now, candidates are talking about more aggressive means, as we saw in that Act that you just talked about, [00:12:00] to make it even more harmful, and to kill more children.

Billy Atwell: And to make us pay for it.

Bishop Burbidge: Exactly. And make us pay for it, which is absolutely ridiculous. So I do think, especially as we begin October Respect Life Month, I think we have to be always vigilant. That is, if we don't get this right in the beginning, get life right at the beginning, then we should expect it. Everything else is going to crumble, and

[00:12:30] Bishop Knestout and I, again, when we issue these statements, we do it in a confident and joyful way, because we're pro-life.

Billy Atwell: Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge: It's that life. It's about celebrating life. And it's about reminding people that the Church is always there to accompany anyone in a difficult situation or a challenging pregnancy, to be there, to walk with you, to [00:13:00] support you financially, to provide for your child—even, sadly, when mother and father choose abortion, to be there afterwards, because healing will definitely be necessary.

Billy Atwell: That's right.

Bishop Burbidge: This is like... This is about life. It's something we celebrate. And when you hear candidates who say exactly the opposite, boy, that'd better raise our attention. Because we have to be defenders of life; and one of the [00:13:30] ways we defend life is to elect officials who are going to chart the course to protect life.

Billy Atwell: How critical is that issue, when people are considering all the issues that are going into an election deal? Abortion's not the only issue; there's other issues that I've talked about. How much of priority should people place on abortion at the ballot box?

Bishop Burbidge: Well, again, we have to get life right from the beginning; and it is what we always say, the most prominent topic or moral issue that we're facing, because of the impact. It's [00:14:00] happening every single day.

Billy Atwell: Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge: Unborn children are being killed.

Billy Atwell: Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge: So because of the gravity of not the act itself, but the sheer number of how this is happening, how can that not be something that gets our primary attention?

Billy Atwell: I thought of it, in terms of context this weekend; I studied the Rwandan Genocide in college. And every year in this country, we abort as many children as the Rwandan Genocide killed. And [00:14:30] imagine if every year, a genocide like that was happening in our country; year after year after year, since the 70s; how would people not be out in the streets and speaking up? How would that not be the most important issue?

Bishop Burbidge: Right.

Billy Atwell: At the ballot box?

Bishop Burbidge: Right.

Billy Atwell: It's really unbelievable.

Bishop Burbidge: So, I always encourage our faithful, "Please. As citizens, we have the sacred duty to vote; but we have to be faithful citizens."

Billy Atwell: That's right.

Bishop Burbidge: "And we cannot separate our faith from our vote."

Billy Atwell: Absolutely.

Bishop Burbidge: That just cannot happen. Yeah.

Billy Atwell: And that's made easier by the Virginia Catholic Conference. [00:15:00] They make it easy for you to do your homework. You don't have to go and dig through every candidate's website. They've done a lot of this for you. So in early October, the Virginia Catholic Conference is going to be putting out a side-by-side chart, showing the position of the statewide candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general on major issues. They also have a chart on the website that shows you how your state senators and delegates voted in the 2021 General Assembly. That's very important to see how they performed—not just what they say, but how did they actually vote? So to check those out, [00:15:30] go to vacatholic.org; it's really imperative. Again, the Virginia Catholic Conference makes this really easy for you to see what's going on there.

Bishop Burbidge: And Billy, that's important too, that when we provide this as a resource, we're just using the words of the candidates.

Billy Atwell: Right.

Bishop Burbidge: It's not our interpretation.

Billy Atwell: Right.

Bishop Burbidge: It's direct quotes from what the candidate has said, or has posted on the candidate's website.

Billy Atwell: Yeah. Yeah. We pull right from their own language. It feels like an eternity since [00:16:00] the Diocesan Pilgrimage. I think the pilgrimage four years ago was my first week on the job, because I met a lot of my coworkers actually at the Pilgrimage. I think, "How long has it been since we've had one of those?" But I think you have some good news for us.

Bishop Burbidge: Yeah. So we are having our Diocesan Pilgrimage to the Basilica Shrine in Washington, D.C., which is always such a joyful, inspiring, spiritually enriching experience on October the 30th, Saturday. I know, [00:16:30] I hope all of our parishioners are informed of that through their parish bulletin, and certainly through our diocesan social media, including our website. The theme for this year's pilgrimage is St. Joseph, because we're in the year of St. Joseph, the guardian of the body of Christ. As we prayerfully gather as one diocesan family, with the shrine devoted to his wife, and our Mother. And so we try to make it a family event. There's something for everyone, even a seek-and-find for [00:17:00] children; and we're going to have them going through the whole Basilica, which is a pretty large facility. And they have fun trying to find the shrines and different places like that. So it's really going to be a great event.

And Billy, even though it's just a day, and it's not too far, a pilgrimage is a great reminder, right, that where we're going. It's a reminder we are in a pilgrimage here on earth; it's our journey, and it's our goal to get to heaven. So that's what a pilgrimage reminds us of. And we travel in the [00:17:30] company of one another, to help each other get to heaven, with always the protection of our Blessed Mother and the graces of her son. So this brings that all home. And it reminds us that we are a family, a diocesan family, united as brothers and sisters.

Billy Atwell: And one of the most beautiful parts about it is how many strollers you see going around.

Bishop Burbidge: I know. Yeah. It really is.

Billy Atwell: Families with little kids, keeping them engaged the whole time. And frankly, our diocese does a great job at making it very family-friendly. So speaking on that, I want just to address some of the details related [00:18:00] to the pilgrimage. Boxed lunch options will be available at the Shrine for about \$10 each, but pilgrims are encouraged to bring their own bagged lunch as well, because there's a limit on how many can be sold. The Shrine is wheelchair-accessible for anyone who needs it. There will also be a sign interpreting for ASL, for the deaf. For more information about the Shrine and its accessibility, and all those kinds of things, go to their website: nationalshrine.org. Currently, the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in D.C. does require masks [00:18:30] for all visitors, so everyone inside will need to wear a mask.

You can check up on those updates as we get closer to the event. And you can see the full schedule of events, the different liturgies. It's a great day, with a lot of stuff going on. Go to arlingtondiocese.org. We don't make it hard to find, I promise you that.

A couple plugs real quick: the Spanish-language lay Catholic spirituality movement called Cursillo, which Bishop Burbidge mentioned at the top of the podcast, celebrates 40 years in our diocese. The Herald has put together a story

on that. Go to catholicherald.com [00:19:00] to check out that story. Bishop Burbidge is publishing a column in an upcoming edition of the Herald, titled "Called to be Defenders of Life." You don't want to miss that. That will be on the Catholic Herald website. Again, that's catholicherald.com. Sign up for the Herald's e-newsletter; it's a great way to get these stories sent directly to your inbox at catholicherald.com.

Bishop, before we get to your final thoughts, quick question: Eagles and Dallas this weekend.

Bishop Burbidge: Tonight.

Billy Atwell: And the Cowboys, it's tonight, yes.

Bishop Burbidge: Oh, tonight. Sorry, sorry, [00:19:30] sorry.

Billy Atwell: Yes. Yeah.

Bishop Burbidge: It's tonight.

Billy Atwell: You were ready.

Bishop Burbidge: Just what I need, another late night.

Billy Atwell: What are your predictions for that one?

Bishop Burbidge: Well, you know I'm a die-hard optimist; I'm an Eagles fan. But I think it's going to be a tough game for the Eagles.

Billy Atwell: Is it? Okay. What's making it tough?

Bishop Burbidge: I think it's Dallas' first game at home.

Billy Atwell: Oh, okay.

Bishop Burbidge: After all these years. So they're on the road, and I think it's going to be a great game. But yeah, I'm usually the optimist, but not I'm not feeling it this morning. Maybe later today, I'll feel a little bit better about that.

Billy Atwell: Very good. [00:20:00] And any final thoughts before you... And then, if you would send us off with your blessing?

Bishop Burbidge: Yeah. Just that I'm really excited; this week, I'll be at my alma mater, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, where many of our priests have graduated into priestly formation, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the seminary.

Billy Atwell: Wow.

Bishop Burbidge: Isn't that incredible?

Billy Atwell: Wow. That is incredible.

Bishop Burbidge: Yeah. And I had the great honor to be the homilist for the Mass. But I have to tell you, this is a pressure one, because the congregation is only bishops, [00:20:30] priests, and seminaries.

Billy Atwell: Oh. A lot of theologians, and lots of ears.

Bishop Burbidge: A lot of, lot of people listening to that one.

Billy Atwell: You've got to bring out your A game for that one.

Bishop Burbidge: So people, say a little prayer there. And yeah, I would just like to also just say, tomorrow I'll finish the business I do to our Catholic Campus Ministry programs in our diocese and high schools, and some of our great schools I have been visiting. And I just want to, again, just express, first of all, words of thanks to our parents, who [00:21:00] make so many sacrifices, especially in this day and age, with adjusting their schedules and everything like that, to allow their children to attend our Catholic schools, where five days a week, our students learn about their faith. They're able to pray. They're able to go to Mass. It's just wonderful. But our Catholic educators just like last year, are heroic.

Billy Atwell: Really amazing work.

Bishop Burbidge: In the midst of these many challenges. I know the pressure that they're under; but they are just doing such a tremendous job. And the thing is, our students are together, and they're happy. And our families understand [00:21:30] that we want to continue to partner with their parents, and their faith formation, provide excellence in education; and that priority, which we will always keep at the highest priority, of keeping them safe and healthy.

Billy Atwell: Absolutely.

Bishop Burbidge: And our schools are doing a great job, but just a word of thanks to all of our Catholic educators.

Billy Atwell: Perfect. And if you'd send us off with your blessing.

Bishop Burbidge: Sure. And we just ask God's blessings upon all of us, and upon our diocese, especially as we embark on this strategic plan, and prepare for our pilgrimage; that we're always reminded, Lord, it's you who lead, [00:22:00] and we who follow. May your Holy Spirit inspire us, purify us, strengthen us and sanctify us, so that, together, we may walk humbly with our God.

This transcript was exported on Sep 28, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

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, @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, [00:22:30] and inspirational content, by subscribing to our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org.