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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 (00:07):

Podcasting from the St. Clare Studio here in the Diocese of Arlington. Welcome to the Walk Humbly podcast. I'm Billy Atwell, chief communications officer for the Diocese and your co-host. We want to thank those who have given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal both this year and in years past because you have made this podcast possible, but all the work of the Communications Office and so many other offices of the Diocese possible. We are so grateful for your generosity. If you haven't yet, please rate this podcast or write a review wherever you're listening to it. If you're on YouTube, please subscribe and ring the notifications bell. Sign up for our e-newsletter at [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org). Follow Bishop Burbidge on Twitter and on Instagram. On Twitter, he provides a short Gospel reflection of that day and on Instagram we share various messages from his homilies and this podcast and other places as well.

(00:55):

You can follow the Diocese on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Send your questions to [info@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:info@arlingtondiocese.org), or you can send us a message on social media. Before we get started, just a reminder that Natural Family Planning Awareness Week is July 23rd through 29th, and the goal of the campaign is to focus attention on the Church's magnificent teaching surrounding human sexuality, conjugal love and responsible parenthood, as well as to inspire the faithful to find out more about natural family planning. It's surprising how many people were not well formed and they weren't taught these things. Well, there's great resources at [usccb.org](http://usccb.org) as well as on our diocesan website, [arlingtondiocese.org](http://arlingtondiocese.org), that can teach a little bit more about it, and our Marriage and Family Life Office is very, very helpful in this regard.

(01:39):

They have NFP counselors and mentors who can really help guide you in natural family planning. For today's topics, we're going to be talking about a letter, a corrective letter that was written to pro-abortion Catholic members of Congress. We're going to talk about Supreme Court decisions related to affirmative action and free speech, as well as a new diocesan family medical leave policy and how that came about. I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you doing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge (02:05):

Billy, I'm doing well. I hope you and all of our listeners are enjoying the summer and hopefully getting some time for relaxation and refreshment and time with families. So wishing everyone a good rest of the summer.

Billy Atwell (02:18):

Our last podcast was a lot of fun. We were at WorkCamp and it was great talking with those youth and hearing all the feedback and answering their questions.

Bishop Michael Burbidge (02:25):

It was so energizing.

Billy Atwell (02:26):

That was a good time. It was a lot of fun.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:27](#)):

They really lift your spirits for sure.

Billy Atwell ([02:29](#)):

Absolutely. I was thinking about WorkCamp and looking into the schedule ahead for the summer, I saw a myriad of activities and events-initiatives, aimed at helping young people grow closer to God and in some cases discern their vocation, and that's tough to do maybe with a middle schooler or a high schooler, kind of get them focused on that. But talk a bit about some of these opportunities and why this is such a clear focus of your ministry as a bishop here in the Diocese.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([02:55](#)):

Sure. We are honored as a church, as a diocese, to assist parents in their role of the formation of their children, which is of course intellectual and spiritual and emotional. So it's a privilege to do whatever we can to assist the parents with this tremendous responsibility. And it's year-round, parents know that very well, so does the Church, so does our diocese. And so we find a number of activities to invite the young people, the youth of our diocese, to participate that provide fun, provide learning experiences and great social opportunities to meet other young people who share their core beliefs and convictions from around the Diocese. You mentioned WorkCamp, which, I think from our last podcast, our listeners have a pretty good sense of what that entails. But coming up this weekend and next weekend, we have a kind of vocation camp.

([03:56](#)):

It's called Quo Vadis for the young men and then FIAT for the young women. And these are high school students who are trying to be supported in discerning God's call. And that all begins with: How can I be a better disciple, a faithful follower of Christ? It's not just for students who are thinking about becoming consecrated religious or priests, but want to learn how to be a disciple, how to pray, how to hear God's voice. And so these camps, which are longstanding, I mean they've been going on in this diocese for a while, are just so powerful. It includes certainly time for prayers, good speakers, lots of activities. It's for young people so we want them to have lots of energy as well and use that energy. And both camps are filled, they fill up very, very quickly.

Billy Atwell ([04:52](#)):

I'm always surprised how every year, when you say discernment camp, how many kids will want to go. Well, the reputation has gotten around the Diocese and it's very hard sometimes to get in because they're just at capacity to how many people they can have. But it's so wonderful and there's all kinds of activities. It's not just talks and lectures and things.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:08](#)):

Oh, no, it's fun.

Billy Atwell ([05:08](#)):

There's a lot of the soccer games and things going on, and I think that's why people keep coming back is it's so well-rounded as a camp.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:15](#)):

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And I always hear too that, it's really nice to hear that some of the friendships that are formed at Quo Vadis and FIAT are lifelong.

Billy Atwell ([05:25](#)):

Absolutely.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:25](#)):

And so some of the friendships, I just heard this the other day, that they go on in life and many get married and some become priests, and some of the priests have been asked to celebrate the weddings of friends they met at Quo Vadis or FIAT.

Billy Atwell ([05:44](#)):

Oh wow, what a small world. How wonderful.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:47](#)):

So you see both vocations highlighted. And then we have always a great... I celebrate Mass for all those making their way to our diocesan Kings Dominion Day.

Billy Atwell ([05:56](#)):

A pilgrimage, right?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([05:57](#)):

It's a pilgrimage. It's definitely a pilgrimage with lots of ups and downs. And this year they've twisted my arm a little bit, so I'm actually even going to the park with them.

Billy Atwell ([06:08](#)):

Oh wow.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:09](#)):

I promised to go on a few of the amusements, so we'll see about that.

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

As an act of mercy. I'll tell you which ones not to go on.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:15](#)):

Please do.

Billy Atwell ([06:17](#)):

My kids have dragged me in and I paid for it.

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

Please let me know. And then of course, a number of our youth are going to World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal to be united with youth from around the world and with our Holy Father.

Billy Atwell ([06:31](#)):

I think we've got more than a hundred young people-

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:33](#)):

Yeah, we do.

Billy Atwell ([06:33](#)):

... which is a major group from the U.S.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:35](#)):

It's a major, major group. And so again, what a joy to have a role in assisting parents to be involved in the lives of these wonderful young people-to form them on all levels of human living and pray God to lead them closer to the Lord.

Billy Atwell ([06:52](#)):

Absolutely.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([06:53](#)):

And have fun doing it.

Billy Atwell ([06:54](#)):

Absolutely. Especially in the summer, right? Your Excellency, so you along with Archbishop Broglio who's the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Bishop Flores who's the chairman of the USCCB Committee on Doctrine, issued a strong corrective statement, which was a unique phrase, usually you don't see corrective statements issued, but it was in response to 31 members of Congress who profess the Catholic faith and yet stand in support of abortion and mourn, tragically, the end of Roe v. Wade, which was a scourge on our nation for more than 50 years. The members of Congress published a letter kind of heralding these contradictory views. I encourage everyone to go read that full joint statement on the USCCB website, but I want to share a key phrase from this and get your thoughts on the situation overall.

([07:36](#)):

Part of the statement said, "Conscience rights rightly enjoys a special regard both in Church teaching and in the public sphere, and policymakers should support the freedom of Catholics and of others to serve the common good in accord with their beliefs in a wide range of areas. Nevertheless, conscience is not a license to commit evil and take innocent lives. Conscience cannot and does not justify the act and support of abortion." These members of Congress, it was very bold of them to say "We're Catholic and support abortion," because these are contradictions in terms. It seems like "safe, legal and rare" has been replaced with "It's a fundamental part of healthcare," so to speak. I'm curious, for the faithful that saw that statement, but for those who didn't but are very aware of this letter, what should they do when they see these kinds of falsehoods?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([08:27](#)):

Well, it's certainly unsettling to see elected officials who profess their Catholic faith move so far away from it and what a significant way when it comes to the sacredness of all human life. But what was very,

very upsetting and extremely incomprehensible to understand, was how they attempted to use their Catholic faith to support the idea of abortion. I mean, it was almost shocking, stunning to see. And we were pretty strong in the letter because I think it's accurate. They grievously distorted the Catholic faith, and I think they know they did that. And if they didn't, hopefully this statement would clearly point out to them how they distorted the faith. And this is why Archbishop Broglio and Bishop Flores, the chairman of our Doctrine Committee, wanted to respond quickly, because it's bad enough that Catholic politicians would embrace this view, but to lead others astray by false teaching and misrepresenting what the Catholic understanding is of formation of conscience, that just could not stand.

[\(09:59\)](#):

And so I thank you for encouraging our listeners to read the entire statement. We cannot sit by, Billy, and wait for political leaders or moral leaders to speak out. Every parishioner should see something like this and lend their voice. And so feel free-

Billy Atwell [\(10:15\)](#):

That's a great point.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(10:16\)](#):

... to write to your elected officials and let your voice be heard. And we also need parishioners to continue to lend their voice according to their faith. And so we also want to keep in mind that it's not enough to say that one must follow one's conscience. It's also necessary, and this is what I think they missed completely, it's necessary to form one's conscience according to the Church's teaching. You can't form your conscience apart from Divine Revelation and from what the Church teaches. And to follow an erroneous conscience might not make one guilty but it still makes one wrong. And that is for sure. So we always at the same time, expressing profound disappointment in these leaders but at the same time we continue to pray because God's grace can always transform hearts, and we pray for that.

Billy Atwell [\(11:16\)](#):

Absolutely. So again, arlingtondiocese.org if you want to read that statement. It's also on the USCCB website as well. In the wake of the Dobbs decision, some states are moving to enshrine abortion into law. This is kind of a secondary question but on a similar note, I'm just curious what you make of that.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(11:33\)](#):

Well, yeah, we often say we did celebrate the rightful overturning of Roe versus Wade, but that was not the end. It is only just the beginning. And we are seeing some very, very aggressive actions being taken, they're well-funded too, from outside the states that are trying to do this, enshrining abortion laws and thus leading to the lack of protection to the pre-born. And there's some key battle states that are being targeted where you would think you have a chance to enshrine pro-life laws. I just saw in Ohio, which is coming up in November, and I know the bishops of Ohio are really working so hard to get the Catholic vote out and people of all goodwill to protect the unborn. But boy, they are facing some really tough opposition. I just saw how the opposition is really gathering some momentum there. So we really have to be vigilant and pray for these states because we look at a state like Kansas, I know the Archbishop very well there who is so pro-life and did everything possible, but we did not win that battle.

[\(12:54\)](#):

But we learned some lessons. And one of the lessons is that we've got to get the vote out and get the vote out early. We've got to correct the deliberate, misleading information that's being put out there.

We've got to be smart with communications. We've got to get to the voters by various means like we tried to do in our diocese on social media where all the voters are, and we've got to raise money, unfortunately. That's a reality because these ads and these promotions cost. But we have a lot of good lay faithful Catholics, individuals and entities and organizations, who want to be part of this movement but we all have to do our part.

Billy Atwell ([13:44](#)):

Right, and it's interesting here in our commonwealth, every seat in the House of Delegates is up for election this year. So taking a look at those Virginia Catholic Conference resources to see how have my officials voted when it comes to abortion is important, and look and say "I want to support a politician who advocates for life, who understands the precious nature of that unborn, that pre-born child."

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:10](#)):

Exactly, Billy.

Billy Atwell ([14:11](#)):

So again, vacatholic.org to keep a tab on all that. Bishop, affirmative action was recently ruled on by the Supreme Court and they found that its application at Harvard and UNC violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. Catholics don't all agree on this issue, or a lot of political issues, but in this one in particular I kind of saw on social media some disagreement. I'm curious about your response to the case, but in more broader terms how should Catholics respond in general?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([14:41](#)):

Yeah, thank you, Billy. First, I mean, it's important to start by noting that this issue, pray God, does not divide us as Catholics. The topic of racism and discrimination it brings up a lot of pain, rightfully so, and frustration for others and I think we need to engage conversations on this topic with charity and assuming the best in others and knowing that there are wounds that people have that need to be healed in light of experiencing racism and discrimination. The issue of affirmative action has been settled by the courts, but this does not mean we should stop thinking about how we can ensure there are no unfair barriers or advantages for one race or another.

Billy Atwell ([15:30](#)):

That's true.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:30](#)):

Right? So we should begin our conversations with the underlying belief that no individual should be unfairly discriminated against and should never succumb to the sin of racism. So we all have to agree on that.

Billy Atwell ([15:45](#)):

Right, let's start there.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([15:46](#)):

And that's the first principle. And from there we can consider prudential options, meaning reasonable people can disagree so long as we have maintained that first principle and how you go about to assure

that principle is embraced. This is the discussion people can and should have all the while maintaining that respect for one another. I think what we have to, and Pope Francis talks about this a lot, reasonable people can have differing opinions and still be in good standing with the Church on many issues. There are of course issues like abortion that are just fundamental. You cannot support abortion and be in good standing with the Lord, with this church. But how we go about avoiding, for example unfair discrimination, is different. How do we go about this? What is the best means to do that?

[\(16:43\)](#):

We often talk about this on our podcast that bishops are not government or elected officials. We teach the truth. We teach those principles and moral standards that must be upheld. And then we pray that the elected officials then go about finding the ways to do so. What is most important for me is to ensure that there are, with this issue, no racial barriers keeping someone from being admitted to any college or university. And pray God all of our listeners agree with that. We're a culture filled with diversity and no attempt should ever be made to segregate people or treat one racial group with different expectations than another.

Billy Atwell [\(17:26\)](#):

Yeah, absolutely. There was another key Supreme Court decision that came down recently. The court ruled that the coercing of a Christian website designer to produce a pro-LGBT website is against freedom of speech. And we've seen similar cases like this in the past, but this one was the one that made it to the Supreme Court, and so this follows these other cases. What are your thoughts on the outcome of this case? Because this seems really groundbreaking for a lot of Catholic business owners who I think have in the back of their mind wondered "When's the day that I get held to my faith or my business that I have to give up one?" That that's a horrible decision for someone to have to make. This seems to, I think, really put some wind back in their sails.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(18:07\)](#):

Yeah, you're right. And it's a continuation basically on that discussion we had recently on the podcast about religious freedom.

Billy Atwell [\(18:14\)](#):

Yes, absolutely.

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

And so here's a concrete example. When the Colorado government told her that she had to produce websites for same-sex weddings or else be guilty of discrimination, she filed a lawsuit in defense of her right to free speech. And the Supreme Court has now vindicated that right, so pray God. Thank God. This case was never about discrimination. It was about moral disagreement said Cardinal Dolan. That's what Cardinal Dolan said and he's our chairman for the Committee on Religious Liberty. He said the government must allow room for people to disagree on hot button issues and it's even more important when the person disagreeing has an unpopular view. But here's a very important distinction, I think, the Cardinal made, and it says it all. He said that Ms. Smith is perfectly willing to design other kinds of websites for same sex- attracted customers in the same way the ministries of the Church provide good and loving care to everyone and in direct need of assistance, no question asked.

[\(19:16\)](#):

Problems only arise when the government tries to force us to support, by our words or actions, behavior that we believe is wrong. So I think what the Cardinal's trying to say is that a same-sex couple can come into her place of business and she's willing to serve them. She's not discriminating against the person. But when they're asking her to do something that is fundamentally against her faith and belief she should not be forced to do that. None of us should be.

Billy Atwell ([19:46](#)):

And it was remarkable to me how almost every media outlet misreported this.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:50](#)):

They misreported it.

Billy Atwell ([19:51](#)):

Entirely, the headlines even said "Court rules website designer doesn't have to serve gay customers." And that was never the issue and they know that, I think, that that wasn't the issue. But it shows a distortion between the Catholic view and sometimes the popular view, that to deny the person's actions is to deny the person. And we say we're more than that, our integrity and our design by God is greater than sin. We're made in his image and likeness but we mess up. We do things that we shouldn't. There's a difference there. I'm not defined entirely by my actions, but I don't think the rest of the world sees that sometimes, we even see that come up in these news articles. That's a great distinction you made there though.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:33](#)):

I mean, on the other side, I mean, I know of a priest who walked into a donut shop and the person behind the counter says, "I don't want to serve you. I won't serve you." Now, that's different. The priest didn't go in and say, "I want you to put a crucifix on my donut."

Billy Atwell ([20:53](#)):

Right, right, right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:54](#)):

You know what I mean? But he was refused simply because he was a priest. Well, that's not acceptable-

Billy Atwell ([21:00](#)):

That's not acceptable.

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

... for any person.

Billy Atwell ([21:01](#)):

That's right, that's right. That is such a huge distinction. Thank you for making that. I want to end on a much lighter note before we get to a question from a parishioner. So on July 1st, just a few days ago, the Diocese implemented a new family leave policy and bereavement policy for staff. In short, previously if staff needed to take a maternity or paternity leave, they needed to undergo surgery or their spouse

maybe needed to, needed to care for an elderly parent who was sick or had a fall, they had to use their sick time and vacation time in order to continue to receive pay. They had family medical leave because that's a federal thing, but that wasn't paid for necessarily.

[\(21:40\)](#):

But through your initiative, we now have a new policy for staff who have worked here for a year and work at least 24 hours a week or more, so basically more than that part-time break, they're eligible for eight weeks of paid family leave. This is a big shift in HR policy, and I think more importantly, it conveys the priorities you've placed for families of our staff, and especially those who work for the Diocese obviously. Talk about how this policy came about and why you went in this direction, because it has a cost to it. Why was it worth that cost to you?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(22:12\)](#):

Well, we often speak, Billy, about our conviction that what's going to transform our church, what's going to transform our world, are holy families, holy marriages. And so it's always important to say "How are we as a church, as a diocese, supporting holy marriages and holy families?" So as any leader knows, you always have to reevaluate and make sure our priorities are reflecting who we are and what we believe and part of that includes listening to our employees. I'll talk to employees who share the joy about the birth of a child, but that joy is tempered with the added stress of having to rush back to work so they can pay bills. Other times I will hear from employees helping their own family, for instance, of an elderly parent. I know many of our parishioners have that responsibility and they're concerned about their loved one's health but they're also worried about job security.

[\(23:18\)](#):

And it's my hope that these policies will help lessen those burdens and allow to embrace the joy of being a new parent of a newborn child or adopted child or receiving a child from foster care, or being a son or daughter who has, although it's a responsibility, the joy of caring for a parent. That's a gift. As hard as it may be at times, it's a gift.

Billy Atwell [\(23:47\)](#):

Absolutely.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(23:48\)](#):

I know as a son who had that opportunity to walk with my parents when they were struggling, to be able to leave responsibilities knowing that others are going to help fill that, alleviated that. And we understand that. When you implement a policy like that, there's certainly a cost for it. I mean, there's a financial cost, I hate to say, but our resources are going where our moral convictions are strong. And it's like a family within this diocese, within our places of work, because when someone's out for eight weeks the other members of the family, the team, have to pick up the work. And it's important to note that this is across the board. It's not just for the diocesan officials.

Billy Atwell [\(24:34\)](#):

That's right, a good decision.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(24:36\)](#):

It's for parishes and schools, and I think it affects almost 3000 of our 4,500 employees.

Billy Atwell ([24:43](#)):

That's right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([24:46](#)):

So, you always want to be working to make sure that we're doing all that we can to support the good people who work for the Church, who use their talents and expertise, probably being able to make a lot more money at other places but say, "No, I want to work for the Church." And so I hope this is a small way of expressing gratitude for that, knowing that they don't have to dip into their vacation or their sick leave until after that eight weeks of paid leave. And we're also expanding our bereavement policy as well.

Billy Atwell ([25:20](#)):

That's right. Talk about that as well.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([25:22](#)):

So our bereavement policy, to provide employees who are scheduled, if they work 20 or more hours a week, we'd like to now give them up to 10 days of paid leave for the loss of a loved one, including a child lost in miscarriage. We know that you can't put a number to the days of healing. It's a lifelong process actually of healing when you lose a loved one, but we've extended that days just so people can begin that process.

Billy Atwell ([25:57](#)):

That's wonderful. I really appreciate that and I know the staff have responded so well. And it does, it's a reflection of the values you have. You say, we need to make sure we have holy families that feel supported and are supported and take the time for the things they need. This is a way to do that and we're grateful for it. All right, we have a question from a parishioner who said, "Will the distribution of the Precious Blood resume formally at Mass here in the Diocese or will this distribution remain up to the pastor's discretion?"

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([26:22](#)):

Yeah, I'm leaving that up to the pastor's discretion and presuming that when I say that the pastors are consulting with their own pastoral counsel, their own parishioners, and that they make that decision together. So it is up to the pastor. And it's important that those who are not comfortable receiving from the chalice the Precious Blood, a common cup, that we always teach and always believe truly that in the body of Christ is the whole Christ, body and blood, soul and divinity in the gift of the Holy Eucharist.

Billy Atwell ([27:01](#)):

Amen.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([27:02](#)):

Amen.

Billy Atwell ([27:02](#)):

Are there any final thoughts before we close out?

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Bishop Michael Burbidge ([27:04](#)):

No, Billy. Just again, boy, the summer's going fast though, isn't it?

Billy Atwell ([27:08](#)):

Very fast.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([27:09](#)):

I know. I looked at the date today and I'm like, "Oh, where did June go?" So I hope we all can slow down just a little bit and enjoy our families. Enjoy whatever time God gives us to maybe re-create, recreate and be renewed. So let's do so as we continue to walk humbly with our God.

([27:28](#)):

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