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

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

Billy ([00:07](#)):

Podcasting from the St. Clare Studio 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. If you have a question for Bishop Burbidge, send it to [info@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:info@arlingtondiocese.org), or send us a message on social media. I now welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how are you doing?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:26](#)):

Billy, I am doing well. I hope you and our listeners are doing well also, surviving this weather. We had an interesting couple of days last week. Some of the students are not complaining. I think they had a couple of days off from school, as well.

Billy ([00:40](#)):

That's right, that's right.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([00:41](#)):

Maybe the parents are, but the students are not.

Billy ([00:44](#)):

And the effect is lingering through the weekend, here. We just celebrated the March for Life. It's the second March for Life since the toppling of Roe v. Wade. I have a couple of questions here, but I want to just start by asking: As you think back over the two days of events that we had from Thursday to Friday, what really stands out to you right now?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([01:03](#)):

Well, Billy, they were days filled with many blessings, to say the least. I began with the privilege of celebrating Mass at the Franciscan Monastery for pro-life leaders from around the country, and looking at that chapel that day and seeing so many individuals just devoting their whole lives for the protection of the unborn and the sacredness of all human life--just a great inspiration to be with them.

([01:35](#)):

And then I was able to be the celebrant and homilist at the Basilica Shrine later that day where--they're saying over 10,000 people were at the Shrine counting the upper church and also the basilica church, many of whom were our young people from around the country, so just a sense of awe, to be honest with you. Seeing young families, seeing people who are advanced in age but have been doing this.

([02:03](#)):

And then seeing so many young people very, very prayerful. Because it's the vigil Mass before the march. What a perfect way to begin. Before we bring our faith into the public arena, onto the streets, let's be renewed by the source of life with Jesus in the Eucharist. And then Eucharistic Adoration throughout the night.

([02:26](#)):

And then after Mass, I was able to rush out to George Mason University, where our great diocesan team here was holding the Life Is VERY Good Rally for our own students, but also for young people from around the country who came to our area for the march. And, as always, Kevin Bohli and his team do a great job. We had lots of great music, the Christian music that young people like, dynamic speakers. They were energized. That's what a rally's supposed to do, to energize people. Get them ready. Well, we did that.

[\(03:01\)](#):

But as I tell our listeners every year, what amazes me about that night is we conclude--after all this great time and all those things, Confessions were being held also by the way--but then we have a Eucharistic half hour of just silence with the Lord and process with the Blessed Sacrament around the gymnasium at George Mason. Profound silence. Now who else but the Lord could bring all these thousands of high school kids from singing and all those kinds of things to just silence. Talk about an inspiration. It's just incredible. Absolutely incredible. And then we had Mass the next morning.

[\(03:41\)](#):

And then the March for Life. There was some snow and some ice, and I think the devil was thinking, "If I throw some snow and ice in their way, that will keep them back." That didn't keep us back, either.

Billy [\(03:51\)](#):

And he should have learned. It's been 50 years and we've gone through a lot of bad weather year after year.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(03:56\)](#):

Actually, I thought it brought really an adventurous spirit. The energy was really, really evident. And again, as I always say, we march peacefully, we march joyfully, because we have the truth.

Billy [\(04:15\)](#):

Exactly.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(04:16\)](#):

That's kind of the march it was. And of course, we marched together. I think that's one of my biggest hopes of these days, is that our young people, but not only young people, all of us realize that sometimes we feel a little isolated when we try to live a virtuous and faithful life and stand up for the Gospel of Life, feel kind of isolated, but all of a sudden you look around and say, "No, we're in this together. There's a lot of people who share my beliefs, my convictions."

[\(04:43\)](#):

And so I hope, above everything, it just sends people home realizing you're not alone. Let's keep encouraging and lifting up each other in faith. And of course, we know it's the Lord who's leading us, anyway.

Billy [\(04:54\)](#):

That joy, it's funny you mentioned that. You did a lot of media interviews, and before I connected you with him, he was talking about how he covers a lot of rallies and protests in D.C., and he said, "This is really different." He goes, "This is joyful." And he goes, "The weather's really not dampening anybody's spirit." He goes, "This is fun. It is kind of a fun atmosphere."

[\(05:11\)](#):

And I was glad that he witnessed that and understood that, because it is what's unique. If Christians are gathered for a cause, it should feel different than other groups gathering for a cause, and I was glad that he picked up on that immediately. You mentioned the Vigil Mass for Life; for a lot of people, the homily kind of sets the tone for where do we want to go marching forward beyond this year and reflecting on the last year?

[\(05:37\)](#):

I was wondering if you would just share some of the key points you made in your homily for those who didn't see it, and what were the messages that you hope people would take away?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(05:44\)](#):

Yeah. And certainly, we have every reason, with the overturning of Roe vs. Wade and the Dobbs decision, to celebrate. It was a victory. Dobbs was a victory, but not a decisive one, so my whole point was that, just as we see throughout Sacred Scripture, whether it be Noah or Moses or David, something great happens, but the work's not done. And the same thing here. Something great happened, but our work, as we know, is far from being over.

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

In fact, in many ways it is a new beginning, because we know that the lives of the unborn in our own country are still in danger, not protected. We've lost some key battles and some state ballot initiatives. Mothers are still being harmed. Couples and children and families are still in need of resources and support, so we have lots of work to do to transform laws that are pro-life where the most vulnerable in the womb are protected, to transform the hearts of our people.

[\(06:51\)](#):

I think one of the ways that we do that is that we communicate our message effectively, and I say we should do so in a way that is uncompromisingly true and unfailingly charitable. Uncompromisingly true. The truth comes from the Lord, himself. Some things are true and always will be. Life is sacred. No one decides which life is worth keeping, which life is not worth keeping. There's some things we just can never compromise; but to the extent that we're effective will be also rooted in our love and our charity. That was one point.

[\(07:31\)](#):

The other point was, I said that we have to be willing to take this truth, willing to take our belief to the darkest places. And sometimes we have to take it to places where people agree with us, to places where we might have victories; but we also, like Jesus, must be willing to go where we might face rejection and we might have a battle ahead of us, so we can't be afraid of that.

[\(07:59\)](#):

And then the final thing I said too is that we have to rededicate ourselves as a pro-life movement to service, to walking with moms in need, to providing mothers and fathers and children with the basic necessities that often are lacking, emotional and spiritual and pastoral support, to reflect our love and our concern through our service.

[\(08:31\)](#):

The theme for the 2024 March for Life was powerful: "With every mother and for every child." That's who we are. Sometimes I think the world forgets. They know, because of our strong stance against

abortion, that we are for every child, especially the most vulnerable, the one who doesn't have a voice, but we're with every mother. Why? Because we love life. Such a beautiful theme.

[\(08:59\)](#):

Those were some of the highlights, and I concluded, of course, by saying, "But when it is all said and done, the most important thing we do is we put Christ at the center of this." It is he. It's he who accomplishes all that we're seeking to do in his name, so with Christ at the center, there's no need to be afraid and there's every reason to be confident and trusting.

Billy [\(09:24\)](#):

Absolutely. If you want to see that video, go to our YouTube channel, [YouTube.com/ArlingtonDiocese](https://www.youtube.com/ArlingtonDiocese). You can see the full homily. It's there. I encourage you to watch it, but also share it with those who you think need to see that, I would say especially those involved in the movement. There's a lot of encouragement there.

[\(09:40\)](#):

Bishop, staying on this topic, life at all stages is under attack, including here in Virginia. This last week, there was an attempt to resurrect the death penalty in the Virginia House, which thankfully has been outlawed since 2021. That attempt failed. And on Tuesday of this week, a senate subcommittee is scheduled to consider legislation that would legalize assisted suicide.

[\(10:03\)](#):

This is kind of all developing and rolling as we're experiencing it here, but I was curious if you had any initial thoughts on these efforts.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(10:11\)](#):

Well, yeah. And again, both of these issues help us to highlight our consistency in being pro-life from the moment of conception to natural death, so therefore, we would of course oppose the death penalty and we would oppose assisted suicide, because all of life is sacred from the moment of conception to natural death.

[\(10:41\)](#):

And as we know, doctors should heal, not kill. All lives are valuable and deserve protection and care. No patient, whether disabled, mentally ill, elderly or otherwise, should ever be abandoned or discarded. The measure, I believe, of a society is in how they treat the most vulnerable among us. And every person, Billy, potentially facing the end of life should have access to quality medical and palliative care instead of drugs to hasten their death. They should be offered help, not death.

[\(11:19\)](#):

These issues that are very real, as you mentioned, are very current, help us to reinforce the consistency with which we proclaim the Gospel of Life.

Billy [\(11:32\)](#):

We led off the last podcast actually talking about a very dire state of Nicaragua, where bishops, priests, and lay people as well as seminarians had been imprisoned by the current dictatorship going on there. We have some good news: Bishop Alvarez, Bishop Mora and 18 other priests were released from a prison in Nicaragua and arrived in Rome. Most were jailed over a year ago as part of a crackdown on opposition to President Daniel Ortega.

[\(11:59\)](#):

We didn't know the status of a lot of these people. We hadn't heard from them and they weren't able to communicate with the outside world. The regime there is claiming that the clerics were trying to overthrow the government. The state of religious freedom in Nicaragua still has a very long way to go, especially for the Catholic faithful who remain there under this oppression. But this was an important step. This was one in the right direction, I think, that will hopefully shed a little bit of light into that otherwise dark scenario. I was curious of your thoughts.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(12:25\)](#):

Yeah, and you're right. You did mention some of the good news in this situation, certainly, I would think and believe through the power of prayer, so those prayers continue, because, once again, our work is not over here. This is still a dire, dire situation. And that's what we see. Repressive regimes often characterize religion and religious leaders as a way to overthrow the state.

Billy [\(12:49\)](#):

Yeah, it's like a scapegoat, almost.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(12:50\)](#):

Being "God's servant first," as our patron, St. Thomas More, famously said, is a threat to tyranny. When the government sees its role as being above all other interests of society, we know what's going to happen: this kind of repression, of course. I hope and ask all of our listeners and people of goodwill to be praying that with the right kind of pressure, including from our own officials here, that we will continue to promote freedom and respect and reverence for all people and life.

[\(13:26\)](#):

And while it's great to see bishops and priests and seminarians and others released, the Catholic lay faithful in Nicaragua are still at a tremendous, tremendous risk. They need protection. They need protection, and we have to lend our voices to encouraging all who can play a role in that, in doing so, and to keep at the top of our prayer list this dire, dire situation.

Billy [\(13:51\)](#):

What's unique about our area is someone listening to this podcast might work for the State Department and be focusing on these issues.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(13:57\)](#):

Right, exactly.

Billy [\(13:57\)](#):

And how kind of isolating that could maybe be, but know that our prayers are with you and our encouragement, as well.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(14:03\)](#):

Absolutely.

Billy [\(14:04\)](#):

Bishop, on the topic of religious freedom: As the U.S. observed Religious Freedom Day on January 16th, the USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty put out its first annual report on the state of religious freedom in the U.S. I found this very interesting.

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

A statement on the report said, "The report identifies a wide range of concerns, such as federal agencies misusing laws meant to aid pregnant women in order to promote abortion; threats to the safety of our Jewish and Muslim neighbors; and hostility toward ministry serving migrants and refugees, and to suggest how individuals and communities can respond." This is an issue you've spoken about quite a bit. We've had religious freedom issues that we've discussed on the podcast. What's your reaction to the report? What is your thought?

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(14:45\)](#):

Well, I very much, of course, welcome the report and appreciate it in the sense that, as you said, Billy, we often talk about religious freedom being the greatest of liberties and it needs to be protected. And sometimes it's easy to think that this is not a real issue at this moment in time in our own country, for example. Certainly we know it is throughout the world, but it really is, and this report highlights what's at threat here.

[\(15:18\)](#):

Perhaps you can give some information how to get the report at the end, but I really think it's important for people to read this. There is a lot at stake here. Sometimes in our intercessions at Mass, you'll hear that petition: for the upholding of religious freedom and liberty. It's a prayer we need to make, because some of these situations and some of what the report includes are concrete examples of how serious this situation is.

[\(15:47\)](#):

We know that our Founding Fathers clearly understood that religious freedom is fundamental if we're going to have a stable and a peaceful society, and whenever religious freedom is under attack, we have reason to be concerned and to remedy the situation.

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

And you'll see in the report, too, that it goes deeper into how even attacks against houses of worship have increased, even in our own country here, especially related to the Israel-Hamas conflict, suppression efforts against religious voices on marriage and sexual difference, and even EEOC regulations that aim to force religious employers to support abortion via healthcare coverage. The report says, "You need examples of what we're saying? Take a look."

Billy [\(16:34\)](#):

It's got great examples in there.

Bishop Michael Burbidge [\(16:36\)](#):

Yeah, and it has entire sections dedicated to Congress, the Executive Branch, the Supreme Court, national trends, and what we predict for this current year. It includes a section about possible FBI surveillance of traditional Catholic parishes in our state. I think we're all familiar with what happened in the Diocese of Richmond. And it breaks down critical legal cases before the Supreme Court.

[\(16:59\)](#):

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The national trend even related to vandalism of houses of worship is concerning. We've had vandalism, as we mentioned on this podcast, in our own diocese, so it hits close to home. I think it also mentions that in 2022, FBI hate crimes statistics reports stated that anti-Catholic vandalism was 75% higher than that of other groups.

Billy ([17:27](#)):

Isn't that unreal?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:28](#)):

That is unreal.

Billy ([17:29](#)):

And when we talk about Nicaragua and a place like that, that doesn't happen overnight. That is a process that gets you there, and we should be vigilant now so we don't get to the state that's that bad.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([17:39](#)):

Yeah, exactly, Billy. I do really encourage people to read this report. You have some information on that.

Billy ([17:48](#)):

Yeah. If you go to USCCB.org, it's right on the homepage, but you can also search for it, they don't make it hard. It's the Religious Freedom Committee that put this together. It's very helpful. They say light's a good disinfectant, and I feel like what this report does is it really boils down the most critical information you need to know about it.

([18:05](#)):

Like you said, there's sections on Congress, the legislative issues that are going on, the Executive Branch, the Supreme Court. It would take you days of research to come up with half this information and it's contained in this one report. It really is very helpful. Again, USCCB.org.

([18:22](#)):

Just a reminder, if you're listening to this podcast, you're benefiting from the generosity of those who've given to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal in years past, and we're coming up on the BLA now. The BLA supports so many ministries throughout the diocese, but one of them is the communications office here, so we want to thank you, all those who've given to the BLA. If you haven't yet, please rate this podcast or write a review wherever you're listening. If you're listening through YouTube, actually, we'd love it if you would subscribe to the YouTube channel and ring the notifications bell so you can be updated whenever we post more content there.

([18:53](#)):

Sign up for our e-newsletter at [ArlingtonDiocese.org](http://ArlingtonDiocese.org). Bishop Burbidge is on X, formerly known as Twitter, where he posts a Gospel reflection every day. We also have on Instagram, [@BishopMichaelBurbidge](https://www.instagram.com/BishopMichaelBurbidge) where great quotes from statements, homilies and messages from our bishop are updated regularly. You can follow the diocese on Facebook, Instagram, and X, as well.

([19:17](#)):

Bishop, we have a couple questions from the faithful, here. The first one is, "I heard there were more than 20,000 young adults at the recent SEEK Conference in St. Louis. Any thoughts on why this event is so popular?"

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:28](#)):

Yeah, well, you're right. We had many young adults and college students and our own seminarians, Father Isenberg, and some of our priests were in St. Louis for that SEEK Conference. They came back on cloud nine, flying high.

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

Exactly.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([19:47](#)):

The photos were incredible. You got 20,000 young adults at SEEK trying to benefit from each other, learn from each other. How is it that we can participate in the mission of evangelizing, in the message of sharing our faith in effective and new and creative ways?

([20:08](#)):

But again, I think it's what I said earlier about the march: when young people come together and just say, "Wow, there are a lot of people like me who are alive for their faith, on fire for their faith, love the Lord and want to share it with others." That helps to lift up the spirits of people, and pray God that make them come home energized and renewed and rededicated. Everyone who was at the SEEK Conference that I spoke to, that's exactly the way they came home, so it was great to see that

Billy ([20:38](#)):

Everybody that came back seemed to be just so excited. No one was undecided on how they felt about it. Everyone was.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:43](#)):

That is the truth, I know.

Billy ([20:44](#)):

Credit to those who put that conference on. Well done. All right, the next one, I hope this doesn't end us on a sour note, but do you have any interest in the NFL Playoffs and the Super Bowl now that the Eagles, the great Eagles, have been eliminated?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([20:59](#)):

Who asked that question? Who asked that question?

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

Does your interest continue?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:03](#)):

It does. It does. We're recording this the day after deciding who the final four teams are, so we know who the final four teams are, and this coming weekend, I think it's even better than Super Bowl



Weekend in some sense, because it decides, there's only four teams left standing, and as our great questioner mentioned, the Eagles is not one, but there's only four teams remaining.

Billy ([21:31](#)):

It's wild.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([21:32](#)):

And only two are going to go to the Super Bowl, so I do enjoy that. And yeah, I do have an interest, and maybe it could be a matter of confessions, because left standing in the AFC, the Chiefs will be playing the Baltimore Ravens, and I am very much on the bandwagon of the Ravens, not that the fact that the Chiefs beat the Eagles in a Super Bowl last year had anything to do with that. But again, there's a great connection here to Baltimore.

Billy ([22:08](#)):

There's a lot of Baltimore fans in our area.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:10](#)):

They're looking good. I am kind of going to predict that maybe the Ravens go to the Super Bowl. That's my prediction on that side. Now, the other side's a little tricky. You got the Lions and the 49s. I think that could go either way, actually, but I think it may be the Lions. I think it may be the Lions and the Ravens.

Billy ([22:28](#)):

This is their year, huh?

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:29](#)):

Everyone's predicting San Francisco, but I think the Lions might be able to do it, so we'll see. Yeah, I am still interested. I'm--

Billy ([22:36](#)):

That's very good.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:36](#)):

Still a fan, and we'll see what happens there.

Billy ([22:40](#)):

Very good. All right, we went through some heavy topics on this. I'm kind of glad we ended on a good note there. But any final thoughts? And if you would send us off with your blessing.

Bishop Michael Burbidge ([22:48](#)):

Yeah, thanks Billy. Yeah. We did some heavy topics today, but it's important. That's reality. That's the world in which we're living. It's a broken world and there's darkness within our world, for sure. We're seeing it; but yet the Lord teaches us how to live in this broken world, this valley of tears. We do so with our eyes fixed above.

([23:12](#)):

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We know the Lord has conquered the power of evil and darkness. He is the true light. He only asks that we walk in that light and radiate it and give our best efforts. Never to be despairing, never to get frustrated, never to give up. He sanctifies it all that we have to give him, so yes, let's keep our heads up. Let's keep Christ at the center and together walk humbly with our God.

[\(23:38\)](#):

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