

Walk Humbly Podcast: Episode #120

[00:00:00] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** This is Bishop Michael Burbidge, and you are listening to the Walk Humbly Podcast.

[00:00:07] **Billy Atwell:** Podcasting from the St. Clare Studios 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. If you have a question for Bishop Burbidge that you would like considered for a future podcast, send it to info@Arlingtondiocese.org

[00:00:24] or send us an email and send us a message on social media. Just a quick reminder, on November 26th at St. Michael's Parish in Annandale, at 5p.m., we have the opening of our Golden Jubilee year. This is the third year of preparation that we've had—it's the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe.

[00:00:45] So it's going to be Solemn Vespers on November 26th at 5p.m., St. Michael's Parish in Annandale. We hope to see you there. Today's topics, we're going to talk about the election—that's tomorrow. Black Catholic History Month, Veterans Day and the state of vocations here in our diocese.

[00:01:00] I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge.

[00:01:02] Bishop, how are you?

[00:01:02] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Billy, I'm doing very well. It's a beautiful week. Last week we honored All Saints and we're reminded of our own universal call to holiness, the goal in all of our lives: to get to Heaven, to become a saint, to help each other get to heaven. And of course, All Souls with a beautiful Mass at the Fairfax Memorial Cemetery.

[00:01:21] So many people present, always a beautiful Mass to celebrate—Mass outside, right in the cemetery and to fulfill that sacred duty that we have to pray for the dead, to remember the faithful departed and to recommit ourselves to honor them by the witness of our own lives. So it's been a very beautiful time in the life of the Church.

[00:01:41] I'll be leaving on Thursday for a week-long session in Baltimore with my brother bishops. We gather every time this year, and Thursday to Sunday are basically committee meetings. And then we begin the General Assembly

Monday. So, if all the parishioners could be praying for us and asking the Holy Spirit to guide and lead our deliberations, I'd be most grateful.

[00:02:06] **Billy Atwell:** And you can follow along online to what's going on at the USCCB meeting, at usccb.org. They've always got links and livestreams and things like that available there. But before any of that, you've got an opening prayer here coming up today that I hear is—

[00:02:21] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Oh yeah, it's gonna be a great event.

[00:02:22] We have a group of our priests who are very good soccer players and enjoy playing the game. And they are going to compete against some of our high school students at Bishop Ireton today. So, I will be doing the opening prayer and what I will be praying for especially is that we keep our

[00:02:42] priests free from injury. We have a lot of athletic priests, but it seems like I always have one on injured reserve. So, I need a full bench. I need a full bench—

[00:02:52] **Billy Atwell:** We'll have a cooler of ice and bags ready to go. So Bishop, like I'd mentioned in the introduction there, this is the last podcast before the election.

[00:03:00] The election is tomorrow. And so people will be getting this, hopefully today. You made some headlines last time—some media outlets have been very interested in the clarification you offered to the faithful on how to approach the voting booth. What are the most fundamental issues and then how do we think about the issues that follow from there?

[00:03:16] What are your thoughts on some of the attention you received from the podcast?

[00:03:19] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yes, on this day before Election Day, where, of course, there is so much at stake here in the Commonwealth of Virginia. So much at stake. First of all, if you have not yet voted, please, my dear parishioners and friends, please get out and vote tomorrow.

[00:03:36] Let your voice be heard in the public arena and bring—as I say, you go forth to vote, not just as a citizen, but as a faithful citizen. And so this is a beautiful opportunity for the truth of the Gospel of Life, our virtues, our hardcore values to be brought forth. And again, as I said in the last podcast, it's certainly not too difficult to distinguish what side politicians are on these days.

[00:04:06] And as I mentioned for us as faithful citizens, the issue, the most important issue is the gift of life itself. The protection of life—especially our pre-born—and the most vulnerable in our society. And everything else follows from that. You have to get that right at the beginning.

[00:04:29] And then of course, every other issue is important. Regarding religious liberty, poverty, how to help those in most need, our care for God's creation, of course. But also, what's at stake here is the right of parents to be the first teachers of their children.

[00:04:51] I have to admit, in days long ago, I didn't pay much attention to school board elections, but I do now. Because, first of all, I think we have seen how powerful school boards can be, and who we put on those boards. What we have been seeing sometimes in certain counties in our public schools is outrageous.

[00:05:12] The Fourth Commandment is to honor mother and father. That's the Fourth Commandment. And we must not allow our schools to undermine parents, to take away their authority of their child or to create secret relationships with their students, or to disrespect that God created us uniquely in his own image and likeness as male and female.

[00:05:35] So school boards cannot be the governing body of your child's life or their moral compass. So, vote for the school boards carefully. And Billy, one of the things that, I've seen—it's obviously abortion. People say, "Why are you talking about abortion so much, Bishop?" Turn on the TV.

[00:05:50] Our candidates—the attack ads for those who are pro-life are relentless. And what is very concerning to me is that those who take a pro-life position, that the most vulnerable, the preborn should be protected, are the ones sometimes being painted as being extreme.

[00:06:14] But what really is extreme are those who are holding positions that have no limits. Not even a limit. When one can take the life of a child, even right before the moment of birth or even through partial birth abortion, or even after birth, now that's an extreme position. Dear friends, the Gospel of Life is at the center of who we are and what we believe and there is so much at stake.

[00:06:43] Please get out and vote. Please do so as faithful citizens.

[00:06:47] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely. Thank you, Bishop, for that. If you want to learn more about issues and to stay engaged in these topics, go to

vacatholic.org, sign up for the Virginia Catholic Conference alerts. You can learn a lot about candidates—they'll sometimes do candidate questionnaires—but also the issues. You can see what's happening in our legislature and around the Commonwealth.

[00:07:03] Bishop, November is Black Catholic History Month, and during this month we honor various Black Catholics who lived virtuously and have made significant contributions to the Church and our communities. Some even have a direct connection here in our diocese.

[00:07:21] And particularly there are six men and women who have causes for canonization in Rome, and I don't feel like enough people really know about this. I was wondering if you might talk a little bit about that and give us kind of a sneak peek into their lives and their example.

[00:07:32] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Sure. And yesterday, it was a beautiful celebration to initiate the Black Catholic History Month at St. Thomas a Becket.

[00:07:39] And we had people from all over the Diocese to participate at the beautiful Mass—the beautiful choir from the Cameroonian community provided the music and every person leaving church yesterday told me just how inspired they were by the music and by the liturgy.

[00:08:01] And it is certainly, as you said, a time to lift up the many contributions Black Catholics have made and continue to make in the life of the Church. Those born in the United States and those who came from other African countries, and what a gift they are. So this is a Mass that gives thanks to God for our brothers and sisters in the Black Catholic community.

[00:08:24] It was also—before I mentioned it was those individuals—this month also reminds us that sadly, we have to acknowledge, Billy, the history—that many of our Black Catholic brothers and sisters have experienced and even to the present day, so sadly—of racism and bigotry and discrimination, it continues.

[00:08:47] Even after Mass yesterday, some people have shared with me how they are experiencing that both in the community and in their workplace and school. So, this issue has not been eradicated, and we have to be instruments to bring about justice and equality. So, you can't do that unless you acknowledge that racism is still an issue in our country.

[00:09:11] We entrust that of course to God's transforming grace. But what a beautiful time to mention that so many black Catholics have walked this path to holiness, showing through their example how to grow close to Our Lord and their lives inspire us. Six notable examples of African Americans who have causes for canonization in Rome. So, I want everyone our diocese, if you can go to our—there's a, we have a link, don't we, to learn about these six individuals?

[00:09:42] **Billy Atwell:** Yeah, so you go to arlingtondiocese.org/blackcatholic, and there's a lot of resources about these individuals, different works and ministries through our Black Catholic community here in the diocese. A lot of great resources there. I encourage you to go check it out.

[00:09:54] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yes, I would like you all to learn a little bit more about these individuals, but please join me in praying that they will soon be canonized, recognized as saints, in our church.

[00:10:05] Um, and as I mentioned, their causes for canonization are in Rome as we speak, and there are the Venerables Pierre Toussaint, Mother Mary Lange, Henriette DeLille, Father Augustus Tolton, and servants of God Julie Greely, and Saint Thea Bowman locally.

[00:10:22] **Billy Atwell:** Sister Thea.

[00:10:23] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Sister, yeah. And, locally, uh, in the—

[00:10:25] **Billy Atwell:** You got excited there.

[00:10:26] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** I know, right? Yeah. Yeah. I just made a pronouncement there. Maybe, maybe it was all inspired, who knows?

[00:10:34] **Billy Atwell:** There you go.

[00:10:25] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** But locally, in the Diocese of Arlington, Venerable Mother Mary Lange had a very positive influence on the African American Catholic community.

[00:10:43] She faced numerous challenges, including violence and racism in Baltimore in the mid-19th century. And despite all those difficulties, she continued to educate and house the poor and needy. She founded, Billy, the Oblate Sisters of Providence in 1829, the first religious order for African American women

[00:11:05] and St. Joseph Catholic Church in Alexandria was blessed by the presence and work of the Oblate Sisters who taught at that school for many years. So, in preparation for our Golden Jubilee next year, we have been reflecting on our diocesan history. And boy, this is a tremendous part of our history.

[00:11:23] **Billy Atwell:** Yeah, what a privilege to have that local example right here in the Diocese.

[00:11:26] So again, if you go to arlingtondiocese.org/blackcatholic, you can see some of those different resources as well. This coming Friday, November 11th is when we observe Veterans Day. And Bishop, this is a day you've talked about a lot because we have so many veterans in our diocese as well as active, military—those serving our country.

[00:11:50] But I was wondering if you had any, you know, thoughts or reflections on this solemn day.

[00:11:54] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Well sure. Today, especially amid so much turmoil in the world, we continue to thank military veterans for their patriotism, their sacrifices and their courage. I really recently just learned this number, but approximately 780,000 veterans live in Virginia.

[00:12:13] **Billy Atwell:** Isn't that wild?

[00:12:14] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** It is. So, these men and women have helped safeguard our nation, many at great physical and emotional costs to them and to their families. They and their families have made tremendous sacrifices to keep us safe, to defend our Constitution and guarding all the precious freedoms we enjoy.

[00:12:32] Our very ability to celebrate this day reflects their commitment to the protection of our liberty. And, I believe, Billy, our veterans provide noble examples of lives devoted to—we always talk about humble service, sacrificial service. They are examples of that. And so, this should be a day that we express gratitude to them, to pray for them and their family.

[00:12:53] And of course, at this time, especially, to ask God to bless and protect our country and grant us and all nations and countries throughout the world peace, especially at this difficult time.

[00:13:05] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely. Again, so Veterans Day is actually Saturday—I said Friday—but we observe it on Friday. So, if you know a veteran, give them a call, say thank you.

[00:13:12] They carry some wounds and some difficulties and baggage with them from that experience—it would be good to thank them and honor that. Bishop, one thing in our diocese that we're known for around the country is an abundance of strong vocations. This has been a gift and a trend that preceded you, but vocations have continued to grow under your leadership.

[00:13:32] It's an area that you also have a lot of experience in, having run a seminary and so on. So with yesterday being the actual beginning of National Vocation Awareness Week, what is your recommendation for somebody out there who is discerning whether they're called to marriage or religious life or even priestly life?

[00:13:49] And for those who've found their vocation, what encouragement would you offer to them as well?

[00:13:53] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Sure. Thanks, Billy. I've just been in contact with all of our seminarians in different ways. And I'll tell you, I'm so proud of them. We have a great group of men preparing for the priesthood and I can assure the faithful, they are great

[00:14:08] great, quality men who are very devoted to grow in holiness so they can one day, God willing, serve you faithfully as their priest. So, thank you for supporting them. Thank you for praying for them. And you know, we're all called through Baptism—we all have the same call through Baptism—as I mentioned earlier, to holiness.

[00:14:28] That's a day to day—it's an ongoing, lifelong process. That's a call that we all share and help each other along that path. But as you mentioned, I was just with about 40 men—juniors in high school and beyond—who came with me and my brother priests to what we call St. Andrew

[00:14:49] Dinner, “Come and See.” And it's not that they were going to become priests, but they wanted to learn more about our vocation and they asked the same question you just asked: “How is it that I know what the Lord is asking?” And our priests gave them such good advice, but it all centered around prayer.

[00:15:08] You cannot hear the Lord's call unless you spend time with him and unless you pray. And part of that prayer is being silent and allowing the Lord to speak to your heart the message that he wants you to hear. Sometimes I think the best way to discern our call is to reflect on the questions we're asking.

[00:15:30] Am I asking, "What am I going to do with my life?" "What am I going to do?" "How can what I want be fulfilled?" But no, it's not about that. It's like, "Lord, you created me. You have a divine plan for me. You know me by name. What is it you're asking? What is it you're asking me to do, Lord?"

[00:15:51] Because I know that when I say "yes" to your will, it always leads to holiness. It always leads to joy. So, for all those discerning, please commit yourself—maybe just a little bit more time—with prayer. Certainly, speak to your parish priest or Father Isenberg in our Vocation Office.

[00:16:10] Father Isenberg in the Vocation Office isn't just there to make priests and consecrate religious. He is there to help young people discern their vocation. So he's available, but also, many times, just speaking to the priest in your parish can be of great help too. But in discerning your call we say, "Don't be tortured by that."

[00:16:30] "Be peaceful." If you're discerning, if you're wrestling—"What am I going to do?" That's great. That's a sign that God's alive in your life. He's stirring your heart and he's trying to draw you closer to him in one way or another. So, rejoice in that. And for all those who are listening who have been

[00:16:48] chosen to live out their vocation as a priest, as a consecrated religious, in the beautiful vocation of the diaconate, marriage or those living our call to holiness in the single life at this time. What a great time this is to reflect on the call that God has given to you. And to renew the promise to live worthily,

[00:17:11] in a manner worthy of the vocation God has entrusted to you. That renewal—you know this in married life, I'm sure—but also in priesthood, consecrated life. That renewal is a daily "yes." It's a daily "yes," and I think Vocation Awareness Week reminds us: We have been called, we have been chosen, and each day God wants us to repeat that "yes" to him.

[00:17:37] **Billy Atwell:** You mentioned the St. Andrew's Dinners and—kind of interesting story—so, I went to one of those dinners as a younger man when Bishop Loverde was the bishop here and Father Bashista was the vocations

director. And one thing I remember Father Bashista saying afterward was—because you don't really know what you're getting into when you go.

[00:17:52] It's like, “Is this gonna be high pressure?” And he just said, “Let me know what I can do to help you find what God's calling you to.”

[00:17:59] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Right. Yep.

[00:18:00] **Billy Atwell:** And that was so relieving, because you do feel kind of alone sometimes, when you're single and you're discerning and you don't really know how to discern.

[00:18:06] I kind of knew how to pray, but I didn't really know how to discern, and just knowing I had that resource there was very valuable. But I think God got nervous that I might be trying to become a priest. And so, he introduced me to my wife about two weeks later. So, the next time I saw Father Bashista, I was like, “I think things have changed.” We're married with four kids now, so it certainly did.

[00:18:23] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Well, the highlight of those dinners, too, is that the young men—the way we do it now, or maybe it was the same with you—is that the young men ask questions. We don't talk to them. They write questions. And I don't say a word, usually. I let the priest speak.

[00:18:39] And the beautiful advice at this recent dinner—the one before, all the time—that our priests give is just incredible. So anyone who's discerning, whatever you might be discerning, you can depend on the wisdom and guidance of the wonderful priests of our diocese as well.

[00:18:58] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely. And you know, the, the Vocations Office and the support of our seminarians, it comes from the Bishop's Lenten Appeal. So, we just want to give a quick thank you to those who have given to the BLA, you support the Communications Office, but you're supporting other critical ministries of the Diocese, including vocations.

[00:19:15] That's how we're able to pay for—whether it's dinners or the posters or resources or retreats—the way we're able to do that, and to send men to seminary. It's not inexpensive to do that. It's because of your generosity that we're able to take in quality men to the seminary. And God willing, ordain them as priests, however many years.

[00:19:33] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** And our seminarians know that it is the faithful of this diocese supporting them in their studies. And I really do think it's a great motivator. They know that they're there through the generosity of our parishioners. And so, they want to make sure they're giving their very best because the people who support them deserve their very best.

[00:19:54] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely. So, quick housekeeping note before we get a question in from the faithful here. If you haven't already, please rate this podcast or write a review wherever you're listening to it. If you're on YouTube, please subscribe to our YouTube channel. We post a lot of great content. There are a lot of videos.

[00:20:08] Bishop Burbidge mentioned the All Souls Mass. Well, that homily is posted on our YouTube channel, so you can go watch that or listen to it, and take in that good content. Sign up for our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org. You can follow Bishop Burbidge on X, formerly known as Twitter, where he provides a short Gospel reflection for that day.

[00:20:27] His handle is [@bishopburbidge](https://www.instagram.com/bishopburbidge). You can also follow him on Instagram. We post a lot of his homilies and messages and even segments of this podcast there on Instagram, [@bishopmichaelburbidge](https://www.instagram.com/bishopmichaelburbidge). The Diocese is on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Feel free to follow us there. All right, so we have a question from the faithful here.

[00:20:46] The question is this: What do we need to know about the Synod? And they're talking about the Synod on Synodality in Rome for those who are unaware. And how does it affect the average parishioner's life?

[00:20:55] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah, we've talked about this on previous podcast episodes, but, in short, I believe, Billy, the Synod is an opportunity for the entire Church to reflect on how the Holy Spirit is guiding us through our modern opportunities and our challenges.

[00:21:13] We had listening sessions, as you know—every parish contributed those reflections to a national report, and the national report was sent to Rome for consideration. So, in a sense, everyone here in the Diocese participated in the Synod in Rome. I talked to a couple of my bishop friends who were at the Synod and you know, God bless them.

[00:21:35] It was a workout. It's a commitment. They were there four weeks.

[00:21:39] **Billy Atwell:** Wow.

[00:21:40] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** And it's Monday through Saturday. Like nine until seven o'clock at night. So, for those who attended the Synod, all the participants deserve our gratitude and there was great representation of various vocations in the Church and from all around the world.

[00:21:59] So, the Synod is the Universal Church at work. And as Pope Francis said many times, it was the Holy Spirit. We were calling upon the Holy Spirit to lead, to guide, to inspire, to direct the deliberations. At the conclusion, a synthesis report was written and in October of next year

[00:22:18] there'll be another Synod gathering for the conclusion of this same process. But fundamentally, I think the Holy Father in the Synod prompts us. The question was, practically speaking, how does it impact us, right? So, I think the Holy Father and the Synod are prompting us to ask ourselves: What are we doing,

[00:22:37] and why are we doing it? We cannot simply do the same thing because it's most comfortable. I mean, that applies to the Diocese, applies to the Universal Church. It applies to all of us.

[00:22:51] **Billy Atwell:** Yeah, even individually.

[00:22:52] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Yeah, individually, in our families. So, I think we must seek to understand the times, reflect on the timeless truth that comes from God—of course we're blessed, we have the timeless truth—but consider new ways to bring that truth to others, even in our own families, our own children.

[00:23:10] We can't just do the same thing over and over again. What are some new ways that we're doing it? I think the reflection involved an international process for the Holy Father, but each of us can go through the same thought process in our own lives, seeking to better understand where God is leading us.

[00:23:27] We do that all the time in the Diocese—your office does a great job. OK, is there another way we should be trying to get this out? Maybe this way was not the most effective. Pope Francis says, “Don't be afraid to ask the questions.” No need to be afraid. The Holy Spirit's at work in all of our lives.

[00:23:42] **Billy Atwell:** And you've offered great leadership in that with the Strategic Plan. You know, that whole plan came about from thinking, “Are we doing what we need to do? Are we doing things we shouldn't be doing?” And

setting new goals and objectives, and there'll be more coming out about that and where we are in that process.

[00:23:55] But yeah, it's important. That's a healthy thing to go through.

[00:23:57] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** Right. And we didn't go in there with any preset plan. We probably had something—in the Strategic Plan—some things in mind. I thought this was going to be a fact, but you know what? It was different than what I had in my mind, but we went in there with a clean slate.

[00:24:12] And that's what we have to do in our own lives. Don't be afraid. Don't cling to what always was and “nothing can change.” Be willing to surrender. The spirit of God surprises us in miraculous ways. But let the Spirit lead.

[00:24:29] **Billy Atwell:** Absolutely. Thank you. Any final thoughts before you send us off?

[00:24:32] **Bishop Michael Burbidge:** No, just so grateful to all of our listeners. And thank you. We talked a lot about the call to holiness today. Rely on the grace of God. We cannot do that on our own. We need God's love. We need God's mercy. And we need each other. Let's continue to lift up each other in prayer and help each other to grow in holiness and to become saints.

[00:24:53] We will do so if we 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 @bishopburbidge, where I offer Gospel reflections each morning and share photos and updates of what is going on in the Diocese of Arlington.

[00:25:14] Stay up-to-date with news, event information and inspirational content by subscribing to our e-newsletter at arlingtondiocese.org.