

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

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

Billy Atwell ([00:08](#)):

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Billy Atwell ([00:36](#)):

And if you're listening through YouTube, please subscribe to our YouTube channel and ring that notifications bell so you know when the latest content has been posted. And we update it regularly. Our e-newsletter is often the head of the spear for key information, major announcements. You can sign up for that at arlingtondiocese.org. Also, you can follow Bishop Burbidge on Twitter, @BishopBurbidge, where every day you can read a short Gospel reflection for that particular day. The Diocese is on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Check us out there and send your questions to Bishop Burbidge to info@arlingtondiocese.org, or you can call or text us at 703-831-7013. I welcome your host, Bishop Burbidge. Bishop, how you been?

Bishop Burbidge ([01:17](#)):

I am doing well, Billy. I hope our listeners all had a very blessed Easter, and a reminder that we continue the Easter season. That good news of great joy that Jesus Christ is truly risen, is alive and is in our midst and has conquered the power of sin and suffering and even death itself. So praying throughout the sacred season of Easter, our listeners, and our families, and all the faithful here in our diocese continue to know, to experience, to celebrate the peace and the joy that our risen Lord brings.

Billy Atwell ([01:53](#)):

Absolutely. So this is a busy season. I was asked by a friend the other day, they said, "After the Easter, is there kind of like a lull for you at the Chancery?" I said, "No, that is not the case." So just this past weekend, you ordained eight men to the transitional diaconate. First question, how did you think everything went?

Bishop Burbidge ([02:09](#)):

Oh, it was beautiful. Like I said, it's incredible to be able to say that we have ordained eight men this past Saturday as deacons. That in itself is incredible, but as I said in my homily, what is even more important is that we've ordained eight holy, faithful, joyful men who are filled with zeal and on fire with the Gospel. And I would say to the faithful of the Diocese here in Arlington, I can say that really about all of our seminarians preparing for priesthood. The number is fantastic, but what is most

important is the quality of men that we are ordaining, and that gives me great delight. And I hope for all of us here in the Diocese, a sign of great hope, tremendous hope for the Church, both in the present and in the future.

Billy Atwell ([03:03](#)):

Absolutely. We got an interesting question on Twitter about this because we have permanent deacons and they ask, so why is this called the "transitional" diaconate? Is there any difference between the ministry of a transitional deacon and a permanent deacon? So maybe you could-

Bishop Burbidge ([03:17](#)):

Yeah, that's a great question. It is asked a lot. And in essence, the pastoral ministry is the same for a transitional and a permanent deacon. Obviously, a transitional deacon believes that God is calling him eventually to be a priest. I even said that in my homely the other day, these men who will be ordained transitional deacons and, God willing, one day soon priests. The diaconate is the foundation of the priestly life. What we call the "permanent" diaconate emphasizes that being and serving as a deacon is a vocation in and of itself. So permanent deacon. So it gets to the point of being a deacon. Even from sacred Scripture, and even our Catechism says, that a deacon is to imitate that humble service of Jesus, one who rose from the table and the night before he died and washed the feet of his disciples.

Bishop Burbidge ([04:13](#)):

So diaconate is to be seen as a ministry of service. And as we mentioned, for permanent deacons, this vocational calling is a calling in and of itself. For others, it's the foundation for the priestly life. So from the diaconate, the transitional deacons are moving towards priesthood, God willing. So it's important to know all priests are ordained deacons first, because first and foremost, we are servants of the Church. We are leaders, we're pastors, administrators, but at root, we are servants. And this is because Jesus Christ is the one who came not to be served, but to serve. And that's the model that we are to imitate. And one thing that's very interesting at the ordination of a deacon, the bishop also wears a dalmatic, that's the distinctive garb of a deacon. So under my chasuble when I ordain deacons, I also wear a dalmatic, that's the only time I do that, which conveys that service characteristic of deacons is at the core of priestly ministry.

Billy Atwell ([05:21](#)):

It's literally the foundation of your vestments, the foundation of your ministry. That's interesting.

Bishop Burbidge ([05:24](#)):

Yeah. So as a bishop, you represent the fullness of priesthood, deacon, priest with chasuble and also of course the miter and crozier of bishop.

Billy Atwell ([05:33](#)):

Very interesting. All right. Well, there's that answer to the question. Bishop, a topic that has been raised from time to time on this podcast by you and through questions that we get is the issue of free speech, especially within society and secular culture at large. Elon Musk is a billionaire tech mogul and recently purchased Twitter. So it was reported earlier this week that he might purchase a share or a larger share than he had. And then all of a sudden, we find out that the board accepted a \$44 billion buyout. Do you think this type of news, while it seems like it might only impact social media, do you think it has significance for the Church as well?

Bishop Burbidge ([06:10](#)):

Yes, Billy, I do. Indirectly, I think it does. As you know I previously served as the chair of communications for the conference of bishops. And one of the issues that we were working during my tenure there, was that of free speech limitations on the internet. So it was with my brother bishops, but as chair of that committee, that was a real focus for us. And it was clear that some of the major tech companies had power policies and algorithms that were at odds with free speech. And that it curtailed the ability of the Church members to speak the truth on sensitive, maybe even controversial public issues, particularly regarding morality.

Billy Atwell ([06:55](#)):

Yeah. We discussed some of those on the podcasts, I remember.

Bishop Burbidge ([06:57](#)):

Right. And what is at risk? And that's why the religious liberty committee is a standing committee of the bishops' conference. I don't know whether Elon Musk supports Catholic teaching or opposes it, but he does seem to appreciate a reasonably open marketplace of ideas in this country. So that's a good disposition for a social media investor to have, especially I think given the role social media, significant role we should say, plays in what information we consume and what information we share. For example, our communications office has tried running social media ads with words like "abortion," "transgender," or "pro-life," only to be denied. Because those words showed up, we were denied that access because of quote, unquote "violating the company's policies."

Bishop Burbidge ([07:56](#)):

We changed the specific words and questions to something more ambiguous, and suddenly the ads were approved. So that's a dangerous place for the Church and for society. And I think as the bishops of the conference believe, the communications committee especially, we must be vocal in speaking out against that type of discrimination really. And I hope that people like Elon Musk and other tech CEOs recognize the importance of free speech in a free society.

Billy Atwell ([08:30](#)):

Yeah. It'll be definitely interesting because he's also taking on the issue of bots and fake accounts that get created by other countries, and how that could impact everything from elections to just what news are we even seeing? So it's also, how we

receive information, but what news do we actually have access to? It's very fascinating. It'll be interesting to cover. We'll continue to stay tuned to that and we'll bring it up on the podcast-

Bishop Burbidge ([08:52](#)):

And as you know, I do a Gospel reflection every day on Twitter. And, thank God, so far, I mean, because obviously we mentioned moral issues in light of the Gospel and teachings. And I'm waiting for that day where, "Love one another"--oh, Bishop Burbidge, you're blocked.

Billy Atwell ([09:17](#)):

So, all right. Well, there was a lot of interesting news in this cycle, but in Washington State, some interesting news came up. So little backstory. In 2008, an assistant football coach at Bremerton High School began a tradition of praying after each football game. No student athlete was compelled. I don't even know if they were even suggested to participate, but many did join him in taking a knee and praying following that game. The school district suspended him for this act of personal prayer. And his name is Coach Kennedy, appealed it all the way to the Supreme Court. So it's being heard of the Supreme Court right now. There's indications that the court might actually be favoring the position of the coach in this. What are your thoughts on this case, especially considering it's at a public school?

Bishop Burbidge ([10:02](#)):

Yeah. Good for the coach, first of all. I'm sure that takes a lot of courage, and I'm sure he takes a lot of heat for doing so. But good for his courage and integrity. Yeah. I heard also that some of the Supreme Court justices have indirectly hinted that they might be siding with the coach on this one, which I certainly hope is the case. At public schools, you cannot expect people to impose their faith on another person. And that is clearly, from everything I read and you just summarized, that's not what the coach did. He chose to live out his faith in a private way that drew the interest and participation of some of his student athletes. So that's a good thing.

Billy Atwell ([10:48](#)):

It attracted his students.

Bishop Burbidge ([10:50](#)):

And again, if he was forcing, imposing, or if you don't do this, you're going to be benched, I mean, that would not be correct. So I think his suspension is outrageous and completely inappropriate. Our free exercise of religion is a fundamental right, the fundamental right, that's rooted in our nation's founding principles. No person should be expected to check their religion at the door. And as we said, nor should they impose a religion on others, and there's a healthy balance there. And it seems until recently that came quite naturally and we knew how to live that. Now, all of a sudden, we're walking on eggshells.

Billy Atwell ([11:30](#)):

That's absolutely right.

Bishop Burbidge ([11:31](#)):

And I have to say that the kind of overreaction from the school district is exactly why I think many of our Catholic schools are at or approaching capacity. Parents are tired, and I hear it from them, tired of this kind of repressive anti-religion attitude from school bureaucrats. And many parents sacrifice to send their children to Catholic schools, private schools, to avoid just this kind of situation for their children, especially during their most formative years. And it's really wonderful to see, as we know, our Catholic schools include students who are not Catholic. But they, in entering the schools, embrace the mission. And we make sure the parents understand that before they enroll their students. And yet we're seeing this uprise in enrollment and it's understandable when we see some of the behaviors of school boards and what's being imposed on our children, which we've talked about before.

Billy Atwell ([12:36](#)):

Yeah. In this area in particular, we've had counties that have done things like this, but I have personal friends who pulled their kids out of public schools and are sending them to Catholic schools, and it's not always easy financially. But one thing that they emphasize is that our Catholic schools are not just themed Catholic. It's not a private school with a theme of Catholicism. It's at the very root of what we believe and how we operate. It's we're Catholic. We do this form of education because we're Catholic.

Bishop Burbidge ([13:01](#)):

That is exactly right.

Billy Atwell ([13:01](#)):

And that has been very attractive for a lot, I think between COVID and these kinds of situations, lots of people are recognizing that value and that important part of their children's life.

Bishop Burbidge ([13:09](#)):

Right. And every teacher that we hire is also given that vision, the mission, whether they're teaching biology, or math, or whatever. It's like, but do you embrace this mission? Because this is what we believe, and our faith and what we teach has to be incorporated throughout the building, not just in the theology wing.

Billy Atwell ([13:38](#)):

Right, absolutely. This Saturday, you're celebrating Mass for a ministry that I don't think gets enough attention, but I know it's very special to you. It's called Special Religious Education Development, or as we call it "SPRED" as the acronym. And so you're celebrating Mass this Saturday at Holy Spirit Catholic Church at 10:00 a.m. You've talked about your pastoral care and interest in ensuring that kids with intellectual and developmental disabilities are integrated and welcomed into our

schools, our Catholic schools as we just talked about. SPRED is for parish religious education programs, to make sure that they receive that same type of appropriate, tailored experience that they get at our schools when they're learning religious education through our parishes. How would you describe maybe the growth and the prevalence of this initiative in our diocese, and what are your hopes for it going forward?

Bishop Burbidge ([14:28](#)):

Yes, as you said, it's a priority for me, it's a priority for our diocese. It's reflected in our strategic plan that not only our Catholic schools, but our religious education programs are to work to make sure that we're able to embrace and to provide that setting, where young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not only part of or welcome, but integrated into the religious education program, into schools themselves. And as we have said many times, these are the students that bring so many gifts and so much joy to the rest of the students and the community itself. I am so proud of our administrators and teachers in our Catholic schools and throughout our religious education programs, and administrators who are really trying to make this a priority and doing a very good job.

Bishop Burbidge ([15:31](#)):

And we know we have to continue to improve in this area, which we will with the dedication of so many good people. And our strategic plan even points to the fact that the resources that we must provide to help this to become a reality. And so the fact that on Saturday we'll be celebrating Mass specifically with this community brings me just such great joy to be with the young people and their families, who just love and embrace their children and want them to have that same solid religious education formation that all children have. So I really am looking forward to this Mass on Saturday.

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

We've, in the Arlington Catholic Herald highlighted this type of program in our high schools and so on, through video and everything else, and we're going to be doing an article coming up on the SPRED program. And I spoke with one of our pastors who has it very prevalently at his parish and I said, "Can we interview you at some point about that?" He said, "Oh, I would love to." You could tell he cannot wait to unload some great stories to us. So stay tuned for that at the Arlington Catholic Herald. So a couple other events before we get to our questions from the faithful, upcoming, an ordination to the priesthood at St. Thomas More Cathedral, it's 11 a.m. on Saturday, June 4. It's open to the public. You're welcome to come. We will be livestreaming it as well on our YouTube channel. If you want a reminder for that, go to our YouTube channel and click the reminder button. That way you'll be notified when it happens, just in case you forget. Saturdays are busy, so we understand that.

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

Eight new priests too.

Billy Atwell ([17:07](#)):

Eight new priests. So eight deacons and now eight priests. We're on a roll here. This is exciting. So again, St. Thomas More Cathedral, Saturday, June 4, 11 a.m. Exalt: an Evening of Worship: with this year's Golden Jubilee preparation, again, we're preparing for our 50th anniversary as a Diocese. The theme is remember. And so exalt is in a program that will travel to various regions of the Diocese and lead us through remembering various aspects of the person of Jesus Christ. So night three is coming up on Tuesday, May 10, at St. Leo The Great, this is partnered with Project Rachel. Again, night three is going to be on Tuesday, May 10, go to our website for more information on that. If you miss the first two nights, that's okay. Each one is its own program. So please come. And then Arlington Diocese Catholic Campout, which I think sounds really exciting. Registration and campsites are still available: arlingtondiocese.org/catholiccampout. That's May 6 through 8; it's only \$10 a person with a max price of \$50 a family. Bishop, if you're going to break out your tent and be out there roasting hot dogs on the fire?

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

I am not adventurous. I'll be there for Mass though.

Billy Atwell ([18:11](#)):

Very good. All right. Again, that's May 6 through 8. There's still campsites available, which is pretty amazing given how close it is. Sign up now if you're interested. And on Saturday, June 11 of this year, we have the Diocesan Family Festival. We called this "Arise", last year. It was a major event. Everyone had a great time from little kids to big kids. There was lots to do, and we're doing it again this year, but it's called the Diocesan Family Festival. You can celebrate with the Diocese and Bishop Burbidge will be there as well. It starts at 4 p.m. and goes until 8:30 p.m. It's going to be at the Warren County Fairgrounds. You can find the exact location at arlingtondiocese.org/familyfestival. There's going to be vigil Mass at 4 p.m., and then there's going to be food, and picnics, and games, rides, inflatables, all that good stuff. Local Catholic vendors are going to be there, and there's even going to be musical guests and songwriters performing throughout the event. So please go to register. You do need to register though. Again, that's arlingtondiocese.org/familyfestival.

Bishop Burbidge ([19:09](#)):

And I think it's free. Isn't it?

Billy Atwell ([19:10](#)):

It is free, yes.

Bishop Burbidge ([19:11](#)):

We got to add that. We got to add that word. Because it's a great way for our diocese to highlight the importance of family life. We're so blessed in our diocese with so many wonderful families. And it's just going to be, like you said Billy, we'll begin with

Mass of course at 4 p.m., and then just have a great time together. Like you said, the kids enjoyed it so much last year. Hope many of our families are able to attend.

Billy Atwell ([19:35](#)):

It'll be a good time. All right. Our first question is from Chris. You are on record for saying that no priest is an active ministry in our Diocese who has been incredibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor, and that nothing matters more than the safety of our children. How are we to reconcile this with teaching God's infinite mercy if a priest is contrite and has been forgiven by God? Are there not ministerial roles for him that do not involve minors?

Bishop Burbidge ([19:59](#)):

Well, thank you, Chris. I appreciate the question, and it's a serious and significant one. And it's true; we have no priest serving in active ministry who has been found credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and this diocese, of course, have zero tolerance for that kind of behavior. And every allegation we receive, from the moment we receive it, we immediately report it to law enforcement.

Billy Atwell ([20:29](#)):

Exactly.

Bishop Burbidge ([20:29](#)):

And if the priest is found credibly accused, then he is permanently removed from public ministry. So the question asks is why can they not be resigned to ministry that does not involve children? And my response starts with the fact that they have so seriously violated their priestly promises and the essence of their vocation, that they could never be trusted in any sort of ministry again. You are in a role of trust of service, and to abuse, especially a minor, is behavior that by its very nature removes you from ministry. And ministry's a privilege. It's not a right. And with that ministry comes responsibility and often authority. And any person lay or clerical, abuses a child cannot be trusted with that responsibility or authority in the Church's public ministries. Their sin cannot just be separated to just one area of life. That type of sin will impact other areas of life as well.

Billy Atwell ([21:37](#)):

Exactly.

Bishop Burbidge ([21:37](#)):

I appreciate this question. It's a serious one. And I thank Chris for raising it. Our Lord is merciful, he's rich in mercy. And he desires to reconcile with us after we sin, particularly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And so, any priest or any person involved in any serious sin, including this one, has as his or her first responsibility, the salvation of his or her soul. And that is possible, if one, no matter how serious the sin, is contrite, expresses sorrow, the desire to begin anew. God forgives. And so

the salvation of one soul is important. But God's forgiveness doesn't mean that there are not consequences to our actions.

Billy Atwell ([22:33](#)):

Right, there's atonement that comes with all this.

Bishop Burbidge ([22:35](#)):

Right. There's atonement. And that damage we cause to others is real. When someone sexually abuses a child, there's no ministry in which I could ever confidently place them and trust that they will act in the best interest of God's children. That trust has been eroded. And we should pray that for the victims always, of sexual abuse, as well as their abusers, that they will save their souls. The abuser needs God, needs to ask forgiveness to atone and seek a conversion in their lives. But every time I talk about that subject, I do want to mention the continued prayers that we owe to the victims of sexual abuse, as well as apologies for any way that the Church has failed them, that prayer for God's healing. Because just as we say God's mercy is infinite and divine, his love is infinite. And his love is powerful, and his love can heal. And we pray for that for victims.

Billy Atwell ([23:35](#)):

And I know this is personal to you because you've also met with victims both individually and in groups, because the Diocese has a victim assistance office. And I know that this is connected to you and it's one that you take very seriously.

Bishop Burbidge ([23:47](#)):

And always deeply inspired that, in fact of being failed in such a serious way, to see victims of sexual abuse, especially by clergy, still striving so hard to deepen their own intimate relationship with God and in time, with his grace, within the Church. But it's a journey, and we must accompany them along the way. But you're right, when I do meet with victims individually or as a group, I come away inspired by their faith and trust.

Billy Atwell ([24:25](#)):

All right. Our next question is, could you please devote some time on one of your podcasts to the work that women religious do in our diocese? I have witnessed their silent service at so many parishes. I think you could take a lot of time on this one, Bishop, but what's your immediate thought?

Bishop Burbidge ([24:41](#)):

Wow, absolutely. We could always devote more time to the witness and the work of women religious in our diocese and in our Church. We are so blessed in the Diocese of Arlington with such a beautiful service and witness of consecrated women religious. We celebrate their ministry twice a year. We have particular celebrations for them when I'm able to gather with them. I can't imagine what our diocese would be like without the service of our sisters. We have a wide variety of services being

carried out in our Diocese. We have cloistered nuns who virtually never leave the convent or monastery and pray unceasingly for the Church. That's their ministry, praying unceasingly for the Church. We have consecrated religious women who teach in our schools, college, high school, elementary, serve in administration for our schools, some provide religious education at parish, serve the poorest of the poor in our diocese, work in youth ministry, and more. But the most important gift of the consecrated women religious to the Diocese is their witness of life entirely given to Jesus Christ.

Bishop Burbidge ([25:52](#)):

And I just see it in our diocese, they do it with such joy and dedication and zeal. They are sometimes called "brides of Christ" because they show us what a soul entirely and exclusively given to Christ looks like. So pray God more young women in our diocese or women at any age really, who are hearing this call to give their lives completely to the Church, may be inspired by those sisters serving in our diocese. And there's a wide variety of religious orders and communities here. And anyone hearing that call, I know any of our sisters would be willing to speak with you and help you in your discernment.

Bishop Burbidge ([26:40](#)):

And when you see our sisters, be sure to express your own thanks. And maybe how sisters play such an important role in your life. I know they did in mine, certainly in education from kindergarten to college, women religious sisters have been such a part of my life and I have just profound respect and gratitude to them. And so we are blessed here in our diocese. And so can we do more? Yes, we can and we will.

Billy Atwell ([27:16](#)):

Very good. And two points about that. The Vocations Office of our Diocese does keep track of people who enter religious life but are from our diocese. And they have a poster for them too. So people see the poster of our seminarians. But if you want a poster like that, to pray with your children for these individuals, please contact our Vocations Office. The other thing is, for this first year of our preparation for our Golden Jubilee, we are doing "remember." So do this in remembrance of me, but also our parish histories and our school histories, we're also going to do a history of the religious of our diocese. So I've put out emails to all the orders that we have on record as having served here and ask them to write up a history of their work here. And that'll be on the Golden Jubilee website once we get them all in. So stay tuned on that. That will be coming down the line here. Bishop, thank you for all this. I know this has been a good chunk of time. We've covered a number of topics, but do you have any final thoughts?

Bishop Burbidge ([28:09](#)):

Just a continued Easter blessings upon all the faithful. I'm always moved by, in his first resurrection appearance, the early words the Lord Jesus spoke to his disciples, "Peace be with you." And no doubt we are united in our prayer for peace in Ukraine, Russia, throughout the world, the end of all conflict and division, knowing that it is

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only Jesus who can transform hearts so that his peace reigns. And it's my prayer, everyone, that in your own lives, and your own families, and homes, and hearts, that you will know the peace of our risen Lord, so that as with his help and grace, all of us will continue to walk humbly with our God.

Bishop Burbidge ([28:51](#)):

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