



The Serra Club of Arlington
Minutes for Tuesday 02 January 2024 | Luncheon Meeting
The Portofino Restaurant | Arlington, Virginia



Guest Speaker

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop of the Diocese of Arlington, VA.

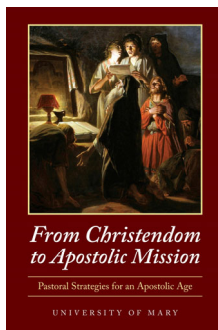
GUEST SPEAKER - HIS EXCELLENCY, THE MOST REVEREND MICHAEL FRANCIS BURBIDGE – BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON VA

The Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge was installed as Bishop of Arlington on Dec. 6, 2016, at the Cathedral of St. Thomas More. As the fourth bishop of the Diocese, Bishop Burbidge shepherds more than 460,000 registered Catholics in 70 parishes and 6 missions.

Bishop Burbidge was ordained to the priesthood in 1984. In 1992, he was named as administrative secretary to the Archbishop of Philadelphia and appointed Rector of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in 1999. In 2002, he was ordained an auxiliary bishop in his hometown of Philadelphia, where he oversaw the Office of the Vicar for Clergy and the Office of Communications. Prior to being appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Arlington in 2016 by Pope Francis, he was the Bishop of Raleigh for a decade.

Bishop Burbidge holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy and a master's in theology from Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, a master's in education administration from Villanova University, and a doctorate in education from Immaculata College. He is the Chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Pro-Life Committee, a vital role as the Church continues to identify and implement new and effective ways to spread the Good News. In addition, he serves on the Boards of The Catholic University of America, Mount Saint Mary's Seminary, and Catholic Distance University.

Highlights: Bishop Burbidge noted that this New Year marks Year Three of our preparations and celebration of the 50th Anniversary of our Diocesan Jubilee. The theme for this year is "Renew" and we focus on the New Evangelization, finding effective ways to lead people to Our Lord Jesus Christ. Bishop commends to our reading the book that His Excellency has been reading in preparation for this year:



From Christendom to Apostolic Mission: Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age (by Monsignor James Patrick Shea, President of the University of Mary, Bismark). This book **is available** through the **University of Mary Bookstore**, which benefits Monsignor Shea's community in Bismarck, ND. This book appears to be in stock (*since the University is the publisher*) and the University of Mary Bookstore offers free shipping via USPS. It's a great way for Serrans to support Catholic higher education. Click [here](#) for a direct link --- or go to the UofM home page (bookstore.umary.edu/home) and put "apostolic" in the Search box.

In this book, Monsignor Shea describes the Sacrament of Confirmation, and our current practice associated with the confirmation of young people. He discusses the major cultural shifts in the Catholic and the Parish mindset that have occurred in the past 50+ years. In 1966, the John Lennon interview ("We're more popular than Jesus now") created a huge uproar. This is not true today. We are not living in an era of Christian imagination.

Monsignor Shea notes that we are now in an era of Apostolic mission, which is not the Christian era of the 1950s and 1960s, but the opposite end of spectrum. It is important for Catholics to recognize era in which we live.

In the Era of Christendom, truth impacted societies. Believers were at peace, which can lead to downfalls. Some viewed the Church as the “doer of faith.” There was not much commitment required, and being Catholic was easy. It proves that things can change very quickly.

From the beginning of his episcopal appointment, Bishop Burbidge noted that all Seminarians have had to pay a price. Today takes more courage than ever to enter the Seminary. In the new apostolic age, the culture no longer recognizes commitments to natural law, the Commandments, or to a life of sacrifice. The challenge is that the institutions of Christendom are now taken for granted. Bishops and priests function as managers, facing challenges to avoid conflicts, losing the inner spirit.

In the Age of Apostolic Mission, Christians have become the minority rather than majority. Jesus and His followers changed world. They were not discouraged. They were on a mission to defend truth. We need to recognize that the current culture is hostile to truth.

In the Age of Apostolic Mission, we need to avoid the “us against them” approach to evangelization and life. It becomes the mission to proclaim the joy of Gospels; and never to compromise what is good, true, and beautiful. We must be inspired and invite those around us to embrace a life of virtue.

Culture shifts have both benefits and challenges. The Church must shift in response to where we are as Diocese and how to be present to those in need of Christ. Our challenge is our 50 years of great history. We are not much different than most Diocese in country. We have 27% participation (23% participation is the national average). What about 70% participation? We need to ask these kinds of questions.

Bishop Burbidge commended the Serran for their increased numbers in the Arlington Diocese. There is growth by invitation and welcoming. The Church must go beyond maintenance. This is why the Diocese developed a Strategic Plan, which will be implemented for years to come.

Bishop Burbidge’s questions to the Serrans:

- Are we focused on apostolic mission of sharing, one soul at time?
- Is obedience true freedom?
- Is holiness critical?
- Are we giving positive witness?
- Is ours a radical witness of joy?
- How do we sustain a sacramental vision of world?

Avoid “doing” but emphasize “being” from a Catholic perspective. Acknowledge the different world view and be willing to ask questions. Become apostles of Jesus leading, we should follow. Divisions can be used to unite God's Holy Family. Becoming witnesses to God’s mercy and love allow us to begin anew. Rely on His grace to make all things new.