



**Feast of the Ascension
Inaugural Volunteers Mass**

Homily

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Sunday 16 May, 2021

For the first part of my early life, my family lived in the parish of Bayswater. Fr John Russell was our parish priest and he relied heavily on people in the parish, who generously offered their skills and gifts for the sake of their community.

One Holy Thursday evening, Fr Russell came to our home with an urgent request. Only an hour or so before the huge crucifix that hung on the wall above the altar had fallen and was badly damaged. An arm of the figure of Christ had been broken. Fr Russell was desperate. Good Friday was only hours away and the Cross features so prominently in the liturgy. But he knew that my father and our neighbour across the road were carpenters and that they had volunteered before to help with maintenance at our school.

So they went with Fr Russell and worked into the early hours of Good Friday to fix and replace the crucifix. No one who came to the liturgy that afternoon realised what had happened.

Today, we celebrate and recognise the generosity of the many people in the Archdiocese who offer their gifts and talents to help the Church in her mission. Some may feel that their action is not that significant or important, but this is not true. Every hour that is given by a volunteer helps build up Church's mission and ministry. We see the work of each person in the Church as the fruit of the Holy Spirit who is present in their life.

The celebration of the Ascension of the risen Christ is an important part of the birth of the Christian community. All that went before the coming of Christ, the time of the covenant with the People of God and salvation history, was completed with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus made it clear, in the time he had with the disciples following his resurrection, that a new time was about to begin: the time of the Church. It was necessary for him to leave the earthly realm and return to the realm of heaven. In this way, he could be present to every person, in every place, in every time.



Jesus also helped to prepare the disciples for the sending of the Holy Spirit, which we celebrate next week at Pentecost. The Spirit is the source of unity and a unifier, the source of strength and of our gifts and talents.

Jesus' last words to the disciples were that they go out to whole world and proclaim the Good News in words and action. The Spirit enables each of us to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus and the hope that this event offers us every day. Our faith urges us on to take our part in building up the Church and to be witnesses of Christ in the world.

I hope that the vast number of volunteers in parishes, schools, healthcare, social services, the care of people with disabilities and so many other agencies in the Archdiocese will see how vital their action is, and how their contribution forms an important part of our witness to the presence of the life-giving Christ in our midst. We pray for you and bless you for your faith and witness.