



Annual Marriage Day Mass

Homily

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

**St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Saturday 28 August, 2021**

Today, the Church celebrates the feast of St Augustine, the great Christian figure of the fourth and fifth-centuries. Yesterday, we celebrated his mother, Monica. She was a convert to Christianity from North Africa who showed great faith in God's goodness and so prayed with faith, especially for her family.

Patient and persistent prayer was rewarded as she saw her husband embrace the faith and later her difficult yet searching son, Augustine, baptised in Milan. It was a mother's love that gained her family the blessing of reconciliation and communion with God.

Love is the central point of the letter of John, a portion of which we heard just minutes ago. We were reminded that the ultimate evidence of God's love for humanity is the sacrifice of Christ that we ponder when looking on the Crucifix. St John reflected and pondered on the great mystery of God as revealed by Jesus. He understood that God is love itself and that all love has its source in God.

He then pondered on God's love for creation especially humanity. John appreciated that we come to know God by knowing the love of God for each of us.

"No-one has ever seen God; but as long as we love one another, God will live in us, and his love will be complete in us". Although we cannot see God, we can experience the presence of God, through loving.

The couples here today are celebrating the years of marriage they have lived. We are especially honouring those who are celebrating 25, 40, 50, 60, even 70 years of married life. We admire their journeys together, with all the twists and turns: the joys, happiness and companionship, and the times of challenge, sadness and growth. Their marriages have invited the Holy Spirit into their midst. The Spirit of God has continually built their capacity to love like Christ; strengthened their love for each other; and assisted them in loving without giving up.



I have just completed my annual retreat with the clergy of the Archdiocese. It was at one point during the week that I reflected on some of the experiences of ministry that I have had since my ordination in 1977. One that stood out was among the first that I had.

As a deacon, I had been assigned to a neighbouring parish to the seminary. I was asked to take Holy Communion to a couple who were housebound. The husband had suffered a very serious stroke which left him paralysed and almost completely helpless. This had happened only after about fifteen years of marriage. His wife was his carer. It was through my weekly visits that I got to know them very well.

They deeply loved and cared for each other. He was concerned for her as she now had to do everything for him, and at times it took its toll. Her care was outstanding. At times, his frustration would be expressed in a sharp word and anger. Yet their love never failed. They would speak of knowing the presence of God in their situation. I am sure that they discovered in that time of enormous challenge that it was through their loving that they came to know God was living within them.

We could tell our stories as well. The couples with us today reassure us that love can conquer all things. They are a true sign of the great goodness of God and that their trust in the grace of love accompanies them each day.

We celebrate the presence of God within them and give thanks that they provide such remarkable witness to the world.