



**Sixth Sunday of Easter (Year A)  
Volunteer Sunday Mass**

**Homily**

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

**St Mary's Cathedral, Perth  
Sunday 14 May, 2023**

So much is achieved in our society through the people who volunteer their time and talents.

Yesterday, the names of well known and not so well known individuals in our communities across WA were published, who are being considered for awards in various categories. Some have been successful in business, or sport and public service. All have found the time, as well, to devote to organisations that are dedicated to lifting up and inspiring many in our communities that otherwise would be overlooked and left behind.

The time that they give, with quite some passion, greatly contributes to and adds value to community projects and the vision of good people “who see a need and do something about it”, as St Mary MacKillop would often say.

Volunteers are to be found in all areas of society. So it is not surprising to find them in every community of the Church as well.

When I was in primary school at Bayswater and Bedford, in the days when little support was provided by governments, and the schools depended on the parents, firstly, to build the school by self-help and, then, continue to develop the amenities needed for a more complete education of their children. Many of our primary and secondary schools were financed and even physically built by the fathers and mothers who gave up their weekends and weekday evenings for the sake of their children. These were great days in those schools' histories. There was great community spirit. Without them it is hard to imagine what the vision of Catholic Education would have become.

They worked hard with the little that they had, with their own hands, using their skills without counting the cost. They did not just have their own children in mind but all the children and the families of their parish.

That tradition of volunteering continues today in a much more diverse way. The parishes and the Archdiocese are more developed and complex now, and there are so many more ministries and service being offered because of people who find the time to make their contribution. All without



expecting rewards or payment. It is why we are celebrating our volunteers today and blessing them and their generous contribution to the mission of the Church.

The Gospel spoke today of the life of the community that flows from our relationship with Jesus and the Father. Before Jesus finally departed, and we will celebrate this next week in the Ascension, he drilled into the disciples the importance of their relationship with God, and how this would deepen as their faith, hope and love grew. With the help of grace, the disciples would show their love for Jesus when they obeyed his commandments. “Love one another as I have loved you” Jesus repeatedly taught them. This is the law of Jesus: the New Commandment.

They became better at doing this, loving in the way they saw Jesus love, because they had come to realise that God reached out first, and had loved each of them first. They knew that there was no other way but to begin from the love of God and love in return, loving God and others as Jesus loves.

Let’s reflect on God’s love for each one of us. This love is transmitted to us through others. Love is observed and is learned. From the moment of our birth we have experienced love, especially from our mother, and gradually we began to observe loving gestures from the one that loves us. Eventually, we learnt how to love in return. And with this capacity to love we can love others, to the extent that we can be the one to make the first step to creating communion, forgiveness and reconciliation with others. This is the law of love that God has shown us in the life of Jesus and in the people who are part of our lives.

Today, being Mothers Day, gives us the chance to say thank you to the mothers who has been witnesses to the law of love through their gestures of love. They loved us from the time when we could not respond in love. They loved us through each stage of our early years, and we learned how to be loving. They taught us how to take the first step in loving others. We learnt of the generosity of love, and that it is never wasted or lost on anyone, for it is observed and remembered by them and makes a huge difference in our relationships with those around us.

The volunteers we pray for, bless and acknowledge today have learnt the law of love and they offer their time and talents to serve their communities so generously because they realise God has loved them first and to this love they are compelled to respond in love and service to their brothers and sisters.