

To All Couples Participating in an
Engaged Encounter Retreat

Dear Friends:

I am very happy to write you as you participate in this important preparation for your Marriage. I write on behalf of the Church, whose life at every level thrives because of the love of families. But I write above all, to remind you of the meaning that God is now preparing to give you, to make your life together something special, unique, and more precious in His eyes.

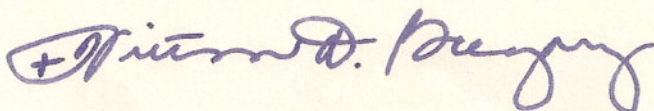
God sees not only everything, but every individual thing. At the beginning of time, God said: "*It is not good that the man should be alone.*" And later, Jesus was to recall these words of His Father, and make God's will about Marriage even clearer: "*So they are no longer two, but one.*" This is meant for everyone, but it is also meant just for the two of you reading this letter with one hand and one heart. In Marriage, you will not be separate, you will not be incomplete - you will be together and one in God's purpose and His love.

And you will be the gift of one another as well, for God never intended that we should be anything but free. And so, the Church, and the world will hear you make the gift of your love mutual, when you say: "I take you to be my wife;" and "I take you to be my husband."

But the grace you gain, by God's will, and by your own choice, will reach farther than you or anyone can imagine. For your life together, and your openness to the life of children, makes new life for the Church and the world. Thus, the beautiful union and harmony of our loving Father's generous plan for our life on earth will unfold in your actions. And the love you bear for one another will mirror that final union with God, when all who have been faithful to His will, will be gathered into eternity - into endless love.

I sincerely pray that these thoughts of mine may add to the spiritual blessings you will experience during this retreat, and that the memory of what you experience will remain with you, as an encouragement, and a guidepost for all the years you will be together.

Sincerely in Christ,



+Wilton D. Gregory
Archbishop of Atlanta