THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Peace and all good things!

It is with great joy that I welcome you back to the Archdiocese of Atlanta for the second annual "What God has Joined" retreat. I was so heartened to hear from the retreat team about the graces and blessings you received during last year's gathering. Your commitment to the beautiful, yet challenging, journey of fidelity to your marriage vows is a powerful testament to the unwavering love of God.

This year, you gather again to find encouragement and hope. You'll have time for prayer, reflection, and fellowship—all of which are essential on this path. The world may not understand the strength and witness you embody, but our local Church sees you and stands with you.

Last year, you meditated on the words of Christ from the Gospel of Matthew: "What God has joined together, no human being must separate." This year, as you continue to hold fast to this truth, let us remember that the strength to do so comes from Christ Himself. As St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Christ understands the weight of your cross and walks with you through every moment of struggle, doubt, and loneliness. In what must often feel like a solitary witness, please remember that you are still a part of a family—the Church—which prays for you and with you.

Your fidelity to your vows, even in the midst of separation, is a truly heroic act of faith. You are not only being faithful to a promise; you are being faithful to Christ Himself, who is the source of the sacrament. You are living out the truth that God's love is unbreakable and that His promises endure forever. You are a living testament to the indissoluble love of Christ for His Church, a love that never abandons or fails. This love, and your faithfulness to it, is your true strength.

As you spend these days here, be open to receiving the healing and grace He longs to give you. May your time together foster a deeper closeness to the Lord and His Church and strengthen you in your resolve to love as He loves.

I am grateful for your presence and your witness. Please be assured of my continued prayers for you, your families, and this retreat. May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

Yours, In Christ,

+ Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv.

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