THE ROMAN CATHOLIC

ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA

Peace and all good things!

With my brother bishops in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, we are very pleased to welcome you to the What God has Joined retreat. Unfortunately, I am unable to be with you in person, as the bishops of the United States are meeting this week in Baltimore. However, please know of our prayers for you over these next few days.

You have come from near and far, but you are gathered by one common purpose: your love and dedication to the Sacrament of Marriage and to the truth of the indissolubility of marriage. Thank you for your witness and for making time for this retreat. I hope and pray it will foster further closeness to the Lord and His Church and continued growth in holiness and healing.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ says, "what God has joined together, no human being must separate." With these words as the title for your retreat, you are reminding all of us of the love we are called to imitate. We are all called to love as Jesus loves, to give of ourselves to those around us every day, and to be faithful to the promises and vows we have made, just as God is faithful to us.

You know well this is no easy task. I am reminded of a quote from Mother Teresa in which she said, "God has not called me to be successful; He has called me to be faithful."

In a society that has gone to the extremes to erode and even erase the meaning, dignity, value, and importance of marriage—to the point where we in the Church, particularly in her leadership, also need to examine our culpability and cooperation in this erosion—you stand as a powerful witness to fidelity, to the indissolubility of the marriage bond, and to God's eternal and life-giving love to us.

Please pray for the bishops, and please be assured of my prayers for you, your families, and your retreat. May the Lord's peace be with you always.

Yours, In Christ,

+ Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv.

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