



805 NORTSHORE DRIVE SW • KNOXVILLE, TN 37919 • (865) 584-3307 • FAX (865) 584-7538

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF KNOXVILLE

To Participants in the Engaged Encounter Weekend

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you for choosing Engaged Encounter. I join with so many people in praying that this weekend will be fruitful for you as you prepare for the sacrament of marriage. I cannot think of a better way for you to take a step back and examine the gift of love which God has given to you, and to come to know with your heart and mind the love that Jesus has for you as you prepare to be married in the Lord. Joined to the preparation which you receive from your parish priest, this Engaged Encounter weekend is a tremendous opportunity for the Church to reach out to you and for you to deepen your faith at this important time in your life. I often say that we must strive to be the face of Jesus to all whom we meet, and what better way to do that at this moment than to share this encounter with your beloved.

During this weekend I hope and pray that you encounter the love that God has for each of you as you also uncover His plan for you. In faith, we know that the marriage covenant by which a man and woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. It is a covenant between baptized persons who have been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a Sacrament. Sacred Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of "the wedding feast of the Lamb." In St. Paul we hear of marriage as a great mystery, as he encourages this covenant in the Lord.

As you pledge your love for one another in a permanent and faithful way and in a way that is open to new life, please know that you are building up the Church of Jesus Christ. Your love for each other in good times and bad is a great sign to the world of the love of Christ for His Church. Your openness to new life and your responsibility as a parent will, I trust, bring you great joy as you live out God's plan for you.

I also encourage you to be active members of the Catholic Church in the area where you will be living. Your participation at the Holy Eucharist together and your involvement in parish life will nurture the grace that you receive as you are married in the Lord.

The Engaged Encounter is a wonderful example of "like-to-like" ministry in our Church. In your name I acknowledge those couples who give their time and talent to serve you. This important ministry of the Church is a tremendous example of the generous love that is in the marriage relationship of the couples who lead you. Our Lord may also call you to reach out to other couples in the future through your participation in the Engaged Encounter. If Our Lord calls you, I ask only that you be open to that prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Please know that you are in my prayers as you take these important steps in preparation for your marriage. May God's blessings be with you and may you have many happy and fruitful years together.

Sincerely yours in Our Lord,

Most Reverend Richard F. Stika
Bishop of Knoxville