



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

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OFFICE OF THE CARDINAL

Dear Friends in Christ,

God has given married love a great dignity, making it a sacramental sign of Christ's loving union with the Church. As Pope John Paul II wrote on the occasion of the Year of the Family, "Marriage, the sacrament of matrimony, is a covenant of persons in love. And love can be deepened and preserved only by love, that love which is 'poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us'. (Romans 5:5)"

I am delighted to recommend the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend as a special time of grace for husbands and wives to build communication and understanding and to deepen their love for one another in marital spirituality. When, in our society, six out of ten new marriages are failing, Marriage Encounter is a powerful tool to strengthen marriage and help couples to live their vocation. Please God, Marriage Encounter will become a regular renewal program for all married couples. I encourage priests and parish staff members to promote it in the parishes.

The Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend also offers priests and religious brothers and sisters a unique opportunity for personal vocational enrichment. The principles of love, commitment and effective communication presented on the Weekend are equally valuable to the relationship between consecrated religious persons and the people to whom they minister in daily life.

God has given us all the awe-inspiring command to "love one another" with reconciling and life-giving love. The mission of Christian marriage unfolds as each family builds up its own "domestic church" (cf. Vatican II) giving special witness to God's own fruitful plan of love for creation.

May the Holy Spirit, alive in your hearts, strengthen all to live deeply, the mystery of God's loving presence among us, finding special strength for your own vocation.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Baltimore