

## **Love, Romance, and Vocation**

When candidates are discerning (and even beyond) there can be confusion regarding which attractions to nurture. The below is meant to bring order.

There are three types of love: “eros” love as in erotic or romantic love, “philos” love as in brotherly and sisterly love, and “agape” love as in the unconditional love of God. Our vocation is to help us grow into the agape love i.e. loving perfectly. No matter which vocation we choose all persons are called to progress in perfect love. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48). By doing so we are answering Christ’s prayer to “bring heaven to earth” (Matt 6:10) which is the purpose of all vocations.

With that said, when a person is called to a particular religious community they find Christ there in an extraordinary way. Their faithful love for Christ has led them there which is His gift to them. Their gift to Christ is the outpouring of their loving reciprocity. Out of this all-encompassing love they produce, nurture, and sustain God’s children.

Now the same holds true for persons called to marriage. The spouses connect with Christ in the other in an extraordinary way. Out of their all-encompassing love for Christ, they produce, nurture, and sustain children of God.

Regarding relationships: All persons can experience a deep friendship with others in any vocation (as in the brotherly/sisterly love) but nurturing “romantic” inclinations as in the “eros” love only applies to Holy Matrimony. Note of importance: Even those discerning Holy Matrimony must do so primarily for experiencing Christ in the other. The problem is many people are not primarily seeking Christ in the other. They can experience a “civil legal marriage” of sorts but not necessarily a Holy Matrimony because many are consciously or unconsciously focused on things of a temporal nature

such as good looks, status, wealth, which often leads to divorce and heartache. Also, many couples today say they are “marrying their best friend”. “Friendship” in itself is not a primary reason to enter Holy Matrimony. Friendships are for everyone. What matters most is embracing the vocation that best helps us grow in perfect love through Christ.

I hope that helps. Love and prayers,  
Natalie