

# GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



## CALLED TO SERVE

ORDER OF FRIAR SERVANTS OF MARY  
Vocation Newsletter

Salvation history is filled with examples of good and holy relationships that strengthened individuals over time: David and Jonathan; Elijah and Elisha; Mary and Joseph; Jesus and the Apostles; Francis and Clare; the Seven Holy Founders; Vincent DePaul and Louise DeMarillac; St. John Paul II and St. Theresa of Kolkata to name a few. We all need that person or persons in our lives whose friendship strengthens our sense of self while encouraging us to positively progress on life's journey. The presence of loved ones and friends makes life better, exciting, challenging, and manageable because we have someone to share it with. Relationships of all sorts are necessary in our formation as human beings.

If there is one thing that is apparent about humanity it is that we are created to be in relationship to others. We are social beings by nature. We find great joy in the friends and family who surround us; in our mentors and those who encourage us, and in our teachers who give us new understandings about the world. We find great joy and needed direction in our relationship with the Lord who saves us from our sin, creates us in his image and likeness and abundantly graces our lives with blessings. It goes without saying that to be human is to be relational.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines relationship as the state of being related



or interrelated. This means that often we can understand ourselves better by those who surround us, especially those whose love and friendship nurture, challenge and support us. To be in relationship is also a spiritual experience because ultimately our relationship with the Lord gives definition to our lives. This relationship defines not only our sense of self, but likewise our understanding of the world in which we live and the manner in that we are interrelated and connected to the people who inhabit our lives and the world around us. It is in relationship with Our Lord that we see our truest self and from which we discern the call of our lives. Often discernment is aided by those persons with whom we share a close bond.



In discernment, we listen to clarify the Lord's call upon our life. Often, it is within our relationships, especially with those closest to us, that we often hear the word of God loudly and clearly. Our loved ones



and friends know us well, sometimes seeing in us what we cannot see or refuse to acknowledge. This is because those who know us well can be wonderful conduits of the Lord's love and understanding to us. These people who know us better than we may know ourselves are often able to help us clarify things we hear in prayer and those which fill our minds and hearts. God speaks to our hearts. God speaks to us through those who love us, offering insights into our discernment. When discerning, we need to listen in prayer and to those with whom we share our discernment because valuable insights come in both aspects. A discerning heart listens for the many voices that speak the truth of God's loving call upon our lives.

or in relationship with another person, we need to love in a manner that honors our truest self, God and others which births joy in our lives. Not all are called to love celibately, but we are all called to love in the manner that honors the deepest stirrings of our hearts and calls forth our best selves. Remember that discernment is the process to learn how we are called to love and the challenge to love as we are called. Likewise, the entrance into a religious formation program is not a fallback if other life plans fail, or to see if "religious life might be for me." These need to be honestly explored in one's discernment process. Discerning religious life and entering a religious formation program is about

## Reflection Questions:

1. Honestly, how am I hearing God calling me to love Him? To love others?
2. What questions do I need to ask the Vocation Directors as I discern the call to religious life?
3. How do I feel about loving God in consecrated celibacy?

### Vocation Directors

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follow



But, at times, relationships can give an added dimension to discernment.

What can compound or complicate discernment to religious life is when the discerner falls in love or becomes attracted to someone. Love is a gift. Love is to be honored. But, the call to religious life is a call to loving celibately, gifting one's entire self to God, in an exclusive relationship where our loving God becomes the primary relationship of life. No one and nothing else can be the object of the consecrated celibate's love but God. So, what happens to discernment when a discerner falls in love and starts dating? Such an event needs to be prayed about and reflected on. Can the discerner commit to an exclusive relationship where loving God becomes the primary focus of life and love? If not, then the discerner might be called to see that a loving relationship with another is the call upon their life. Remember, love is a gift and God calls us to love in a manner that honors us. Whether the discerner loves celibately

answering God's call to love Him as a consecrated celibate realizing that doing so is the call upon one's life.

Love is a gift. To love relationally is to be human. To love God in consecrated celibacy is the call to give oneself exclusively to God. Discernment is the process to acknowledge whether one is called to humanly love God in this manner. Remember, whatever way you choose to love God is acceptable to Him for where there is love, there is God. Blessings on your discernment.

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