

NOGUTZKY GETS THE LOWDOWN

IV

Ya know, Stooze, that was a funny thing the padre says to me the other night---on this vocation business, I mean. If ya got Wishbone, Backbone and Funnybone, Mac, says he to me, then you're just about on the way in. How about that Stooze! Nothin' about the brains angle at all, at all! So I says to the padre, Pere, maybe ya think I got birds in my aerial, but I just don't get it--wishbone, backbone, funnybone--so what? Ain't ya gotta have somethin' upstairs too?

"For the love of Pete, Mac," says he, "I'm assuming that everyone around here--even the midwesterners and the men from Peoria---I'm assuming that you all have some gray matter up there or you just wouldn't be here or on any other campus. The pre-requisite for a vocation, --- for any professional field, Mac, is at least average intelligence. Now you take the ordinary student around here--the English or History or Math or Philosophy major, or the premedic or prelaw students---they all have some natural talent for learning and for applying themselves. Unless they're just wintering here at Notre Dame, and that kind doesn't stay around after the pinkies come out, nine out of ten of the lads here have what it takes intellectually to go on in the professional field. A fellow doesn't have to be an Einstein or sleep between book-ends to get a college degree. That goes for a vocation to the priesthood too. The important thing is to start out with at least average intelligence. This intelligence can be developed and trained by serious habits of study and intellectual curiosity both of which are fostered by the training in the seminary. It takes a love for learning and a serious outlook on study to crack the Latin and Greek and Philosophy and Theology with which the seminarian wrestles day after day. But the routing of seminary life, the regular house, the absence of distractions which is peculiar to the sem---all of this aids the student to develop that thirst and love for knowledge which the Church demands in her priests, whether they be Secular or Religious."

And what about this Wishbone angle, Padre, says I.

"I suppose, Mac," says he, "it would be better to call that the CONVICTION angle.; you see it really isn't wishbone because a fellow can wish to be a millionaire from now till breakfast and it won't make him a millionaire; so he too can wish to be a doctor or banker or teacher or priest, but mere wishing won't get him there any more than merely wishing for happiness will bring happiness. An earnest desire, springing not from my emotions but from intellect and will, hence something really deep and spiritual could be one of the signs of a vocation. My desire might arise from an earnest intention to serve God or my neighbor in God's service. It could stem from a strong urge to assure myself of salvation, knowing that there is less chance of succumbing to temptation in the religious life or priesthood than otherwise. A fellow might be willing to leave home and family and friends and relatives with this intention in mind, and, by the way Mac, that's where the Backbone comes in too---MORAL COURAGE. It takes that to make the initial step, to break away from the world and at least give the seminary a try. The life of the seminarian, of the religious, of the priest is not easy; it demands courage and patience and endurance and innumerable other hardships, but all of these can and do add up to happiness when we realize that Christ said to those first priests: "I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN" i.e., He didn't say 'you will make yourselves fishers of men'---wasn't it St. Paul, Mac who said 'I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me!'"

And how about the Funnybone business? says I.

"That just means a sense of humor, Mac," says the padre. "Good humor is essential in any profession--and by that I don't mean going around with a silly grin on your puss or making yourself the Simple Simon of the crowd. It is the ability to look at life and life's problems in a sanely humorous way, disregarding the annoyances that would disturb our serenity of soul, or at least taking those problems with a grain of salt rather than have them throw you out of proportion. The ability of chuckle in the midst of life's perplexities is one of the prerogatives of a good priest--and of a