

Anthony, B.
The secret Key.-
ADJ 0173

The Secret Key



By
B. Anthony

Nihil Obstat:

THOMAS W. SMIDDY, S.T.L.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ THOMAS EDMUNDUS MOLLOY, S.T.D.,
Archiepiscopus-Episcopus Brooklynensis.

Brooklynii, Die XVI Aprilis, 1956.

COPYRIGHT, 1956, BY
THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE
IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

Deacidified

THE SECRET KEY

By

B. ANTHONY

INTRODUCTION

WHEN talking to a serious-minded Catholic youth who is about to choose his life-time career, he expressed a hidden desire to become a Priest. Yet, he was fearful of his worthiness of such a sacred privilege. He spoke of many personal failings, his uncertainty . . . his interest in various fields . . . and his burning desire to serve God perfectly.

As a result of that conversation, the following article was prepared in an effort to guide him, and other Catholic young men who are struggling in doubt and indecision, during the formative years of life.

Special attention has been drawn to the three outstanding phases of human activity, in an attempt to illustrate the various advantages and disadvantages in each of these fields . . . namely, Business, Service and Religion . . . so that personal abilities and limitations will manifest themselves in proper relationship with the field of choice, thereby giving the Catholic youth of today, the opportunity of living a happier, more successful life in the eyes of God and man.

Discovering Yourself

When you were only a few years younger, you probably pictured yourself, as becoming another Dick Tracy, a 'Master Detective', like Nick Carter . . . a Tarzan, Superman . . . or Pilot of a Space Ship . . . headed toward Mars!

As you look back upon it now, it all seems pretty silly and impractical . . . just 'kid's stuff'. Yet, today, you undoubtedly are wondering just what type of career you 'should' choose, in order to lead a worthwhile life in the service of God and your fellowmen.

Perhaps now, you try to visualize yourself as a businessman, doctor, scientist, surgeon . . . member of the Armed Forces, parish priest or missionary. The variety of opportunities is rather staggering. Yet, there are many problems as well as opportunities confronting you, as you stand on the threshold of your lifetime career.

It isn't an easy decision to make. It takes time, to come to the correct conclusion. Be wise, give considerable thought to the type of work you feel you are suited to do the best. It must also be pleasing to you, and help you to serve a worthy purpose upon this earth.

The stage of childish fantasy and wild dreaming has passed. The business of everyday living and planning for the future, is at hand. Start off on the right track . . . don't miff the opportunity, it will prevent possible heartache and disappointment in the years to come.

Experience teaches us, that the best way to accom-

plish the desired results, is to turn in all humility and confidence to our Blessed Mother and her Divine Son . . . in order to know the Will of God . . . and to obtain the courage to fulfill it.

Once you have made this petition . . . the great search begins! For a time, you become an 'Explorer' . . . in order to discover the hidden secrets of your heart and soul. In this way, you will begin to know yourself . . . in regard to your abilities and limitations. Be sure to keep in mind your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual capabilities. Your educational Background, personal desires and preferences, should also be considered.

STOP.....To think!

LOOK.....At the following questions.

LISTEN.....To your answers!

What sort of a person am I?

What type of work would I like to do the most?

How do I fit into the picture . . . physically, mentally and emotionally?

Could I handle the job well?

Is there any special training necessary? If so,

How are my marks in school?

Do I like to study?

Am I willing to work hard?

Would I be happy on the job?

Are there any spiritual risks?

There's plenty of food for thought in those ques-



tions. Take time . . . to think them over carefully. They are very important.

If you attempt to give a hasty answer to these questions, you may find yourself in the same sad predicament as the physically weak young man who stubbornly and unwittingly pursued the career of an athlete. He hoped to become an Olympic Star! Of course, he suffered defeat. He had overlooked his physical limitations. Yet, he might have become a Champion, if he had stopped to realize that God had blessed him with a keen mind, and a great capacity to learn. He may have become a successful writer, educator . . . composer, or the like. Poor fellow, he rushed into the 'Race of Life' . . . without stopping to catch his breath, and 'get into condition', before he started.

During this Period of 'Discovery', you will realize that God has placed a certain 'key' in your possession. If you use it with proper guidance and discretion, it will open the door to your lifetime career.

The Period of Choice

As Catholics, we all realize that it is our sacred duty to God, ourselves, and our fellowmen, to search for that particular 'key', which lies on our own, individual 'key-chain of life'. We must choose it wisely . . . grasp it confidently . . . and use it discreetly. So you see, this 'Period of Choice', is an all-important one. It should not be treated lightly, or looked upon as a 'field-day for curiosity' . . . therein lies the seed of ultimate failure.

The 'Pass Key'

BEWARE . . . of the so-called 'Pass Key'! It opens the doors to various careers, indiscriminately. It satisfies momentary curiosity, but it leads to a lifetime of confusion . . . misguided efforts . . . and unhappiness in the sense of failure. Don't be attracted by the glitter and glamor of 'make-believe'. The 'Pass Key' is as fragile as glass, and it will break in the 'keyhole of real opportunity'.

In order not to get fouled up in your search for the 'hidden key' in your possession . . . follow a definite plan, and you will come to a definite and correct conclusion. The best method, is to put 'first things, first'. Once you have discovered the importance of doing this, you will have taken the first step toward future achievement.

To us as Catholics, 'putting first things first', means pleasing Almighty God and His Blessed Mother. Therefore, you will agree, that your initial step, should and must, be that of prayer.

Prayer

Don't be fooled into thinking that there is anything 'sissified' about prayer! A few so-called 'hep characters', may attempt to persuade you and others to either neglect, or eliminate prayer. Poor fellows, they'll learn in time . . . the hard way!

There is something very masculine and inspiring about seeing a young man on his knees in humble prayer. Don't be afraid of it . . . The safest, and most

certain way to obtain the desired answer you are seeking, is to ask for it . . . through prayer.

Do not hesitate to beg our Blessed Mother for help in directing you. She will definitely reward you for your Faith and efforts. In time, you will know the Will of God, and understand yourself in regard to your personal abilities and limitations. Also, ask our dear Lord to obtain the strength and courage necessary at this crucial period of your life. If you follow this simple plan, you'll not only achieve a portion of worldly success . . . but you will also become a finer person.

The Ideal

The first thing you will discover, will be your Number One choice of a life-time career. It will be your own, personal 'Ideal'. The next step is to study yourself in proper relationship with your 'ideal'. Sound difficult? Well, it really isn't . . . just review the questions you asked yourself; only this time . . . keep your 'ideal' in mind.

Take care, not to become temporarily blinded by enthusiasm, and fail to see reality. That is what happened to the unfortunate chap we mentioned earlier. He neglected to study himself in proper relationship with his 'ideal'. It was easy for us to recognize his error and faulty judgement . . . but we sometimes fail to see our own mistakes and foolishness.

The Weighing Process

Once your 'ideal' has been 'temporarily' chosen . . . put your abilities and limitations on the opposite side

of the scales. See how you measure up! If the scales tip toward, 'abilities', then pursue your 'ideal' still further. If they point toward 'limitations' . . . there is need for more prayerful consideration. In that case, it would seem that momentarily at least . . . you have not found the suitable 'ideal'. The one you have chosen, just isn't for you.

This 'weighing process' may be considered as the 'compass point'. It indicates the direction to be travelled.

If the scales tip toward 'positive', that is, toward 'Abilities', further study is necessary. You may think you possess the desire and natural ability to do a certain job well, but other factors have to be considered.

In order to weigh things properly, give yourself the following test. You will find it quite interesting:

Is good health and strength, needed on the job? . . .
if so,

How do I measure up, physically?

Is mental ability a requirement? . . . if so,

Would I be suited to the job . . . mentally?

Does it tax the emotions? . . . if so,

Could I cope with the emotional strain?

Do I honestly feel I have the ambition needed for the job?

If you feel you meet all other qualifications . . . pause and consider the spiritual aspects of your 'Ideal'. Get to the root of it by asking:

Will such a career be worthy in the sight of God?

Would there be danger to my faith and morals, if I pursued such a career?

At the end of my life, could I, through the Grace of God, stand before Him unafraid, and offer a lifetime well-spent for His honor and glory?

How did you make out with these questions? How do the scales balance now?

Three Keys to Glory

It would seem that God has provided Mankind with several 'keys' with which to serve Him. To some, He has given the 'Copper Key to Industry'. Others, have been endowed with the 'Silver Key of Service' . . . and a select few, have been blessed with the privilege of possessing the 'Gold Key to a Religious Vocation'.

If we would only pause in our rush onward toward Eternity, we would gradually discover which 'key' lies in our possession. Therefore, we should analyze each 'key' . . . each possibility . . . and weigh things carefully before making the final decision.

The Copper Key

The majority of young men, who are enjoying all the conveniences of modern living, become impressed with the marvelous contributions Industry and Business have made . . . to make this world a better place in which to live.

They feel compelled with the desire to make a 'personal' contribution. Some, become small instruments in the large mechanism of the modern business machine. In this way, they feel that they are paying their debt to the men and women who have done so much before them.

Others, desire personal advancement, in the hope of procuring a sound financial security. They wish to possess the finer things in life, and to secure freedom from economic worry, when their working days are done.

Do you honestly feel that you share their hopes and desires?

Would you like to make your own 'personal' contribution in the field of industry?

Do you feel you could serve God best, as a 'Business man'?

If you have answered, 'yes,' to these questions, then you may be reasonably certain that you possess the 'Copper Key' to the door of Business Opportunity. This of course, is merely your 'temporary' decision. In fairness to God, yourself and your fellowmen . . . you must also consider the remaining 'keys' . . . It may alter your 'final' decision.

But for the moment, let us consider that you 'do' possess the 'Copper Key'. Now, it is time to dwell upon the 'Occupational Advantages' and most of all . . . upon the 'Occupational Hazards' involved.

Occupational Advantages

Very little time need be spent dwelling upon the 'Occupational Advantages'. They can be seen at a glance. By reason of your own choice, they undoubtedly are pleasing to you.

Be sure you view these 'Occupational Advantages' realistically. Don't become a foolish dreamer! The

chances are, you will not become another Rockefeller; things just don't work out that way. Very few, ever become millionaires . . . but thousands manage to earn enough money to provide a comfortable living and lead a worthwhile life.

If you heed this 'CAUTION' sign . . . you will avoid future disappointment, and through hard work and personal achievement . . . you will reap the benefits of the 'Occupational Advantages' involved in the 'Copper Key to Industry'.

Occupational Hazards

On the road marked 'Discovering Yourself' . . . you met the first signal . . . 'STOP . . . LOOK . . . AND . . . LISTEN'. Now, you will do well to slacken your speed, as you approach the 'SLOW' signal. Time is needed to consider the 'Occupational Hazards' involved in the 'Copper Key to Industry'.

At first, you may not even recognize these so-called 'hazards' . . . yet, they do exist. These are not merely bodily risks which are necessary in dangerous work . . . for example in shipyards and the like, they also involve spiritual risks.

These spiritual risks exist in every type of work undertaken by man. You must be constantly aware of them, especially, in your own field of choice.

Consider for a moment . . . the 'Occupational Hazards' involved in this materialistic world. They make it so easy for us to forget the 'really important things in life' . . . and tempt us to make a god of the mighty Dollar. Certainly, you, as a Catholic, would not want

that to happen to you. Therefore, if the 'Copper Key to Industry' lies in your possession . . . sincerely ask God's help in prayer, and whisper within your heart:

If I obtain wealth . . . let me be willing to bless it with Charity; if I gain power . . . let me use it kindly; if I become influential . . . let me use my position benevolently; if I obtain all earthly possessions . . . let me deem them as nothing . . . if they be the price of my immortal soul.

If you feel you are a Business-minded Catholic youth . . . keep these thoughts foremost in mind. Ask God's blessing upon your choice. Then, grasp the "Copper Key" you have found in your possession . . . hold it confidently . . . and go forth to take your proper place among men!

The Silver Key

After you have considered the 'pros' and 'cons' of the 'Copper Key', you may find that it could not satisfy your longing desire to serve humanity. Therefore, you will realize that you have come to the sign marked 'DETOUR' . . . and more prayerful thought is needed. The 'road' ahead . . . leads to the 'Professions'. Those who travel it, possess a more precious 'key' . . . it is the 'Silver Key of Service'.

For you . . . the 'Silver Key' of Service may mean:
Service to suffering humanity, in the field of Medicine.

Service in the realm of Science and Research, or

Service to your country, in the Armed Forces.

Think it over! You may be privileged to enter one of

these high spheres of 'Service to Mankind'. But of course, you must decide whether or not, you are qualified.

Physically

Mentally

Emotionally

and Spiritually.

Give yourself another little 'quiz'. This time, ask yourself the following:

Would my health permit the stress and strain needed in the field of Service?

Am I mentally equipped to cope with the long years of study and learning needed as a foundation for such a career?

How are my marks in school?

Do I like to study?

Would I have the perseverance to endure personal hardships, in order to achieve my goal?

Have I good control of my emotions?

Could I cope with the spiritual risks involved?

If you cannot answer, 'Yes', to all of the above questions . . . then you can be certain, you do not possess the 'Silver Key'! On the other hand, if your answer 'is' in the affirmative . . . you are in a position to choose which 'type' of service would be most suitable.

So you see, this business of 'Discovering You' . . . can be a very soul-stirring experience . . . and will inevitably bring the desired results!

Occupational Advantages

When you consider any phase of Service, the "Occupational Advantages" are varied and numerous. They all soar into the realm of high ideals.

The healing knowledge of the physician, can cure the sick. The skilled hands of the surgeon . . . can snatch life, from the jaws of death. The keen mind of the biologist, can discover serums, vaccines and drugs for ailments once considered fatal.

The brilliant vision of the scientist, can find ways of improving conditions as they exist, and/or arrive at new methods or inventions, to enrich living upon this earth.

Those inspired by Patriotism, defend not only our own country in time of War . . . but stand as valiant Sentinels of Freedom . . . against those forces whose diabolical ideal . . . is to destroy the dignity of Man, and his Christian Civilization.

Certainly, there is no doubt about the 'Occupational Advantages' in the field of Service. (As shown in those examples briefly mentioned . . . and in all of their allied fields, which you recognize, are far too numerous to mention.)

Occupational Hazards

The 'Occupational Advantages' in the field of Service, must not overshadow the 'Occupational Hazards' which lurk in the background.

If you wish to enter any of these specific endeavors or, their allied fields . . . you will realize the importance

of studying the 'Occupational Hazards'. The most important of course, are the 'spiritual risks' involved.

Spiritual Risks

Each branch of 'Service' has its own peculiar 'spiritual risks'. Let us say for the moment, that you wish to become a Doctor, Surgeon, or other member of the Field of Medicine. By reason of your choice, we can assume that you are a young man with high ideals. However, these are not enough. As a good Catholic, you are bound in conscience, to study your own 'Spiritual Personality', before making your final decision. Otherwise, you may find that such work would endanger your spiritual life and growth. If you feel that such a profession, just 'might' become 'spiritually dangerous', then you can rest assured you are not fitted for such a career; despite all reasons to the contrary.

On the other hand:

From your past 'spiritual behavior', can you honestly say that you would make every effort to see Christ in the sick?

Could you really succeed in your efforts?

Would you be able to cope with the familiarities peculiar to this specific type of profession. That is, with reasonable 'spiritual safety'?

Would you be willing to give your efforts . . . tirelessly and willingly?

If so, then you have what it takes to make a good man of Medicine!

Now, let us assume that you desire to become a Scientist or the like. If this is your choice, pray fervently for the graces necessary for your particular field of choice; lest one day, you forget that there is a God . . . without Whose help, Science would be fruitless.

A strong Faith,
complete confidence in God, and
a keen sense of humility,
are the weapons with which you will have to fight but only a few of the 'Occupational Hazards' in the Scientific Field.

Do you possess these qualities? . . . Think it over!

* * * *

Those in the Armed Service of our country (particularly those who have seen 'action' in war), can testify to the truth that Service in the Armed Forces, presents many serious 'Occupation Hazards', as well as benefits. The very fact that a young man is stationed far away from home . . . often unable to attend to his religious duties, frequently leads to a slacking up of moral discipline, and lukewarmness, toward things spiritual.

Therefore, if you are fired by the glow of Patriotism . . . keep religiously vigilant. Otherwise, you may desert Christ's Army, and become a traitor to your Master!

Do you feel that you possess the necessary strength of Faith and Character . . . to make service in the Armed Forces your life-time career?

Are you eager to defend and protect the rights of

your God and your fellow-men . . . if it became necessary to do so?

If you do, then you may feel reasonably certain that, with Divine Assistance, you may find that your worthwhile decision . . . not only satisfies your worthy desires, but will prove an excellent plan for you to follow.

Be honest with yourself. Don't pull any punches, or try to fool yourself. It just won't work . . . You'll be the loser!

If you feel that your Faith 'is', a 'little weak', and you have become inconsistent in your moral behavior, (even in the ordinary circumstances of living . . . forgetting prayers, missing Mass, etc) . . . then you are bound by conscience to consider some other type of lifetime career.

On the other hand, you may discover that you 'do' possess the spiritual qualities needed for such a profession. If so, then in all humility and confidence . . . you may grasp the 'Silver Key of Service', and enter the field of your 'Choice'.

If the 'Silver Key' lies in your possession, you are indeed, a fortunate young man . . . for to serve Humanity . . . is to serve God . . . by helping others!

The Period of Trial

Put on the brakes a moment! We have come to the 'Crossroads' in our journey. There is something 'else' to be considered . . . Let us heed the 'STOP' sign!

Do you find that you are not satisfied to grasp the 'Copper Key to Industry'?

Do you find that even the 'Silver Key of Service', does not adequately fulfill your desires?

If so, then you are probably quite puzzled. Well, don't be alarmed. There are other young men . . . just like you. Unfortunately, they are relatively few in number.

Finding yourself in this precarious position, you may naturally feel perplexed. You know that you were placed upon this earth to love and serve God all the days of your life. Yet, the 'ordinary means', seem inadequate and imperfect. So, if this has happened to you . . . pause for a moment, and you will realize there is 'another key' . . . which is a little more difficult to find . . . and perhaps a little more difficult to grasp . . . Start searching for it!

Like the others, you undoubtedly realize that few things are known to you at this crucial moment.

First of all, you know your own particular 'exterior' and 'interior' personality.

You are also aware of your sincere love for God.

Lastly, you are eager to do something worthwhile with your life.

The rest, may be wrapped in mystery.

Like any other serious-minded Catholic youth, you too will turn for guidance to our dear Lord and His Blessed Mother.

Unlike the others, who arrive at a decision com-

paratively quickly, you may be seized by doubts, fears and a lack of self-confidence.

This 'Period of Choice' may, indeed be a 'Period of Trial' for you. Keep up your courage . . . Lift your Lamp of Faith. It will guide you through the dark and difficult passes, until you see the Light of God's Holy Will.

Like the others, who have also experienced this 'Period of Trial', you will slowly begin to understand yourself a little more clearly. You will gradually realize that the 'Copper Key to Industry' and the 'Silver Key of Service' are not attractive to you . . . because you love God, above all else, and in some way wish to express it.

The Gold Key

When a serious-minded Catholic young man comes to this realization, he begins to search to find the 'hidden key'. Like a man looking for a treasure, he nervously digs through the hard rocks of resistance. Finally, he discovers that his 'key' . . . is indeed, a 'Hidden Key'. It is difficult to find, and perhaps even more difficult to grasp. It is a 'Gold Key'. Like gold, it must be tried and purified by fire, before its true beauty can be seen.

The possibility of your possessing the treasured, 'Gold Key to a Religious Vocation' may be frightening at first. Or, perhaps at this moment, you are putting up quite a resistance by saying:

Who me?

That's impossible!

I couldn't possess a 'Gold Key to a Religious Vocation' . . . I'm not good enough . . . or . . .

I'm a . . . well . . . I just never figured it that way. That's O.K. for fellows like . . . but not for me.

Yet, in spite of yourself . . . you keep on pondering the possibility. You, like the man who discovers gold in the rough unattractive ground . . . may tremble at the sight of your new-found possession . . . You may become frightened at the thought of its great value in your worthless hands. Of course, you may be filled with holy fear and expectation, upon finding such wealth in your troubled heart.

Just as 'gold' must be tried and purified by fire, so also will your treasure. At first you may even grasp it and leap for joy upon your discovery; only to suddenly sink deep into self-contempt and rebellion. Be not afraid . . . These are but the fires that purify, and can be watered by Grace.

Once again . . . you may be offering resistance saying:

I couldn't be a Brother or a Priest, I'm not the type. I'm just a 'regular' fellow.

Of course you are, and the Brotherhood and Priesthood is made up of thousands of 'regular' fellows; that is, on the 'outside'. Some of them even play ball . . . go golfing . . . swim . . . and drive automobiles. They all look like everyone else, except for the 'round collar'. However, they are 'different' on the 'inside'. They may participate in sports, teach . . . write books and even enter into world affairs . . . yet, their hearts

and souls are 'not of this world'. They are generous fellows too! They are so generous, they gave their very lives to Christ! . . . Don't you be stingy! . . . Nobody likes a 'tightwad'!

The Two Doors

When a young man is contemplating his possibility of possessing the 'Gold Key to a Religious Vocation', he finds himself standing before two glittering doors. One, places him upon the threshold of the Brotherhood. The other, opens the door to the corridor leading to the Eternal Priesthood.

Through prayerful intercession, and as a result of previous self-study of his own particular abilities and limitations . . .

Physical

Mental

Emotional

and Spiritual,

he realizes which door he should open, in order to fulfill his holy purpose in life. He also recognizes which will enable him to serve God perfectly.

Occupational Advantages — Brotherhood

Perhaps you know a few Brothers. They may have taught you in school. Now, let's pause to consider the 'Occupational Advantages' of life in the Brotherhood.

Did you know that the various types of work done by the Brothers, cover all fields of endeavor? Well,

they do! Their worthy work ranges from Carpentry and Farming . . . to Teaching and Nursing . . . as well as the intensified, specialized field of Religion.

Many young men, who previously felt they possessed the 'Copper Key to Industry', have discovered that their work would be more pleasing to God . . . if done as one of His Brothers.

Are you . . . one of these?

Some fellows who previously felt they possessed the 'Silver Key of Service', have also discovered that they could serve God by helping others . . . more perfectly, as a Brother.

How about you?

If you feel that you may possess the 'Gold Key to a Religious Vocation', you will also be drawn to the worthy life in the Brotherhood. This will hold true, particularly when you realize that the 'Occupational Advantages' of such a life, are crowned with numerous Graces and Blessings from Almighty God.

The treasure-chest of Holy Mother Church, is rich with many types of Brotherhoods. Upon seeking the advice and direction of your kind and understanding Confessor, you will be able to determine which Order would meet your own needs and qualifications.

Occupational Hazards — Brotherhood

It would certainly seem that the glorious field of Service to God, would contain no 'Occupational Hazards' . . . but, some 'do' exist. As you will see momentarily, these so-called, 'Hazards', are similar to those

of the Priesthood. However, there is one 'Distinguishing Hazard', shall we say. It is the lack of power to administer the Sacraments, and offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

This so-called, 'Distinguishing Hazard', can hardly be so-named, as it merely marks the difference between a member of the Brotherhood, and one of the Priesthood.

If you feel that this so-called 'Hazard', is a 'stumbling-block', you will come to realize that your 'key' will open the door to the Priesthood. Considerable time, should then be spent dwelling upon your own personal abilities and limitations in that regard.

Occupational Advantages — Priesthood

If or when, you realize that you may possess the 'Gold Key' to the Priesthood, you will certainly become aware of the 'Occupational Advantages'. Unquestionably, you will steal away from your pals for a while, to think it over . . . in the silent tranquillity of your parish church.

You will whisper within your heart and soul:

My hands could possess the power to forgive.

My mind could instruct the ignorant and innocent, in the Word of God.

My feet could mount the altar for daily Mass.

My body and soul could be consecrated to God.

My very life . . . could radiate Christ!

Upon realizing the magnificence and dignity of the

Priesthood, you will inevitably and rightly, pause for considerable sincere prayerful meditation. Like the others, who share your secret thoughts, you too, will ask God to let you know His Divine Will. You will also strive to see yourself as He sees you. In this way, you will gradually discover whether you are suited best for the Secular Clergy . . . the Missionary fields afar . . . or the hidden life of a Monk. Our Lord will certainly help you to find the courage to fulfill your holy purpose, regardless of all personal cost . . . Above all, don't become over-enthusiastic or over-discouraged . . . either extreme, would be very harmful.

Points to be Considered

You have given yourself several little tests throughout this 'Period of Discovering Yourself' . . . Now you are about to commence the final examinations. Take time out to answer all of the following questions, to the very best of your ability. Be perfectly sincere and honest with yourself.

Do I feel that I am physically fit, to enter and remain in Religious life?

Am I of average, or above-average intelligence?

Would I strive to persevere through the long years of study and training?

Do I honestly believe I am emotionally fitted for the task?

How do I rate spiritually?

Be extremely cautious when answering the questions regarding your Emotional Capability and Spir-

itual Capacity. These qualities are important in any field of endeavor, but in Religious life, they are the vital ingredients in the cornerstone of a Religious Vocation.

Be wise . . . put up your own 'CAUTION SIGNAL' . . . and BEWARE of emotional drives, sentimentality and the like!

The Wrong Approach

At times, young people are attracted to religious 'Callings', merely because of emotional drives. These 'drives' are not sufficient grounds for attempting to pursue a Religious vocation.

Emotion, in the sense of making religion attractive, should be carefully avoided. Look upon emotional satisfaction with suspicion. It is subject to the whimsical moods of man, and is not the solid rock of Faith and the holy desire to serve God perfectly.

Also strive to avoid Pride, in the feeling of obtaining a position which is looked upon with respect. If you feel just 'a little bit better than others' . . . rule it out! If it persists, and there is no genuine humility in the thought of such an honor being bestowed by God . . . then it may be a 'Counterfeit Vocation' . . . based upon personal pride and the satisfaction of the Ego.

The Natural vs the Supernatural

Now we have come to a "FULL STOP" Sign. It is time to do more thinking!

In all other professions, those who are part of them, can choose whether or not, they wish to remain single, or marry and raise a family. If you are contemplating a Religious vocation, give considerable thought to this important fact.

We all have to fight the War of the 'Natural against the Supernatural'. It continues all the days of our lives. However, your present Battle may be won by asking:

Am I willing to give ALL my love to God . . . now and always?

Would I be inclined to long for the love of a truly 'good' Catholic girl, who might become my wife . . . and mother of our children?

or,

Could I be happy, loving ALL human beings for the sake of Christ, yet . . . claim no one to be my own?

As you dwell upon these facts which are your birth-right, you undoubtedly recognize the necessity of talking the matter over with your kind and understanding Confessor.

Seeking a Confessor

Once you have made your own 'personal' decisions regarding these vital points, your own Confessor . . . or any Priest, will be happy to direct you. In time, he will be able to help you to raise the veil of doubts which may cloud your vision from the true light of your own personal possibilities of serving God worthily.

Spiritual Qualifications

Your spiritual qualifications will also be studied by your Confessor. Of course, you should be aware of them yourself first, (at least in part), before approaching a Priest. Otherwise, you will not present a true, or even fair picture of your spiritual life.

If, after sincere self-analysis, you feel you could not live a life alone with yourself and your God, you may discover you are not emotionally fit for such a task. It is also possible, that you may come to the conclusion you could not maintain a life of strict spiritual rigidity.

Physical restriction must also be considered.

If any of these points unduly distress you, you may feel reasonably certain that you do not possess the true 'Gold Key' . . . At any rate, talk the matter over with your Confessor; with his help, and guidance . . . your secret dream may be realized.

On the other hand, if you feel you meet the challenge reasonably well, sincerely reveal this fact to your Confessor. Follow his advice . . . regardless of how pleasing or displeasing, it may seem.

Occupational Hazards — Priesthood

The 'Occupational Advantages' to a Religious Vocation are, as promised by Christ, 'a hundredfold'. They are quite obvious even to the ordinary thinking mind of a 'practicing Catholic'. However, do not fail to recognize the 'Occupational Hazards' which also exist.

The life of a Priest, or anyone in the Service of God . . . burns out slowly, before His consecrated shrine. There are hours, days . . . weeks, months . . . perhaps even years of loneliness. This is particularly true in the lives of Missioners, who are far away from home, surrounded by foreign-speaking people and unfamiliar customs. Try to understand just how terrible loneliness can become.

Have you . . . ever been . . . really lonely? If so, then you have some idea of what is meant. If you haven't . . . then, think it over carefully.

Can you understand and accept the fact, that we are never truly alone . . . spiritually speaking?

God is everywhere, and your Guardian Angel, is always at your side.

Are you able to realize that the only TRUE loneliness, is the result of Mortal Sin, when the soul is cut off from God's Graces and Blessings?

Can you resolve that no 'other' loneliness will distress you unduly?

If so, then you can feel reasonably certain that at least that point, has been won!

Now that we have dealt with the problem of loneliness, it is time to turn within yourself, to see whether or not . . . you are the master of your passions. If these are not guarded, they can run the gamut of all the Seven Capital Sins.

Surely you will agree, that this phase of self-examination can be only done during periods of prayerful meditation before your Divine Master. Your

sincere efforts will pay off, if you ask the Holy Ghost to enlighten you . . . the Blessed Mother to protect you . . . and our Dear Lord to guide you, in your decision.

Naturally, you will realize that such thoughts can not be profitable, if attempted in the corner candy store . . . where the juke box is beating out the Number 1 song on the Hit Parade. It would also be difficult to dwell upon such matters at home. The radio, television, as well as members of your family, would become intruders upon your thoughts.

Obey the 'FULL STOP' Signal . . . give yourself a fair break. Follow the lead of other fine lads who sought the solution to the same problems . . . in the Presence of Our Eucharistic King!

The 'I' vs the 'Cross'

A worthy Priest once said, "Take the 'I' out, and the 'Cross' will be seen." You will find that it is difficult to do this at first. Like the rest of us, you may tend to be self-centered, and dwell upon yourself . . . your hopes . . . dreams, fears and ambitions.

Have you ever tried to say a few prayers . . . only to find you can't concentrate on what you are doing? It has probably happened many times . . . as it does to everyone. Well, don't become alarmed . . . just do your best to lift your heart and soul to God in earnest prayer. In time, you will be able to view your soul through Holy Light. All the scars and illnesses will be seen. A keen sense of unworthiness will inevitably sweep across your once self-centered heart. At last,

you will then take the 'I' out . . . and will see the 'Cross'. Once this happens, you will become less 'self-centered' . . . and more 'God-centered'.

If you really 'are' a Vocation-minded young man . . . follow this simple plan. It will happen to you . . . and then, you will understand.

When the 'Cross' is truly seen . . . particularly by one wishing to become 'Another Christ' . . . all else . . . including passionate desires, will become but challenges of Satan. They will cease to be barriers and detours on the road to the Eternal Priesthood. Then, you will be prepared to meet every obstacle in your path, more successfully.

Spiritual Risks

It may seem unlikely to you now . . . but the 'Occupational Hazards' present in the actual religious life, are ever-constant. Like thieves who ransack the homes of the poor . . . hasten to the mansions of the wealthy . . . the Seven-fold Legions of Satan, attack the rich castles of a Priestly soul. However, like the Serpent in Eden . . . they can be crushed by the foot of Mary. Our Lady is always willing to draw her beautiful Rosary about her children. This is particularly true in regard to the members of her Priesthood. If they ask for her help, she will inevitably draw them closer to her, and her Divine Son.

Have you ever stopped to realize that while a Priest is hearing Confessions, he is subject to the filth and slime of sin-stained souls?

Did you ever consider the possibility of his being

tortured by the most cruel torments of the Devil . . . (particularly those of the flesh?)

Try to remember that his soul has received the mark of the Eternal Priesthood, but his human heart still throbs within his breast. He is constantly aware that no human being upon this earth enjoys immunity from evil. However, these facts should not, and must not, prevent you . . . or any other Catholic young man, from accepting the 'Gold Key'. If it lies in 'your' possession . . . thank God for it, all the days of your life.

Recall the Mercy of Christ! . . . Our Lord raised Peter to be the first head of His Church. Yet Peter, who was so human, so very like all men . . . denied Him . . . not once, but on three different occasions.

He also forgave the sinner Augustine . . . Now, he is numbered among His Saints.

To the young man who possesses the 'Gold Key' . . . God has also given the precious gift of humility. This can be recognized by a feeling of unworthiness . . . together, with a burning desire to serve God perfectly.

Is that how 'you' feel at this moment? . . . Think it over!

If you have decided that you 'do' possess the priceless 'Gold Key', hold it fast . . . lest thieves try to rob you of it. In the due course of time . . . it will open the precious door to the Priesthood.

In the meantime . . . cling to the glorious realization that one day, you will bow at the foot of the altar of

your Eucharistic King . . . a worthy Servant of your Divine Master.

When the final battle of life has been won . . . you will, through the Grace of God . . . give a 'faithful account of your stewardship'.

Just think of it! The souls you have helped along life's path, the Masses and prayers you have said . . . the trials of loneliness, spiritual dryness, violent temptations . . . and years of fruitful service . . . will become precious jewels in a radiant Crown of Glory . . . when your 'Gold Key' is placed upon the 'Key-ring of Peter', for all Eternity!

CONCLUSION

The 'type of key' in our possession is not sufficient to bring happiness upon this earth, or forever after. It is the way we use that 'key', that really matters.

By now, you realize how important it is, to choose the proper one . . . use it according to the dictates of conscience . . . and in compliance with God's holy Will.

Whether you possess the 'Copper Key to Industry' . . . the 'Silver Key of Service' . . . or the 'Gold Key to a Religious Vocation' . . . is relatively unimportant. The 'Secret Key' only opens the door to the road ahead. It is the way you travel that road that is important.

You are free to choose a simple path. You can enjoy all this life can offer . . . think little of things spiritual, perhaps even forget God! Or, you can walk in the Shadow of the True Cross . . . accept each challenge in life . . . and rise confidently after having

fallen. You have the power to lift your heart and mind in prayer and whisper within your soul:

“In Thee oh my God, I place my trust . . . let me not be confounded.”

Therein lies ‘true’ success or failure. Not in the passing circumstances of Time . . . but in the lasting things of Eternity.

Now that we have discussed the three outstanding phases of human activity, have you discovered ‘your’ SECRET KEY?

If not . . . then put this little pamphlet aside. You have not reached a ‘DEAD END’! Pray a little more fervently. Then, re-read it, and you will find your answer.

If you ‘have’ found your ‘Secret Key’ . . . thank God for your discovery and proceed . . . ‘FULL SPEED AHEAD’ . . . along the Highway of Life. Always keep alert . . . and watch for the ‘DANGER’ Signals. If you remain obediently law-abiding in the ‘traffic of life’ . . . you will serve God faithfully, with peace of mind . . . purity of heart, and steadfastness in virtue . . . until our Divine Master . . . eventually calls you Home!



