

THE LAST couple of years I've observed the year's ordination class as they file out of classrooms, have heard them in discussions while on walks around the campus, have seen their eager faces in intimate communion with God.

I have long wondered: what are the thoughts of men like these? How do they feel as they come within breathing distance of ordination?

I have never dared ask any of them for fear of intrusion. But this year, as I find myself treading the last weeks of my own ordination, I've decided to break into print my own inner feelings, my own overriding thoughts.

And this I found out: More than anything else I'm haunted by the presence of an abyss. The abyss between my own littleness and the monumental greatness of the priesthood. My inadequacy and the Powers of God's anointed.

Anyone I think who has examined himself, as he approaches the threshold of his ordination, will bear out this experience.

Often I have asked: Why me, Lord? Why instead of all the brilliant minds in the world, and of all the pious young men in school, have you chosen me?

But I dare not push the question too far. I know that Jeramias argued thus with You So did Moises. And they lost. And who am I anyway to question Your judgement, O God?

Indeed, this is my one comforting thought: It was not I who have chosen You; it was You who have chosen me. This is no longer a mere pietistic thought; it is the very visceral reality.

For as I look back I see your Hand that contrived the events that led me to the altar.

I recall my schoolboy days in Manila: how barren my taste for the things of God. How excitedly we ran from home to school to thrilling experiences. And then the War came, with the mysticism of fear that it engendered and the change of habits that it forced on us, particularly the habits of thought.

How my first close contact with a priest was forced on me by circumstances. How the things I began to read, and that

THOUGHTS

BEFORE

ORDINATION

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This is no longer a mere pietistic sentiment.

"chanced" meeting with an American chaplain had aroused a new hunger within me. And later, that great inner distress at the graduation dance: in the weird lights of the crowded ballroom I felt all alone! How I almost shouted before the grinning microphone the vanity of all human rejoicings without God!

The first years of seminary life opened up more doors to God's grace and I saw the blind alley of religious indifferentism to which our system of education was leading us.

How I almost cried with St. Augustine: "O Ancient Beauty too late have I known thee...!"

But these, I see now though darkly as through a glass, have all been planned out for me... that all the while, God was there, pulling the strings behind the scenes...

And so now, looking at the tangled skein of events that led me to the seminary and is now leading me to the altar, I can truly say: "This is Your idea, Lord: You have chosen me out of the countless millions of young men to be Your Ambassador... and I submit. But this I pray: Make me a priest according to Your own heart!"