

## *THINGS WE OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT THE CHURCH.*

### CERTAIN ACTS DURING SERVICE.

I think it is hardly known that not only are the words of the clergyman in church carefully chosen and ordered for him, but also his *acts*. He does not stand, sit, kneel, according to his own fancy, but by rule.

We have not space to follow his movements and explain them one by one, so the best plan will be to remember a principle which governs pretty nearly all he does.

The principle is quite easy to understand—it is this: In all he does in church the priest is acting in a two-fold capacity—that is, in two ways.

First, he is representing Jesus Christ, his Master, to the people; he is giving them His message; he is pardoning their sins in His name; he is offering the Sacrifice in His stead.

On the other hand, he is acting as the leader of the people in their worship. They confess their sins—he, a sinner also, speaks for them. They offer prayer, he is their mouth-piece—he is the one speaking for the many.

Now, if we keep in our minds this double capacity—first, as acting for his Master to the people, and second, as speaking for the people to his and their Master, it will serve to make things much plainer.

In what part of the service is he acting in the stead of his Master?

Well, in the sermon Jesus Christ teaches the people through him; in the Absolution, he speaks out God's pardon to sinners; in the Benediction, he blesses for God; at the altar

he does on earth what Jesus does in Heaven.

And when does he act for the people? When the Confession is said he also kneels humbly with his fellow-sinners; he offers prayers, thanksgiving, alms, for them and for himself—as I said, one for the many. The people, too, are 'priests unto God,' but he is the one man set apart, appointed in a particular way, and, if he is faithful, blessed with special grace for his high work.

There is a certain place in the service when the clergyman is acting in *both* capacities at the very same moment.

It is at the awful moment of Consecration in Holy Communion.

He stands with his back to the people, praying that solemn prayer and making those solemn acts which bring our Lord's most holy Presence near.

Why should he thus stand? why should he not turn to the people?

Simply because he is not speaking to them.

He is speaking to God. His face is towards that altar where he is offering to God the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Yet, at that same moment—standing before God in Christ's stead—he is also one with his people, pleading for forgiveness for their sins and his own.

I may add that when the priest stands it usually means that he is speaking *for* God to the people; and when he kneels he is usually speaking *to* God for the people.—*Mary Bell*.

It is better to suffer an injury than to commit one.

A discontented man is like a snake who would swallow an elephant.