

## XIV

### THE MINISTER'S PART

The minister's part in the preparation of the chancel for worship is an important one. In the first place, he should no more enter the chancel to make his preparations right before the service, and walk about here and there, than any one else. If he requires orderliness of others, and reverence, and observance of sympathetic deportment, he should be the first to observe these carefully and strictly himself.

The minister will first of all examine all things to see that the chancel is in proper order; a good rule is to take nothing for granted. Is the cross straight? Are the alms plates in their place? Are the candles ready for use? Are the books in place? Are the proper hangings in use? Is the fair linen clean? One would not think one would need to suggest such questions, but we have been in a church where the altar cross had been carelessly put back in place *turned around* and the minister had never noticed it! We have seen the minister march up the center aisle after his choir, wearing one colored stole and an antependium of a wrong color on the altar; he had never noticed it! We have seen a deacon rush up to a hymn board and begin to put up the hymn numbers while the choir was already singing the processional hymn and entering the church! Such things need not occur; a bit of real interested foresight will prevent them.

After this general survey of the chancel, the minister will find the lessons to be used at the coming service; mark the altar book; find the text for his sermon in the

pulpit Bible; and if he uses a manuscript, this is the time to put it where it belongs, on the pulpit desk, and to do all the fussing over it and with it that so often is saved for a congregation to watch. In short, he will do all things needful at this time, so that when he enters for the conduct of Divine Worship he will contribute no jarring note by some unnecessary or heedless action of his own.

## XV

### THE MINISTER IN THE SACRISTY

The minister should endeavor to enter the sacristy at least fifteen minutes before the beginning of the service, *and there he should remain undisturbed.* This period of time will be all too short for his quiet preparation for worship, preparation which he too needs right at this time, and which he should insist upon being permitted to have. Interruptions of this period from without should be most firmly but gently discouraged. If the pastor will say frankly why he wants this time for himself, his people will most gladly respect his wishes, and it will be a most excellent example to them as well. If he can arrange a longer period, say half an hour, so much the better: that is not a minute too long. And thankful should such an one be who need not rush from the closing period of Bible school into the sacristy at almost the last minute with hardly a moment's pause either for quiet contemplation or prayer.

If the Bible school precedes the morning service, the pastor should arrange to leave the school in sufficient time for his unhurried needs in the sacristy or see that the school is dismissed in time to allow a period of quiet between the end of the school session and the opening of service. This is not only in his own interest but in the interest of all.

Once in the sacristy and alone, these moments should not be wasted on "last things," such as preparation of announcements, a hurried glance at sermon notes (!), the choice of hymns, or even the looking up of lessons. There has been plenty of time for all these matters before this!

The pastor will want every moment he can get for quiet thought and for earnest personal prayer. The worship in which he is about to engage, the Liturgy he will conduct, the Word he will read and teach, the Sacrament he will celebrate,—all these are asking something of him, and the last they ask is *not* professional readiness. It is the call of the high and holy, of blessed privilege, of rich opportunity, of serious and searching responsibility, to him. Therefore let him kneel quietly at his prayer desk and seek that harmony of spirit which will make him a worthy ministrant in the Divine office. Here is the moment of the good beginning, which will carry through all that is to follow. There are excellent little books of devotion, little Offices of Preparation, for use at a moment like this, if he desires something to direct and aid his meditations and devotions. These may well find a place on the sacristy book shelf, and be there ready for use in these moments. A brief reading, a few of the rich collects, and then his own hungering plea for grace and strength, for enrichment, for mellowness of heart and speech: these are merely suggestive indications.

The pastor should not leave his vesting until the last moment, “when the organ begins to play,” but robe in ample time and *with care*. Nor should it be necessary for him to have assistance; he is neither helpless nor does he need help to dress at other times. That his robe is not put on in any kind of fashion, or improperly adjusted, or his stole carefully arranged; that his whole appearance is one of careful neatness, is not personal vanity, but the only thing worthy of the office he holds and which he is about to administer and of the place he is about to enter. There are prayers he may use while vesting (see “Oremus,” page 131); and remembering that every moment in the sacristy is to be put to the highest purpose, to one end, every act will seek some spiritual contact.