



SERVING CHRIST AT THE ALTAR

"Be in heart, forever, a holy altar server." (St. John Berchmans)

ALBERT IS AMBITIOUS

One of Bert's dreams clicked - the one he least expected to.

"Well, Bert," I asked, "What are you going to be this week?" It was Albert Maken that I was talking to, but of course no one called him Albert except his mother.

"What is it this week, Bert," I went on. "Are you going to be a great astronomer and discover a new star; or are you going to be an explorer and sail up the Amazon river in South America?"

This was a private little joke that Bert and I had between ourselves. About every second or third week Bert would be my server at the eight o'clock Masses. Friday morning he always would have a book under his arm, a book that he was returning to the library that day.

"Gee, Father," Bert would say when he came into the sacristy, "You ought to read this book! It's all about the man who dug the Panama Canal. I think I'll go to college and learn to be an engineer when I finish school here."

That would be one Friday morning. Then maybe two weeks later Bert would say, "Gee, Father, you ought to read this book. It's all about the doctor who discovered germs. He saved the lives of billions of people. I think I'll be a doctor when I grow up."

Another Friday Bert would be all set to become a great lawyer who would keep innocent people from going to prison. Then again he was going to be a teacher so that he could start free schools for poor people in India or some other place.

I liked Bert a lot. He was always so cheerful and full of life. He was so full of life that you almost expected him to jump six feet each time he took a step.

How Bert picked out the books he was always reading I don't know. But I noticed one thing. Bert always wanted to do something, not just be somebody. Everything he wanted to do was something that would help others.

Of course I kidded Bert a lot about his big ambitions. He took the kidding well. He would laugh and kid back. "You just wait," he might say. "You'll be proud of me some day."

But this particular day, when I said, "Well Bert, what are you going to be this week," Bert got sort of serious. "Father," he said, "I suppose you think I'm crazy, don't you? But honest, Father, I really would like to do all those things I talk about. Sometimes I wish I could be about six different people."

"No Bert, I don't think you are crazy," I told him. "The reason I don't think you're crazy is because I felt almost the same way when I was your age. It didn't seem like life was going to be long enough. There were so many things I wanted to do.

"Then one morning my old pastor Father Mac got me in a corner. 'Look, Leo,' he said to me. 'Why don't you do something really worthwhile with your life? It's better to cure sick souls than to cure sick bodies, because souls live forever. It's better to build bridges that will take people to heaven, than to build a bridge across the St. Clair River. It's better to teach people about God than to teach them arithmetic or grammar.

" 'It's better to give people courage and hope, than to give them bread and beans. So why don't you take on the biggest job in the world,' old Father Mac finished up. 'Why don't you go to the seminary and study to be a priest?' "

Bert and I both thought that over for a minute. Then Bert grinned, "So here you are at St. Pat's, eh Father?" "Yes Bert, so here I am. And I've never been sorry one minute. It's the grandest life I know of."

After that Bert didn't talk about what he wanted to do, and I didn't kid him any more. But he still was reading books. I used to take a peek at them sometimes when he would bring his book into the sacristy on Friday mornings. There was a book about St. John Bosco, I remember. There was a book about Father Damien, and one about Father Flanagan.

Well, I felt pretty proud of Father Bert Maken when I stood beside him last June as he offered his first holy Mass in old St. Pat's. He was a bit nervous before the Mass started. But just before we went to the altar I whispered in his ear: "What are you going to be this week?" And Father Bert went to the altar smiling.

Words from Our Holy Father to youth...



Looking at you, I think with trepidation and with trust of what is in store for you in life and of what you will be in the world of tomorrow; and I wish to leave you, for your lives, three thoughts:

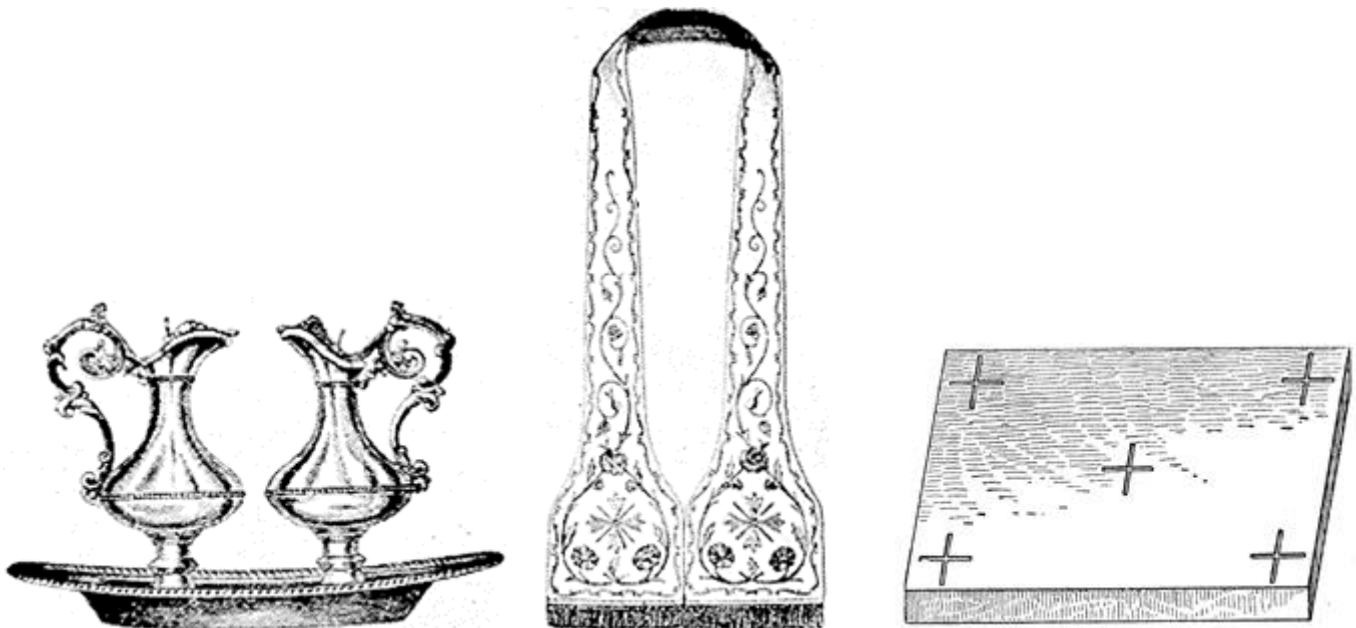
-look for Jesus,
-love Jesus,
bear witness to Jesus.

1. In the first place, look for Jesus! Look for Jesus by reading and studying the Gospel, by reading some good books; look for Jesus by taking advantage especially of the religious instruction lesson at school, of the catechisms, and of the meetings in your parish.

2. In the second place, I tell you, love Jesus! Jesus is not an idea, a feeling, a memory! Jesus is a person, always alive and present with us!

3. And finally, I tell you, bear witness to Jesus with your courageous faith and your innocence. To seek, love and bear witness to Jesus! This is your duty; these are the instructions I leave you!

Can you name the Vestment & Vessels?



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Answers to Vestment and Vessel: 1. cruets, 2. stole, 3. altar stone