

# + SERVING CHRIST AT THE ALTAR +



Serving at the Eucharistic table and at the various liturgical celebrations, you draw directly "from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3) the strength necessary to live well today and then face your future more energetically.  
*(Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II)*

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

**St. John Berchmans, patron of altar servers, *pray for us!***

## FREDDIE MADE IT

A priest doesn't have eyes in the back of his head. When he is offering Mass, a priest has no way of telling how the altar boys behind him are behaving. But the way God made us it is pretty easy for a boy's head to swivel around on his neck. So in years past I was never surprised when a parishioner said, "Father, I wish you'd tell that Peterson boy to pay attention when he's serving. He's always twisting around to see what's going on in church." Or maybe it's the Maloney boy or the Meyers boy that gets complained about.

Anyway, whenever I'm training new altar boys, I always warn them about keeping their eyes on the altar. Jesus our King cannot feel very much honored if his knights, standing or kneeling by His throne cannot keep their minds on Him more than two minutes at a time. Jesus hanging on His cross cannot feel very much comforted by his young apostles at the foot of the cross, if they are looking everywhere else but at Him.

Well, I want to tell you about one of my new altar boys. Let's call him Freddie Brown, even if that wasn't his right name. Freddie had been begging me for over a year to make him an altar boy. So when I announced that I was ready to start a new group of servers, Freddie was the very first one to hand his name in.

Right from the start I was pretty doubtful about Freddie. He was very slow getting through something maybe six times, when the other boys would get it the first time. Still, he wanted SO much to be an altar boy, and he did try so hard, that I didn't have the heart to drop Freddie. So when the training period was over, his name went on the list of servers.

But I was sorry. I was sorry about once every week. Freddie was always on time, always clean and neat (his mother saw to that). He was always willing to serve the early Masses, even on Saturdays and holidays. But oh! the things that could happen to Freddie! He would spill wine on the altar cloth or

knock over a vase of flowers or upset the incense boat or tip over a candle. He would forget to fill the holy water sprinkler or would ring the bell at the "Lamb of God".

Finally I decided that I would have to do something about it. I would tell Freddie, as kindly as I could, that he should join the boys' choir and drop out of the altar boys. But before I got around to telling him, Freddie stepped on a rusty nail. He didn't mention it at home, because it didn't seem important. But in a few days Freddie was a very sick boy. When I went to see him then, I didn't go to tell him that he couldn't be an altar boy. I went to give him the Last Sacraments. The doctor had told me that he couldn't save Freddie. The blood poisoning had got too much of a start. So I heard his confession and gave him Extreme Unction and Holy Viaticum. I talked to him about heaven and about what a wonderful thing it would be to see Jesus face to face - the same loving Jesus he had been serving at the altar.

As I was getting ready to leave, Freddie grinned at me. His eyes were bright with fever and puckered with pain, but he could still grin. "You know, Father," he said, "I really wasn't much of an altar boy. I made an awful lot of mistakes and I seemed to get everything wrong. But there's one thing I can say, Father: I always kept my eyes on the altar. I never even wanted to look anyplace else. I never looked back. Not even once. I never looked back!"

I stopped with my hand on the doorknob. I couldn't see Freddie very clearly; there was too much water in my eyes. "Well Freddie," I said. "I hope you'll look back once in a while from now on. Especially at the old pastor you left behind."

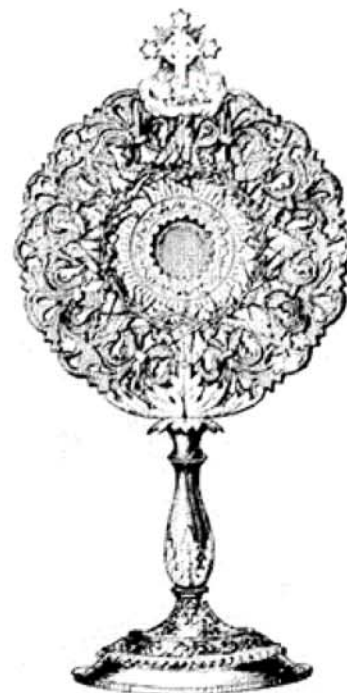
My altar boys all know the story of Freddie, and I have noticed one thing. Ever since he died I have had very few complaints about my boys looking back.

The above story is from *Book for Boys*, by Rev. Leo J. Trese, Fides Publishers, 1961. Efforts were made to obtain the publishers' permission to print here, but we were unable to locate the current address of Fides. We would appreciate a note if anyone has current information.

## Can you name the Vestment & Vessel?



1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_