

## Opening the Great Choir of Washington Cathedral

Formal Ceremonies on Ascension Day, Thursday, May 5, When the Sanctuary and Choir Will Resound With Sacred Anthems—Description of Section Where Jerusalem Altar Finds Permanent Resting Place—Marvelous Stained Glass Windows and Carvings in Stone.



Jerusalem Altar and reredos of the Washington Cathedral.

By Victoria Faber Stevenson

THE great stone walls of the Washington Cathedral will resound for the first time with glorias and other hymns of praise when the vested choir of men and boys raise their voices in sacred song and anthem on the morning of Ascension day, May 5. The service, which will be conducted by the Right Rev. James E. Freeman, Bishop of Washington, in the sanctuary and choir section, will open the main floor of this great house of prayer, which, when completed, will be without peer of beauty. Services have, however, been held in the Bethlehem Chapel in the crypt under the sanctuary since 1912.

In this first section of the Cathedral proper to be opened a seated attendance of 1,200 will be accommodated in the choir, with its chapels and east aisle of the north transept, where several hundred more of the congregation may find standing room. Then for the first time worshipers who enter from the west end of the choir will be inspired by the vista down 168 feet of graceful high Gothic arches on both sides of the vaulting into the sanctuary, the setting of the

high altar. In the arches above the altar and looking down from the stone walls of the choir carved angels sing the everlasting praise of the "Ter Sanctus." That theme of the beautiful white reredos will be perpetually chanted in symbolism: "Therefore, with angels and archangels and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name; evermore praising Thee and saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High, Amen.'"

THE full-sized models of the reredos now above the high altar justifies the claim that the stone reredos, which will be put in place later, will be one of the most magnificent pieces of church carving ever created. In its niches 70 figures typify the patriarchs and apostles of Christianity, amid the nine traditional choirs of angels. Christ, as the reigning King, is seated in the center, and

in His worship every character and symbol expresses the ecstasy of praise.

This generation, which enjoys the rare privilege of seeing this typical fourteenth century pure Gothic Cathedral in the building, saw the Jerusalem altar consecrated on Ascension day, 1902. That first part of the Cathedral to be completed was necessarily placed in a temporary setting. Now that it is in position as the high altar of the Cathedral, thousands may worship during the Summer before this sacred communion table of stone hewn from the quarries outside the walls of Jerusalem, from which the stones were taken for the building of the temple. As the altar is the very heart of the Cathedral, it has been placed over the exact location of the huge granite foundation stone in the substructure, in which are embedded stones from the field of Bethlehem, where the shepherds were watching their flocks by night when the angels announced the birth of the Savior.

Washingtonians, who are beginning to use terms which they formerly associated with Old World architecture and art, have learned that "bosses" are the carved keystones in the middle of ribbed arched sections of the vaulted roofing (stone ceiling). As there will be more than 1,000 bosses in the Cathedral, and each of these rosettelike stones will be a symbol, the Cathedral visitor is interested in their meanings. The 24 main bosses in the roofing of the nave represent the affirmations of the creed. Those in the roofing over the high altar, symbolizing "I believe in the life of the world to come," show a main boss picturing the gates of the heavenly city, with the angels welcoming the redeemed. In the 15 subordinate keystones grouped about this stone picture the host which will meet in the life of the world to come is represented. In picturizing these people all nations and races are shown, including the African, Eskimo, American Indian, Chinese, Jew, Hindu, Ethiopian, Arab, Teuton and Russian.

Bosses in the north choir aisle have been planned to portray the sacraments. Baptism shows a clergyman baptizing