

I appeal to you not to enforce breaking the seal of Confession. I try each day to be better and because we are human and fall repeatedly into sin, I need the healing of My Lord to stay strong, forgive the wrong done to me and the wrong I have done to someone.

- As a child I pretended I didn't hurt someone with my words or actions. Through spiritual maturity I have changed to feel sorrow when I bring sorrow to another person, to seek pardon from that person and to seek God's pardon because He truly knows the workings of our heart and mind and we cannot hide from him.
- You see Jesus instituted the sacraments - to liberate you and me. Our faith is our hope, our purpose for being.
- My act of sorrow at Confession brings a joy I cannot describe and lifts a burden that is tangible. An example of my confession many years ago that made me recognise how merciful are Lord is- my dad and mum were on holiday with me for many months. Raising a large family comes with its challenges but we were (and still are) a praying family. My father was very domineering and as you can appreciate when you try to keep the peace between spouse and parent - it is not a smooth road. It caused me many frustrations. I turned to the Lord in Confession and asked for me to change, for understanding of the burdens that weighed my dad down. I prayed for my hurt feelings to go away. I wept tears of joy because as I confessed I felt my burden lift and as the Holy Priest (whom I cannot see and who takes the place of My Lord) uttered the words of absolution I felt this huge weight lift off my shoulders. I walked away lighter knowing I would have the strength to find a better way to engage with my father.

I also recall my child at a mere age of 5 throwing sand on an older sibling and it got into the face and hair. My child was distraught and recognised the need to say sorry and seek pardon.

- The power of this Sacrament has to be experienced to be understood.
- Please find attached a couple of samples and life experiences that support the most important gifts of faith, hope and charity.
- The Sacrament of confession has one purpose only - to bring healing. True healing can only be achieved through forgiveness. The gift of Reconciliation is beyond human understanding since it is a supernatural gift. A priest accepts that he will die before he breaks the seal of confession because he understands how precious it is for someone to go with deep trust to the Fount of mercy.
- No counselling can achieve what confession can do.
- Even psychologists cannot understand its power.
- I have had my share of troubles - everyone experiences abuse in some form or other. Knowing that I can speak in confidence what is deep in my heart, gives me the courage to be honest and through this gift of reconciliation with God peace is restored.
- One of the biggest crisis to face our times is mental health issues. As you can see this is on the rise. Removing the seal of confession will destroy any chance the WA people have at becoming whole after they have been hurt or abused. Like Jesus forgave his executioners from the Cross, the priest guides us to seek help if required, to set safe boundaries and to bring the perpetrators to account. This opportunity is lost if we force your viewpoint on our Church in WA. I can vouch for someone very close to me who suffered with mental health and how the sacrament of reconciliation brought complete healing to this person.

I ask pardon on behalf of the Church for all the wrong that was done.

I ask that we consider the victims of abuse who will lose faith in this healing sacrament if the seal is removed.

I ask that each one of us recognise that we belong to Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour of mankind. The authenticity of Christ's teaching is historical. Based on fact, that he was truly God on earth and died to bring mankind to salvation.

I would like to thank you for the efforts you are making to protect the community from sexual abuse. I would like to thank you for giving us an opportunity to raise our voices for you to consider. I know you will recognise the importance of protecting what we hold so dear to our existence.

I pray that your decision reflects a true understanding of the teachings of Our Lord. I pray His guiding light leads your way and helps you make the right decision for the faithful people of WA.

PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION

The evil we do to one another and the ways we fail to do good are ever present in our lives and prayer. Daily in the Lord's Prayer, the Christian asks for forgiveness and prays for deliverance from evil. Each night, we ask forgiveness for our faults and express contrition. We ask Mary to "pray for us sinners." We begin the Sunday Eucharist by praising God for a mercy that is greater than our sins. Friday has been a day traditionally set aside for fasting and deeds of charity so that we might turn our lives to the way of the Gospel. Each year, Christians keep the season of Lent, Forty Days for finding anew the strength to renounce evil, to profess Christ as our Lord, and so to live again in the grace of Baptism.

Repentance and reconciliation are thus constant and lifelong. Some moments in each person's life are marked with the sacrament that bears this name of Penance and Reconciliation. Even things as personal as sin, sorrow, and confession are brought to the community, to the Church, and to the Church's ministers. The Church comes together—even if only the penitent and the priest—so that God's pardon may be sought in the confession of sin, sorrow, deeds of penance, and the expression of God's forgiveness in words of absolution. The sacrament embraces all these moments. It springs from the Church's faith that, though sin is personal, it is not private. "Penance always entails reconciliation with our brothers and sisters who are always harmed by our sins" (Rite of Penance, no. 5). When the Sacrament of Penance is celebrated with a number of persons penitent, the rite begins with the reading of Scripture and includes a homily, examination of conscience, individual confession and absolution, praise of God's mercy, and prayers of thanksgiving. When an individual comes alone for the Sacrament of Penance, the order in the following pages is observed.

Prayers for times of penance and reconciliation in the household are on page 342. These prayers, along with the prayers for Fridays and the prayers for Lent (both found in Part III: Days and Seasons) may stir in us a spirit of contrition and conversion that leads to the regular celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.

After a greeting, the priest and penitent make the sign of the cross together:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In these or similar words, the priest invites the penitent to have trust in God.

May God, who has enlightened every heart,
help you to know your sins
and trust in his mercy.
R/. Amen.

Then the priest reads from the Scripture a text that proclaims God's mercy and calls us to repentance. The penitent then makes a confession of sin. The priest gives suitable counsel and proposes an act of penance.

The penitent then expresses sorrow through one of the following prayers or in similar words. (A traditional form of the Act of Contrition may be found earlier in this Part, on page 8.)

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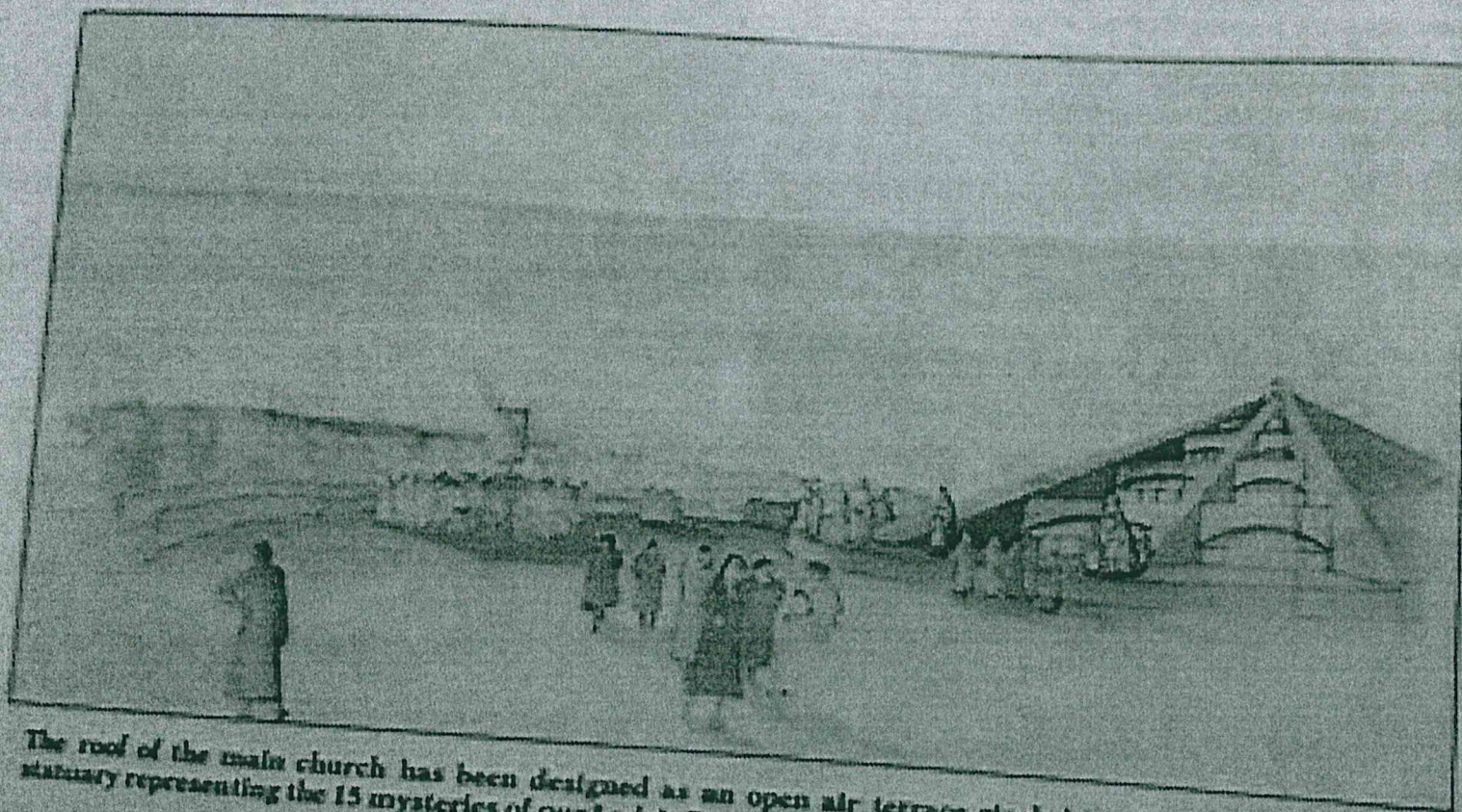
My God,
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong
and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you
whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.

(continued)

*Let us emphasize over and over again the immense value
of a personal encounter with the God of Mercy.*

Rose Marie Goes to Confession

By Valentine Long



The roof of the main church has been designed as an open air terrace circled in plants. There will be a statue representing the 15 mysteries of our Lady's Rosary arranged on the terrace.

Her name may or may not have been Rose Marie. Nor was her family name known to the psychiatrist who wrote about her. The identity of the teen-ager remains anonymous. But the impression she made on that psychiatrist is not in the least uncertain. It happened. And its having happened years ago does not render it less relevant to our times.

If anything, it has become more keenly relevant today when many Catholics do not seem to realize or even care that the new penitential rite of general absolution in public does not absolve from mortal sin, unless the penitents in question intend at the time to confess and then do confess their mortal sin privately to a priest, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And this "as soon as possible," according to the New Code of Canon Law. During the recent Holy Year, which Pope John Paul dedicated to the theme of reconciliation, his directives to the faithful under his care never tired of stressing their need of frequent, private,

sacramental confession. Typically to a delegation of visiting bishops he suggested a way to make the Holy Year a success in their dioceses. "Dear Brothers," is what the Holy Father said, applying the admonition to himself as well as to them, "let us emphasize over and over again the immense value of a personal encounter with the God of mercy through individual confession."

As for the psychiatrist already mentioned, an honest observation brought him to the same conviction: that the dialogue between priest and penitent within the secrecy of the confessional does have beyond a doubt an "immense value." Before ever Pope John Paul was telling the world about the sweet efficacy of the sacrament of God's loving mercy, this psychiatrist knew. He had found out for himself. Let me relate to you how he had.

One Saturday afternoon some forty years ago he peered tentatively into a Catholic church, not quite

knowing what sat down in a tunity he want and the other o in use. A cluster each confession preparation wa clearly, they we Recurrent or that confess step out. Then promptly rise, behind the cu observer, and I sort of person veils of secrecy.

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knowing what to expect, and decided to remain. He sat down in a rear pew. After all, this was the opportunity he wanted: the confessionals, one on the right and the other on the left side of the church, were both in use. A cluster of penitents knelt or sat in pews near each confessional, awaiting their turn to go in. Their preparation was obviously routine for them. Just as clearly, they were in dead earnest.

Recurrently a curtain on one side or other of this or that confessional would fling open and a penitent step out. Then another, whose turn it was, would promptly rise, genuflect in the aisle, and duck in behind the curtain. The procedure intrigued the observer, and had him wondering inquisitively what sort of person would next emerge from behind those veils of secrecy.

The psychiatrist glanced around, from his vantage point of a rear pew. There was no mistake about it — a variety of types distributed sparsely through the church, forming little groups only in the vicinity of the confessionals. None of them, whether they looked like truck drivers, school teachers, business men, worried mothers, or whoever else, appeared the least bit self-conscious. The mental expert was taking it all in with his professional eye when, presently, a girl who had just come into the church genuflected but a few paces ahead of him. She teetered nervously on her high heels as she stood up and chose her place across the centre aisle from him. He watched her.

There was something arresting about her behaviour. She had not knelt more than a minute when she sat back heavily, with a weary heave of her shoulders. She did not look to be over sixteen, but a nervous anxiety had overcome her. She twitched. She fumbled at the kerchief covering her head, as though unable to convince herself that it was still there.

Of a sudden, as if driven by her inner torment or under the impetus of a growing resolve, she sidled out of the pew and made straight for the nearer confessional. Then she stood waiting there until either of its penitents would come out, all the while apparently not realizing that she was jumping her turn. One or the other threw her a glance of disapproval, and let it go at that. The rest did not by the slightest token advert to her. The psychiatrist, casually noticing this, had his attention fixed on the girl: a figure young and comely, carved out of sorrow. Her posture, the lines on her face, her tortured look, bespoke tragedy, which she was too inexperienced to have learned how to cover. What was it that had laid such a premature burden on her youth?

As soon as she disappeared behind the curtain, her observer, following an urge, left his seat to saunter down the main aisle toward the altar, which stood at the extreme rear of the sanctuary and at its center featured an ornate tabernacle. Here and there along the railing, which closed off the sanctuary, knelt the absolved. The psychiatrist joined them. How peaceful it was. Nothing to disturb the calm. Pityful gleams on the golden tabernacle from a lamp, and the prayerful whispers of the aged woman kneeling next to him, and behind him the quieted sound of footsteps now and then, did not distract but deepened his reverie.

Above the altar hung a large painting of Christ Crucified. It caught his eye. A God dying naked, shedding the last drop of His Blood for the sins of the world — what dreadful dignity it bestowed on suffer-

ing! He thought of the young man who had just come out of the confessional. He thought of the young man who had just come out of the confessional. He thought of the young man who had just come out of the confessional.

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No irreverence, surely. That girl was worshipping no delusion. She was pouring out her gratitude with the serenity of a forgiven soul to the Christ who had, moments ago, spoken to her through the lips of His priest. Having been relieved of the burden of guilt, she felt, through every fiber of her being, the liberating difference. Dr. Oliver, who had watched a distraught youngster pluck nervously at the confessional curtain to get it open and afterwards felt as well as saw the little intruder squeeze airily into a narrow space at the sanctuary railing, could scarcely trust his eyes. It was incredible, but it was true. It was there. Completely herself again, her innocence of youth restored, she was no radiant fantasy. She was a radiant reality.

Do you think I exaggerate? Then take the work of the witness who knelt beside her: "All her tenseness was gone; the lines of worry had been smoothed from her face. No signs of mental torment now; no anxiety — only perfect relaxation — peace — and, apparently, a great happiness, for her lips were parted in a smile."

Very thoughtfully indeed Dr. Oliver walked home from the church. Where could one find in his profession the magic formula to match that simple absolution of an unseen priest? Could psychiatry have done as much, after not one but a series of treatments? Could it have wrought such a change at all? Minimize or explain it away as so much religious hysteria, superstition, emotional self-hypnosis, with all the usual clichés, and what will the effort have achieved? The effort surely could not wipe from young Rose Marie's face the happiness the sacrament had put there. And the specialist who saw it, and saw the results in penitent after penitent coming out of those confessionals, thought he ought to publish the fact. He accordingly sat down and wrote his report for a book entitled *Christian Dogmatics*.

From that report I have quoted with the publisher's permission, adding interpretative details, not in distortion of Dr. Oliver's factual statements, but in order to draw out more vividly their genuine validity. To realize better how genuine their validity is, one has only to read and ponder over the following excerpt from an encyclical by Pope Pius XII: "For constant and speedy advancement in the path of virtue we highly recommend the pious practice of frequent confession, introduced by the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. By this means we grow in a true

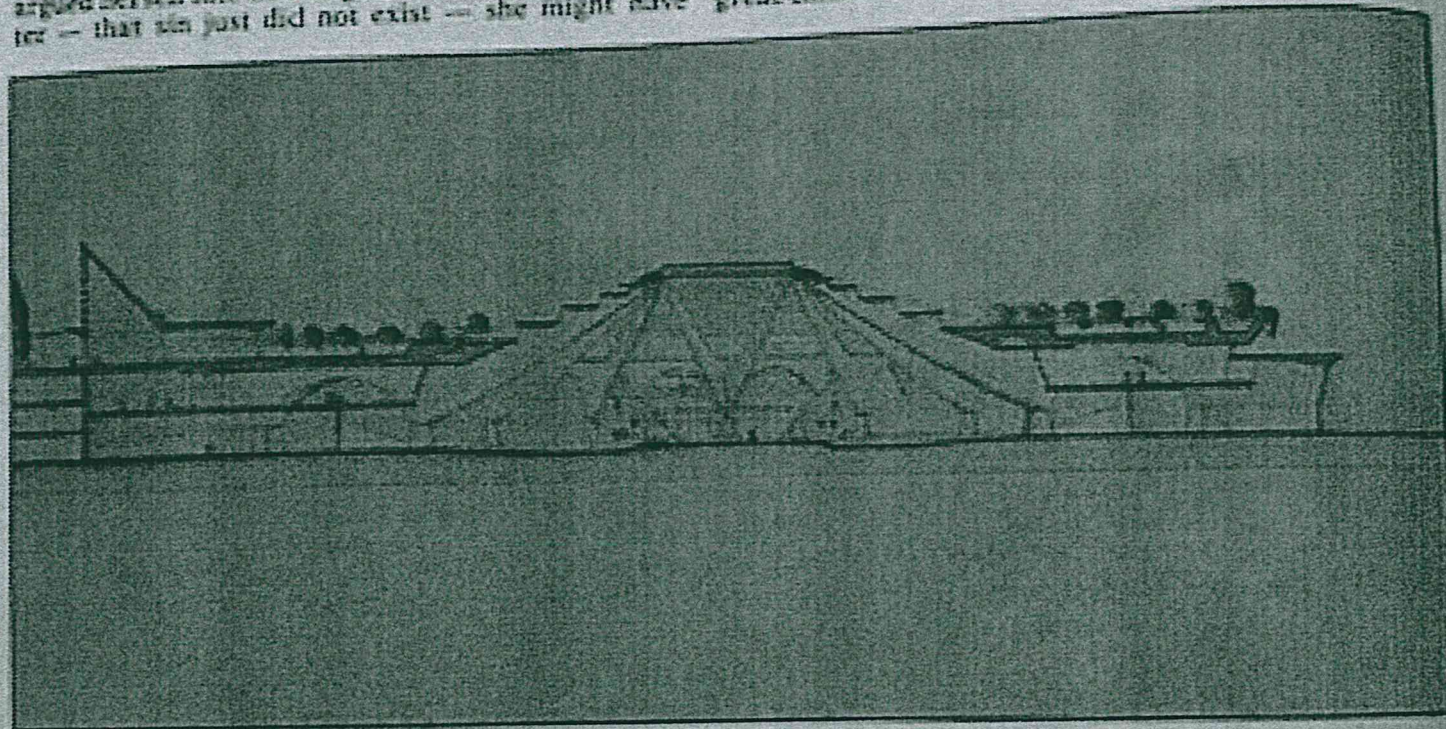
knowledge of ourselves and in Christian humility. Bad habits are uprooted, spiritual negligence and apathy are revealed and prevented, the conscience is purified and the will strengthened, salutary spiritual direction is obtained and grace increased, by the efficacy of the sacrament."

Where else than in this sacrament are the words of Jesus — "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" — taken seriously and put into effect? Where else could Rose Marie have found such an instant and complete relief that Dr. Oliver, seeing it, could scarcely believe his eyes? Had the young penitent withheld her burden from the liberating influence of the sacrament and gone home unabsolved, her parents would have wondered to each other: What on earth can be ailing the child? Had she, worse still, argued herself into thinking that nothing was the matter — that sin just did not exist — she might have

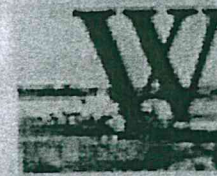
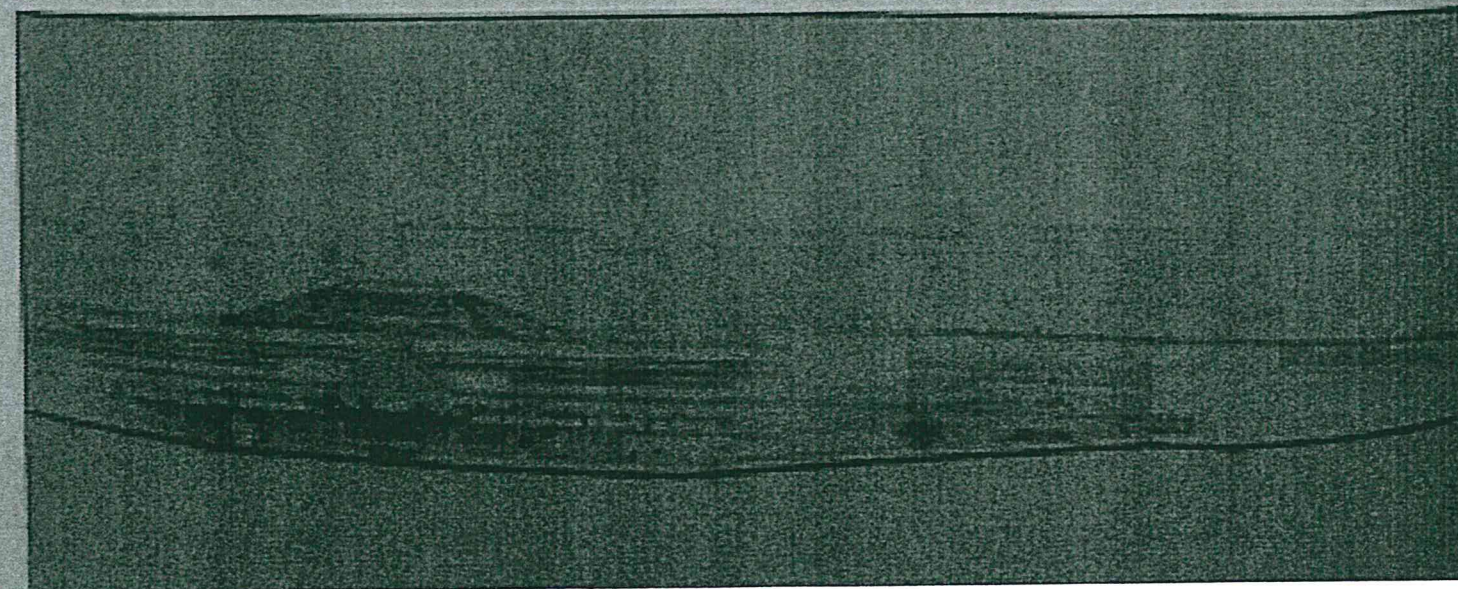
submerged her sense of guilt into the locked caverns of her mind, and then she is well as the others would be.

As it was, none who attended the church that Saturday afternoon formed any such thoughts of her. She does not ask what might be troubling a girl who hurries along as though trying to keep time with a heart sore young again. She certainly isn't an observant psychiatrist to his type-writer to top out his conium on the healing grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The words of absolution had upon her turbulent soul an effect not unlike what befell, at the command of Christ, the raging Sea of Galilee. His power was to work in both miracles. The distraught girl felt it so less vigorously than the tempest. There came to both a great calm.



The three levelled building has been purposefully designed on a slope so that the construction will not block the panoramic view. A dining hall for a thousand persons is included in the design.



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