

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD (observed)
May 29, 2022

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, WELCOME TO ST. PAUL'S!

8:30 & 10:30 a.m.



THE ENTRANCE RITE

PRELUDE

Up through Endless Ranks of Angels
Setting: William Braun

WELCOME

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

ENTRANCE HYMN #491

Up through Endless Ranks of Angels

**1 Up through endless ranks of angels,
Cries of triumph in His ears,
To His heav'nly throne ascending,
Having vanquished all their fears,
Christ looks down upon His faithful,
Leaving them in happy tears.**

**3 To our lives of wanton wand'ring
Send Your Spirit, promised guide;
Through our lives of fear and failure
With Your pow'r and love abide;
Welcome us, as You were welcomed,
To an endless Eastertide.**

**2 Death-destroying, life-restoring,
Proven equal to our need,
Now for us before the Father
As our brother intercede;
Flesh that for our world was wounded,
Living, for the wounded plead!**

**4 Alleluia, alleluia!
Oh, to breathe the Spirit's grace!
Alleluia, alleluia!
Oh, to see the Father's face!
Alleluia, alleluia!
Oh, to feel the Son's embrace!**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

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

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE - "This is the Feast"

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Power, riches, wisdom, and strength, and honor, blessing, and glory are His.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation:

Blessing, honor, glory, and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

For the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign. Alleluia.

This is the feast of victory for our God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. O King of glory, Lord of hosts,

uplifted in triumph far above all heavens, leave us not without consolation but send us the Spirit of truth whom You promised from the Father; for You live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST LESSON (Be seated)

Acts 1:12-26

Then [the apostles] returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." (Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

"May his camp become desolate,
and let there be no one to dwell in it';

and

"Let another take his office.'

So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 133 (read responsively by verse)

Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down on the collar of his robes!
It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the LORD has commanded the blessing,
life forevermore.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

(10:30) CHILDREN'S SERMON

ALLELUIA VERSE (Stand)

Alleluia.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Luke 24:44-53

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 24th chapter

Glory to You, O Lord.

Then [Jesus] said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

SERMON (Be seated)

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ:

The Gospel lesson just read tells of Jesus' ascension into heaven. Each year the church has us review this glorious event, not only to complete the account of Jesus' ministry as recorded in the scriptures, but also to remind us that he lives and reigns with God in heaven until that time when he will return.

Right before he ascended, Jesus gave his disciples a parting blessing. We don't know the particular words he may have spoken, for the text only tells us that he lifted up his hands. Then again, perhaps the blessing was

given to them without words. Maybe his uplifted, scarred and powerful hands said all that needed to be said. Or maybe Jesus just smiled or gave a loving look. Maybe his face “shone upon them” as the ancient blessing of Aaron describes. We don’t know.

What we do know is that a blessing was both given and very fitting. It was fitting because the giving of a blessing was a natural thing for Jesus to do – flowing from his status as God’s Son and his love for his followers. It was also fitting because it was something Jesus knew his disciples would need.

When Jesus gives a blessing, it is not just the conveyance of a nice thought or feeling but a means of his powerful help. The disciples would need that help – more than ever – because Jesus was leaving them. One of the things they would need help with was decision-making. Jesus, up until that point, had no doubt made most of the decisions. He was the leader. In his absence, the disciples would have to make decisions on their own.

Today’s sermon is about making decisions. Life, as we know, is filled with constant decisions – both in our life as individuals and in our common life together. Decisions are needed in our families, our workplaces, our neighborhoods, and also here at church.

In today’s Bible reading from Acts chapter 1, the followers of Jesus were making a decision. They were deciding who should replace Judas as one of the twelve apostles. The number twelve was very important to them, for it represented both the twelve tribes of Israel and the number of disciples that Jesus had originally chosen. When Judas took his life, the apostles agreed that they needed another to make their group whole. The people of the church proposed two men for the position – Joseph and Matthias. After spending time in prayer, they made their decision by casting lots. The lot fell to Matthias, and he became the twelfth apostle. As we today make decisions, what can we learn from this example of the first believers?

The part of the story that likely catches our attention the most is the practice of casting lots. What do we make of this?

The Old Testament records a number of instances where lots were cast to decide between two options. From what we know, it seems that two sticks or rocks were marked with the two possible choices. They were then placed in some kind of container which was shaken until one of them came out. The one which came out first, or landed in a certain space, was the one thought to be God’s choice. The practice is summed up in Proverbs chapter 16 verse 33, which says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.”

On one hand, the practice of casting lots seems to be a very good thing. For it takes the final decision out of people’s hands and leaves it up to God.

On the other hand, deciding this way will always carry the risk of seeming like a simple act of chance.

Many have pointed out that the mention of casting lots in Acts chapter 1 is the last mention of the practice in the New Testament, and that the only other mention of the casting of lots in those books is that done by the soldiers at the foot of Jesus’ cross as they divided up his clothing. They will also point out that in the three other cases in the book of Acts where the early Christians chose leaders for certain missions or positions in the Church, there is no mention of casting lots. The church, it seems, started making its decisions in other ways. It has been suggested by commentators, and I am inclined to believe it, that the casting of lots was abandoned by the Church when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. Once the Church had received the Holy Spirit, things were different. Jesus had said that the Holy Spirit would guide the Christians into all truth. This seems to be an example of what he meant.

When we make decisions at the Church today, we remember this promise of Jesus and call on the Holy Spirit to guide us. And this normally involves direct appeals to the Spirit in prayer.

Yet even before this, we first consider God’s Word. For through the Holy Spirit, God has spoken to us already. He has done this in the Bible – those holy scriptures which contain the true revelation of God to our world. The Bible, of course, needs to be interpreted. And it needs to be faithfully applied. Knowing this, we call on the Spirit for specific direction with these tasks. When it comes to interpreting the Word of God and applying it to decisions of today, we count on the Spirit’s presence to enlighten the hearts and minds of faithful people so that God-pleasing decisions will be made.

Today, we in the church normally make our decisions by casting votes, not lots. We give each of our members a voice and trust that the Spirit will lead us through our discussions, deliberations and choices.

As in the case of lots, some may see voting as simply another exercise in chance – since outcomes will depend on things such as who shows up, which factors are being considered the most, and who voices the loudest support.

Yet we believe that the Spirit does guide the vote. The Spirit of God works through the collected wisdom of believers in the Church, and through the discussions and deliberations of his people. Thus when the votes are counted, we believe that the Lord has spoken.

For Lutheran Christians, one of the decisions we make through a vote of the people and the invocation of the Spirit is the calling of pastors. While some churches believe that ministers should be appointed by some higher authority, we believe that it is the right of the individual congregation to call its own pastor. We've taken our cue from the book of Acts, where believers proposed their own candidates then sought God's will in deciding between them.

The call documents you gave me when you called me to be your pastor say that God "moved you to extend your call" to me. The documents also asked that the Holy Spirit convince me that this Call was from God, not just you. I believed that. And still do.

When people vote in our country's national elections, it is said that the vote reflects "the will of the people." That is certainly true. When people vote in a church election, the result is said to reflect the "will of God." The difference is that in the church the Holy Spirit is called upon and present – both in the process and in the people.

And just to be clear, when we speak of the "invocation" of the Spirit, we are talking about prayer. Prayer has always been a part of the decision-making by God's people, as the scriptures clearly witness. Prayer is essential as we make our decisions, for in prayer God focuses us on his will and speaks to our hearts. When the first disciples gathered to choose a twelfth apostle, they prayed before they cast their lots. We even have the text of their prayer: "Lord, show us which of these two you have chosen." It's a short and simple prayer... so short that I'm guessing it was only a summary of the actual prayers that were offered in their process. But it gives us guidance, nonetheless. The people prayed for the Lord to "show" them. And that is what we are to ask for as well.

At the beginning of today's text we are told that the disciples "joined together constantly in prayer." Throughout the book of Acts a similar picture is given. The church had many decisions to make, and God had always encouraged his people to pray. Those who followed Jesus during his ministry were accustomed to spending great amounts of time in prayer.

As we pray about the decisions we need to make each day, our prayer will lead us to consider them in a Godly manner. Prayer opens the heart and mind to the Holy Spirit's presence and conforms it to the will and purposes of God.

As we saw in today's text, an important first step in our decision-making is to seek out Godly choices. Our text says that the disciples of Jesus proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas, and Matthias.

The text also shows us that before proposing them, the Church discussed criteria for their choice which they felt was pleasing to God. The church agreed that the men for their choice should be among those who had been with them "the whole time the Lord Jesus was with them."

When we make our decisions, let's make sure that the choices we consider are those which conform to God's criteria. God has expressed his criteria in his holy law. There we have his teachings on which behaviors are acceptable and which are not; which things are right and which things are wrong.

Any possible choices in our decisions which contradict God's law can therefore be ruled out immediately. In deciding what to do with our time, for example, we shouldn't spend it on activities which are sinful. Likewise, when deciding what to do with our money, we shouldn't spend it on items which lead us into sin.

That being said, sometimes after applying God's criteria we will find that we still need to choose between two or more Godly alternatives. The disciples of Jesus found two men that would both be pleasing to God. They had more deciding to do.

This is when the disciples specifically prayed for God to show them His will. “Show us what you have chosen,” they said.

Those first disciples decided that God would show his will through the casting of lots. They followed a practice that they knew from their history and their scriptures.

We, on the other hand, believe that God will make his choice clear to us through study, deliberation, and voting. God will send his Spirit to help us see what he is showing.

That old practice of casting lots, however, can still be a good reminder to us. It can remind us that the results of decisions are ultimately out of our control. They are out of our control because we don’t know how they will play out. For example, we don’t know if that new car choice will be a good one or not. And we don’t know if that new pastor we’ve called will work out as we thought or if things will be different. Ultimately, only God knows.

One final thought on all this. When those first disciples of Jesus prayed for a new apostle to be made known to them, they said in their prayer, “Lord, you know the hearts of all.” And while they were probably thinking about the two men they had proposed – Joseph and Matthias – we should also hear this thought directed at us.

When we pray about a decision, we should think about the condition of our hearts. Specifically, we should ask ourselves whether our choice reflects selfish desires or whether it reflects a desire for the good of all. God wants us to think about the good of all. Therefore in our prayer we must always be conscious of our sinful desires and be mindful of how easily we act out of these instead of love.

Thankfully, we know that the Lord God forgives our sin for the sake of his Son Jesus. And this forgiveness builds our faith and moves us to do what is right. For when we are forgiven, we are then moved and inspired to act out of faith.

What’s more, when we have faith, God then listens to the desires of our hearts. Psalm 37 tells us to “delight yourselves in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Those desires of ours that are pleasing to him he will fill, in his good way and in his good time.

In our lives we will have many decisions to make – some of which will not be all that impactful but some of which will have great bearing on all that comes after. How good to know that God cares about our decisions and that he seeks to help us with them.

God may not always whisper in our ear directly. But he has spoken to us clearly through His Word. And when we come to him in prayer, there is a whisper in our hearts which can be none other than the Holy Spirit of God.

May God then bless you in the decisions you make, that you would know the divine guidance that comes from the Holy Spirit and that his purposes would be accomplished through you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY #363 LBW (Stand)

**Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
His cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
His love in death shall never die.**

Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing

**Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
he comes to claim the here and now,
and conquer every place and time.**

Not throned above, remotely high,

untouched, unmoved by human pains
but daily, in the midst of life,
our Saviour, with the Father reigns.

In every insult, rift and war,
where color, scorn or wealth divide,
he suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, though ever crucified.

Christ is alive! His Spirit burns
through this and every future age,
till all creation lives and learns
his joy, his justice, love and praise.

**I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life ☩ of the world to come. Amen.**

OFFERING

Offerings support the church's mission work – both here and through our many partners. Offerings may be placed in the box at the sanctuary entrance or sent to the church through our website or the mail. Fellowship Cards help us welcome new people and track participation. Please fill one out and place it in the offering box following the service.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

O Lord, since Your Son has gone up with a shout and the sound of a trumpet, ascended in triumph and seated at Your right hand, so open our lips to sing praises to our King, rejoicing and living in the truth of His victory for us. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, You have instituted Holy Baptism as a saving flood – a washing of rebirth and renewal. Grant that many more would be washed in the river that flows from the heavenly city and be brought through her gates into the communion of Your Church. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of the Church, You have sustained Your people through the ages by the apostles' witness to Your Son. Raise up in our generation faithful men and women to serve in your church. And bless all believers and all congregations in their decision-making, that they would learn to listen to your Holy Spirit and follow your ways in all things. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, You have placed us in communities and families so that we would be nurtured and grow in love and in the knowledge of Your Word. Bless all who teach in them and all who learn. Extend your care and protection to homes, schools, churches and all places of godly learning. And be with those who are graduating, that their celebrations be joyful, and their next steps lead to much happiness and success. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious Lord, on this Memorial Day weekend we thank You for the many blessings You have bestowed upon this nation. Grant us a long memory to recall those who gave the full measure of devotion to our country's peace and security. Bring to mind the sacrifices of those who served faithfully until death in the protection of our freedom and in the defense of our land. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal Lord, You have seated Christ at Your right hand for our deliverance. Remember all who are afflicted with illness and injury, including those on our prayer list and those we name in our hearts at this time... Give them health and strength according to Your will. And Lord, bless all who mourn, especially the people of Uvalde, Texas and all of us who are saddened and frustrated by such senseless killing. Shed your light upon us and lead us in finding ways to do better in preventing such things. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of hosts, You have instituted and given Your Sacrament so that we who believe would receive the very body and blood of Your Son for our forgiveness, life and salvation. Grant all who commune pure hearts to receive this gift worthily in faith. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. **Amen.**



SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

PREFACE

LSB 160

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

It is truly good right and salutary...evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS

LSB 161

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of pow'r and might:

Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.

Hosanna. Hosanna.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

PAX DOMINI

LSB 163

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
Amen.

AGNUS DEI

LSB 163

**Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; grant us peace.**

THE COMMUNION *(Be seated)*

DISTRIBUTION MUSIC

Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing
Setting: Wayne Kerr

PRAYER *(Stand)*

BENEDICTION

SENDING HYMN #494

See, the Lord Ascend in Triumph

**1 See, the Lord ascends in triumph;
Conqu'ring King in royal state,
Riding on the clouds, His chariot,
To His heav'nly palace gate.
Hark! The choirs of angel voices
Joyful alleluias sing,
And the portals high are lifted
To receive their heav'nly King.**

**2 Who is this that comes in glory
With the trump of jubilee?
Lord of battles, God of armies,
He has gained the victory.
He who on the cross did suffer,
He who from the grave arose,
He has vanquished sin and Satan;
He by death has crushed His foes.**

**3 While He lifts His hands in blessing,
He is parted from His friends;
While their eager eyes behold Him,
He upon the clouds ascends.
He who walked with God and pleased Him,
Preaching truth and doom to come,
He, our Enoch, is translated
To His everlasting home.**

**4 Now our heav'nly Aaron enters
With His blood within the veil;
Joshua now is come to Canaan,
And the kings before Him quail.
Now He plants the tribes of Israel
In their promised resting place;
Now our great Elijah offers
Double portion of His grace.**

**5 He has raised our human nature
On the clouds to God's right hand;
There we sit in heav'nly places,
There with Him in glory stand.
Jesus reigns, adored by angels;
Man with God is on the throne.
By our mighty Lord's ascension
We by faith behold our own.**

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

See, the Lord Ascend in Triumph

Setting: Mark Sedio

Those serving:

Sunday, May 22, 8:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Rich Kauzlarich

Comm. assist: Jim Easterly

Reader: Anne Kauzlarich

10:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Marian Robinson

Comm. assist: Judy Koucky

Reader: Dale Rogers

Acknowledgments

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