

**A GUIDE TO
FUNERAL PLANNING**
REVISED, JANUARY 1, 2023



*Saint Catherine of Siena Catholic Church
Great Falls, Virginia*

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena Catholic Church, we extend to your family our prayerful sympathy in this time of loss and grief. Our parishioners are praying with you and for you. At Sunday Mass, we pray especially for those of the Parish family who have passed away recently. In the Sacred Liturgy, we pray for the repose of the souls of our loved ones. We receive the consolation of praying with the whole Church, all the saints, and Jesus.

The death of the just, we are told in Scripture, is blessed in the eyes of the Lord (Psalm 116:15). In the face of death, the Church proclaims that God has created us for Himself and that Christ has broken the bonds of sin and death that keep us from Him. In the face of death, Christians have hope. In Christ, upon the sleep of death, "life is changed, not ended."

The Church's funeral ceremonies begin with the wake the night before. The prayer gathering is an appropriate time to reconcile with the past and "celebrate the life" of the deceased with favorite stories. The wake also begins the prayers for the departed loved one and sets the tone for the funeral the next day.

The Holy Mass enables us to offer up our prayers and sorrows in union with Christ's perfect Sacrifice, made present on the altar under the forms of bread and wine. In keeping with the ancient Christian teaching on purgatory – whereby souls experience a final purification from the effects of sin – the Requiem Mass begs God to free the deceased from all bonds of sin and to receive the person into paradise. We have confidence that our prayers hasten the journey through purgatory to the eternal joys of heaven (cf. 2 Maccabees 12:43-46). The Funeral Mass provides an opportunity for reconciliation with God. At Mass, we focus on the present and the future in the light of Our Lord's Death and Resurrection.

The Funeral Mass differs from a memorial service since its focus is Jesus Christ, His victory over death, and the deceased's participation in the Paschal Mystery. Nevertheless, the Funeral Mass also seeks to console the family and friends of the departed with the Christian hope of life after death and our continuing union with the deceased in Christ.

It can be comforting to remember that our deceased loved ones have seen the face of God. We are then better able to reconcile with all the faithful departed. We also can consider the possibility that they now might feel differently about their last wishes. Our offering of personal prayers and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass benefits those who have died; *how* we do so benefits the living.

Let us pray.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace. Amen.

*May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

May the Lord be your strength and may His Mother be your comfort.

God bless you.

Rev. Jerry J. Pokorsky
Pastor

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Of Immediate Interest

When scheduling a funeral, the priest must deal directly with the funeral home director.

The bereaved pay the funeral home to organize the funeral. The logistics can be complicated (family schedules, funeral home constraints, cemetery timetables, etc.). Hence, it would not be appropriate for a priest to set the time and date of a funeral with a family member. As a strict rule, the priest speaks directly to the funeral director after the family has met with the director. After the priest has spoken with the funeral director and has established the schedule, he will set into motion further contact with the family, contacting the Choir Director and other Parish staff and volunteers. Experience shows that this strict rule prevents much misunderstanding and miscommunication. The family should also let the priest know who makes family funeral decisions.

The Mass time of a funeral

The priest customarily sets the funeral Mass time at 11 a.m., Noon, or 1 p.m. The earliest time to celebrate a funeral, schedule permitting, is 10 a.m. Again, schedule permitting, a funeral may be celebrated on Monday, Thursday, and Friday. We discourage Saturday funerals because the priest already celebrates two Masses that day. We do not allow funerals on Sundays or Holy Days.

Reception of Communion: practicing Catholics only

Catholic faith in the Real Presence requires that only practicing, properly disposed Catholics (i.e., without an awareness of mortal sin) should step forward to receive Communion. However, others are warmly encouraged to silently pray for the repose of the soul of the deceased loved one and the consolation of family and friends.

There are various forms of funeral liturgies or Memorial Masses.

1) Wake Service the afternoon or evening before the Funeral. Celebrate the Funeral Mass during the day. Burial takes place immediately after the Mass. 2) The same as the preceding, with the burial taking place at a later date (e.g., burial takes place at the place of birth or Arlington National Cemetery). 3) The family does not desire a Wake Service. The Funeral Mass takes place, followed by a burial as above. 4) Simple Memorial Mass without a casket or cremated remains.

Fees

The priest does not require a stole fee but asks the funeral home to prepare checks to pay for the musicians (usually an organist and cantor) on behalf of the family. In conversation with the Choir Director, the funeral director will identify the organist and cantor. The funeral home will make payment to Musica Nova, LLC (according to the parish music rate schedule) which will take care of payments to the organist and the cantor.

Elements of a traditional funeral liturgy

1) Wake Service at the funeral home, 2) Funeral Mass, and 3) Graveside Service. The Wake Service takes about 15 minutes (or perhaps 20 minutes if the family opts for a Rosary). The Funeral Mass generally takes about 45 minutes as celebrated by the priest of the Parish. The Graveside Service is brief, perhaps 10 minutes.

What a Funeral Mass is: A Funeral Mass is an act of liturgical worship upon the death of a Christian celebrating the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and our hope – individually and as a community – in our participation in the Cross and Resurrection. During a funeral, we pray for the repose of the departed loved one and the consolation of family and friends. A Funeral Mass begins with the “earthly liturgy.” On earth the meaning of life or our eternal destiny is difficult to see. Only faith in Jesus Christ and His Church provides us with this vision. Early in the liturgy, we may find ourselves uncomfortable and reluctant to be present. The Church in Her liturgy understands and appreciates this sense. The Mass proceeds with the consoling words of the scriptural readings, followed by a brief homily invoking the Cross and Resurrection. The Mass continues with the movement from the earthly to the heavenly. Through the priest, the faithful offer God bread and wine, the “work of human hands.” At the time of the Consecration, our offerings become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. During Communion, practicing Catholics are invited to step forward for the reception of Holy Communion. Others remain respectfully in place and are warmly encouraged to pray for the repose of the departed soul. As the Funeral Mass ends, there is often a sense of relief and release. The “work” of prayer (after all, “liturgy” means “work”) comes to a holy completion. Hence, the liturgy has the celebrant in the name of the Church sending the deceased to heavenly bliss: “May the angels lead you to Paradise....” The overall trajectory, therefore, is one of sorrow and even resistance in attending the funeral and concludes with an interior joy that comes with our faith in the Resurrection, God’s overabundant mercy, and the prospects of eternal life. The glorious "heavenly liturgy" transforms the preceding “earthly liturgy."

What a Funeral is not: A Funeral Mass is not a “celebration of the life” of the deceased, nor a mere gathering of family and friends for light conversation and “remembering the good things.” These sentiments, as worthy as they are, take place in the social settings outside of Mass. (There is much truth in the weary saying that the only time we have a family reunion is when there is a death in the family.) Nor is the Mass – especially the music – a means of consoling entertainment, often reminding us of the deceased’s “favorite hymn” or even “favorite song.” As mentioned above, the Funeral Mass is a profound act of worship. It does not belong to the family or priest (bound by the Church’s liturgical legislation). The Mass belongs to Christ and His Church.

Supreme Court of the United States
Washington, D. C. 20543

CHAMBERS OF
JUSTICE ANTONIN SCALIA

September 1, 1998

Dr. James C. Goodloe
Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
1627 Monument Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23220-2925

Dear Dr. Goodloe:

I looked for you unsuccessfully at the luncheon following the funeral yesterday. I wanted to tell you how reverent and inspiring I found the service that you conducted.

In my aging years, I have attended so many funerals of prominent people that I consider myself a connoisseur of the genre. When the deceased and his family are non-believers, of course, there is not much to be said except praise for the departed who is no more. But even in Christian services conducted for deceased Christians, I am surprised at how often the eulogy is the centerpiece of the service, rather than (as it was in your church) the Resurrection of Christ, and the eternal life which follows from that. I am told that, in Roman Catholic canon law, encomiums at funeral Masses are not permitted—though if that is the rule, I have never seen it observed except in the breach. I have always thought there is much to be said for such a prohibition, not only because it spares from embarrassment or dissembling those of us about whom little good can truthfully be said, but also because, even when the deceased was an admirable person—indeed, especially when the deceased was an admirable person—praise for his virtues can cause us to forget that we are praying for, and giving thanks for, God's inexplicable mercy to a sinner. (My goodness, that seems more like a Presbyterian thought than a Catholic one!)

Perhaps the clergymen who conduct relatively secular services are moved by a desire not to offend the non-believers in attendance—whose numbers tend to increase in proportion to the prominence of the deceased. What a great mistake. Weddings and funerals (but especially funerals) are the principal occasions left in modern America when you can preach the Good News not just to the faithful, but to those who have never really heard it.

Many thanks, Dr. Goodloe, for a service that did honor to Lewis and homage to God. It was a privilege to sit with your congregation. Best regards.

Sincerely,

Antonin Scalia

Frequent Questions

We encourage your private prayers

(Q) Do you recommend any prayers in preparation for the Funeral Mass?

(A) Yes. The Holy Rosary is a lovely family prayer. It allows you to take turns leading and following. It assists you in joining your sorrows and joys with the life of Christ. If you meditate on the Sorrowful Mysteries, it might be helpful to add the First Glorious Mystery to conclude on a hopeful note with the Resurrection. The Chaplet of Divine Mercy beautifully draws us into a simple meditation on Our Lord's Passion and prayer for all in need of His mercy. The Liturgy of the Hours is the official public prayer for the Church throughout the day. Holy Mass is the official worship of the Church. Joining the weekday Parish Mass helps us to experience the Holy Sacrifice in a quiet and meditative setting. We can get no closer to heaven than by being in the presence of and in being in communion with the Blessed Sacrament. The reception of Holy Communion is a moment when our loved ones are especially pleased, provided we make a good confession.

Viewing cannot take place in the church

(Q) Can the viewing take place in the church instead of the funeral home?

(A) Unfortunately, no.

Several funeral homes are nearby

(Q) What funeral home do you recommend?

(A) We do not recommend any particular funeral home, although parishioners often use Adams-Green (Herndon), Money and King (Vienna), and Murphy Funeral Home (Falls Church). Other local funeral homes are also nearby. However, funeral homes some distance from the church will probably require the funeral director to obtain the services of local clergy for the Wake Service.

Luncheon facilities may be available

(Q) Are facilities available for a gathering or luncheon after the Funeral Mass?

(A) The Parish Hall may be available, schedule permitting, but not on weekends. We have a busy parish and limited maintenance help. Some seating is available. Contact the rectory office for details. You may make arrangements with outside caterers. However, we prohibit the use of kitchen facilities.

You may opt to select the Readings (Liturgy of the Word)

(Q) Are friends or members of the family permitted to read at Mass?

(A) We generally rely on Parish readers. Occasionally, a family member or friend may read one or two of the readings (except for the Responsorial Psalm and the Gospel). This person should be someone who already serves as a reader at Mass. **The reader must be a practicing Catholic.** Given the understandable difficulty of remembering the loss of a loved one, family members may lose their composure at the funeral. Hence, the Parish is happy to provide a reader.

(Q) Which readings can we use?

(A) The priest knows the appropriateness of readings under various circumstances. However, if you wish, we invite you to choose some Scripture passages from the approved liturgical ritual. The list of options for the readings, as approved for the Rites of Christian Burial, can be found in the "Scripture Reading Selections" appendix. The priest who is preaching sometimes has a particular Gospel passage in mind. Kindly consult with him before selecting the Gospel.

(Q) Should the readers bring a copy of their readings with them to the Funeral Mass?

(A) No. They will proclaim their readings from the Lectionary at the pulpit. See the priest before Mass begins.

(Q) Do the readers recite the Prayers of the Faithful?

(A) It is customary for the priest – assisted by a deacon if available – to pray the Prayers of the Faithful from the ritual.

The music program is regulated by church policies**(Q) How do I arrange for music?**

(A) The Parish Choir Director (703.759.4350) arranges the music. He will contact you after the funeral home informs us of the settled schedule.

(Q) Why are our music choices limited?

(A) We choose the sacred music at St. Catherine of Siena from those pieces written specifically for the Holy Mass and are of superior quality. Since the Sacred Liturgy re-presents the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the sacred music should reflect our demeanor as if we were witnessing those events in time. The nature of the Mass helps explain our selections and the songs we exclude or use only outside Mass.

We may not permit hymns still used in various church settings. For example, we do not allow songs with doctrinal problems arising out of other Christian traditions, self-referential songs rather than prayers directed to the Lord, and hymns that presume salvation and obscure the meaning of the Holy Eucharist. For these reasons, please do not request *Amazing Grace*, *One Bread One Body*, *On Eagle's Wings*, *I am the Bread of Life*, *Be Not Afraid*, *Hosea Song* (i.e., “Come back to me.”) and *Here I am Lord* -- all of which may have a proper setting but not necessarily at a Funeral Mass.

Some musical parts of the Funeral Mass are not hymns per se but are liturgical prayers that have been used in the Sacred Liturgy for so long that they even have their unique melodies. These include *Requiem Aeternam* (sung during the Entrance), *Lux Aeterna*, and *In Paradisum* (sung during the final rituals) or appropriate variations on these hymns. These lovely prayers are similar to the regular parts of the Mass chanted in the ancient languages at St. Catherine of Siena every Sunday: *Kyrie*, *Alleluia*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*. They will be sung in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, respectively.

We encourage you to choose hymns for the Entrance, Offertory, and Recessional (see Funeral Music Suggestions in the Appendix). Kindly ask the Choir Director to help you select appropriate pieces. His decisions will be considered final, and he will inform the Parish office of the selections for inclusion in the Funeral program.

(Q) Are bagpipes permitted during Mass?

(A) We do not permit bagpipes during the celebration of the Mass. However, we allow bagpipes at the Wake Service or after the conclusion of prayers at the Graveside Service.

Flower arrangements are normally permitted**(Q) What about flowers?**

(A) Flowers are welcome in Church except during Advent and Lent. Some should remain in the sanctuary after the conclusion of Mass. Flowers honor the deceased and also decorate God's altar in worship. At any time of the liturgical year, you may place an arrangement in the Church lobby as a decoration; these may return home or bring to the cemetery.

Eulogies are encouraged, but not permitted during Mass

(Q) Can someone deliver a eulogy?

(A) Yes, but only at the wake or burial, or reception. The Catholic Church does not permit eulogies at the Funeral Mass. The interior peace liturgically knit together by prayers, chants, Scripture readings, and Holy Communion are lost during reminiscences about the faithful departed. Reverential remarks are better suited to more informal settings. Although encountered in some Catholic Funeral Masses, we do not permit eulogies in the church after the Funeral Mass. Please do not ask for an exception. We warmly recommend that the family prepare a brief (or longer if preferable) narrative biography of the deceased. Such a narrative is helpful for the celebrant as he prepares his homily remarks. Although liturgical legislation proscribes eulogies, a few words about the virtuous acts of the deceased are often appropriate during the brief funeral homily.

Proper burial must take place

(Q) What about the interment?

(A) Interment usually follows the Funeral Mass. In those cases, the priest will accompany the family to the cemetery for the funeral rites at the grave. For burial at a later time, please make arrangements through the Parish office to ensure that a priest or deacon will be present for the blessing of the grave. Due to increased security procedures on military bases and installations, expect the funeral director to contact the designated Catholic chaplain to perform graveside services.

The Parish will confirm the Funeral Mass only with proper burial plans. The desire to keep your loved one's remains close by explains why a nearby cemetery can be a wise choice. But permanently retaining the cremated remains in houses is forbidden.

(Q) May we have the traditional prayers for burial?

(A) Yes. The traditional (Latin or English) prayers at the graveside certainly can be provided instead of those from the contemporary ritual. Please let your priest know ahead of time so that he will bring the correct book to the cemetery.

Cremation permitted

(Q) What about cremation?

(A) The Church now permits the cremation of the mortal remains of the deceased. The cremated remains may be present at the funeral. Nevertheless, the Church prefers that the body not be cremated and urges that, if cremation occurs, it be done after the funeral (although cremation often takes place well before the funeral Mass, and this option remains available).

The Church requires the proper interment or burial of the cremated remains: buried in a grave, at sea, or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. It is forbidden to scatter the remains. If the family does not intend to inter or entomb the cremated remains, then Saint Catherine of Siena Parish will not be able to do the funeral ceremony.

The Church prohibits cremation when it signifies a lack of belief in the resurrection of the body.

Outside, or visiting priests are welcome

(Q) May we invite another priest from outside the diocese to participate in the Funeral Mass?

(A) Yes, if they are in good standing with the Church and abide by our policies. Please ask them to contact the rectory office so that they can coordinate their collaboration. All priests from outside the diocese are required

to demonstrate their good standing. Their Bishop or Provincial will need to send the appropriate letters to the Chancery of the Diocese of Arlington. The priest will be familiar with the details.

Flag is removed from the casket during Mass

(Q) May a flag be draped over the coffin?

(A) Yes, before and after the Funeral Mass, but not during the Mass. As the casket enters the church, the national flag is removed, and the funeral pall is placed on top to call to mind the deceased's life in Christ at Baptism. The family may place a family Bible or a crucifix on the coffin after the draping of the casket pall. After the funeral, the flag may be placed again on the casket before departing the church.

Pictures are allowed in the vestibule but not the sanctuary

(Q) Do you allow the placement of pictures?

(A) You may place pictures of the deceased in the narthex (entrance) of the church, but not in the church or the sanctuary. The altar of Sacrifice is the focus of attention during the Sacred Funeral Liturgy. The casket of the deceased -- in life, the Temple of the Holy Spirit -- reverently stands before the altar.

Offertory procession is optional

(Q) May we have an offertory procession?

(A) A brief Offertory procession may take place by selected members of the family. If so desired, two or three family members – at the appointed time as directed by the priest – step forward with the vessels holding hosts and wine. The procedure is quite simple and easily managed by the priest. Alternatively, the priest continues with the Mass with the gifts pre-arranged near the altar.

Overview of the Funeral Mass

Catholics reverence the sacred space of our Holy House. We request your respect for the reserved Eucharist and those praying in the Church. Family and friends who arrive well before the beginning of the Funeral Mass are welcome to visit with each other outside and in the Church lobby. Once inside the Church proper, we invite all to enter a spiritual communion of silent prayer. When the sacred rituals begin, all may join in the spoken and sung prayers.

The Greeting

The priest greets the casket and the deceased's family at the doors of the vestibule (narthex). He sprinkles the coffin with holy water, and the funeral pall is placed over it.

The Opening Prayer

When all are gathered, the priest prays the *Collect* (opening prayer) for the dead.

The Liturgy of the Word

This portion of the Mass consists of one or two readings from the Old and New Testament, a sung Responsorial Psalm, and the Gospel. The family may choose the scripture readings from approved texts in the Order of Christian Funerals. After the Gospel, the celebrant or another priest or deacon delivers the homily.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The priest prepares the altar, and the gifts are brought forward. Then, the Preface and Eucharistic Prayer follow. The *Sanctus*, Memorial Acclamation, and *Agnus Dei* are typically chanted. The Lord's Prayer immediately precedes the distribution of Holy Communion.

Guests often feel awkward not knowing what to do when approaching the altar rail to receive Holy Communion. The priest beforehand may remind all present of the ancient Christian tradition that only those in full communion with the Church who are in the state of grace and keeping the Eucharistic fast may receive Holy Communion.

Final Commendation

At the end of Mass, we make a final farewell to the departed Christian. The ancient antiphon, "*Subvenite Sancti Dei*" (*Saints of God, Come to His Aid*), is chanted while the casket is blessed with holy water and then with incense – a reminder of Baptism and a sign of our prayers rising to God (cf. *Revelation* 8:4).

Sample Funeral Program

RITE OF RECEPTION INTO THE CHURCH

Greeting

Sprinkling with Holy Water and Placing of the Pall Entrance Procession

Entrance Hymn – Be Thou My Vision #238

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: Wisdom 3:1-9

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23

Second Reading: Romans 6:3-9

Gospel Acclamation (chant Alleluia)

Gospel: John 11:17-27

Homily

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

General Intercessions

Offertory Hymn – The King of Love #564

Holy Holy Holy

Memorial Acclamation

Lamb of God

Communion Solo Hymn – Panis Angelicus (Franck)

FINAL COMMENDATION

Prayer of Commendation and Incensing of Casket

Saints of God (Duffy)

PROCESSION TO THE PLACE OF COMMITAL

In Paradisum (Plainchant)

Funeral Music Suggestions

Hymns for Entrance or Offertory:

#209 All You Who Seek A Comfort Sure
 #238 Be Thou My Vision
 #355 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say Come Unto Me and Rest
 #392 Lead Kindly Light Amid the Circling Gloom
 #406 Lord of All Hopefulness
 #446 O God Our Help in Ages Past
 #564 The King of Love My Shepherd Is

Responsorial Psalms:

Psalm 23
 Psalm 27
 Psalm 103

Eucharistic Hymns for Offertory or Communion:

Pie Jesu (Faure)
 Panis Angelicus (Franck)
 #194 Adoro Te, Devote
 #377 Jesus My Lord My God My All (Sweet Sacrament)
 #408 Lord, Who at Thy First Eucharist
 #452 O Jesus We Adore Thee (O Sacrament Most Holy)
 #458 O Lord I Am Not Worthy
 #490 Panis Angelicus (Lambilotte)

Marian Hymns (generally sung at Offertory):

Ave Maria (Schubert)
 #278 Daily Daily Sing to Mary
 #327 Hail Queen of Heaven the Ocean Star
 #362 Immaculate Mary
 #468 O Sanctissima
 #525 Sing of Mary Pure and Lowly

Music for Incensing of the Casket:

Saints of God (Duffy)
 Subvenite, Sancti Dei (plainchant)

Recessional Hymns:

May the Angels (Hughes)
 In Paradisum (plainchant)
 #198 All Creatures of Our God and King*
 #213 Alleluia Sing to Jesus*
 #294 Faith of Our Fathers
 #297 For All the Saints*
 #315 God of Our Fathers
 #345 Holy God We Praise Thy Name
 #356 I Know That My Redeemer Lives
 #428 Now Thank We All Our God
 #446 O God Our Help in Ages Past
 #495 Praise My Soul the King of Heaven*

**Please Note: hymns containing the word "Alleluia" may not be sung during Lent.*

Additional selections from the Saint Michael Hymnal may also be appropriate depending on the Liturgical Season (Easter Season, Advent etc.) – please contact the Choir Director for additional guidance.

Music from the Adoremus Hymnal (which include a good deal from the St. Michael Hymnal) may be heard at:
<http://www.ignatius.com/promotions/adoremus-hymnal/downloadable-mp3s.htm>

Scripture Reading Selections

Choose from the following approved readings or ask the priest for his recommendations

Readings in italics are the choices for the first reading during Easter season.

First Reading

2 Maccabees 12:43-46
 Job 19:1, 23-27
 Wisdom 3:1-9
 Wisdom 4:7-15
 Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9
 Lamentations 3:17-26
 Daniel 12:1-3

Second Reading

Acts 10:34-43
 Romans 5:5-11
 Romans 5:17-21
 Romans 6:3-9
 Romans 8:14-23
 Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39
 Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12
 I Corinthians 15:20-23, 24b-28
 I Corinthians 15:51-57
 2 Corinthians 4:14 -5:1
 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10
 Philippians 3:20-21
 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
 2 Timothy 2:8-13
 1 John 3:1-2
 1 John 3:14-16
Revelation 14:13
Revelation 20:11 - 21:1
Revelation 21:1-5a, 6b-7

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12a
 Matthew 11:25-30
 Matthew 25:1-13
 Mathew 25:31-46
 Mark 15:33-39, 16:1-6
 Luke 7:11-17
 Luke 12:35-40
 Luke 23:33, 39-43
 Luke 23: 44-46, 50, 52-53; 24:1-6a
 Luke 24:13-35
 John 5:24-29
 John 6:37-40
 John 6:51-58
 John 11: 17-27



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