

# *Resurrectionist Spirituality Center*

*Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ*

*Via San Sebastianello 11, 00187 Rome*

*Tel. +39 06 679 59 08. E-mail: cdz.rome@gmail.com*



## **Materials for monthly day of recollection**

**NOVEMBER A.D. 2009**

### *First Principle of the Resurrectionist Spirituality: GOD LOVES US UNCONDITIONALLY*

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#### **Preface**

“Materials for Monthly Day of Recollection” are a proposition of the Resurrectionist Spirituality Center in Rome for monthly day of recollection. In article nr 65 of C.R.’s Constitutions one can read: *Recalling that Christ “would always go off to some place where he could be alone and pray” (Lk 5:16), we, too, must withdraw from time to time from our apostolic labors in order to devote some time exclusively to reflection and prayer. This withdrawal for prayer will serve to render our apostolate more fruitful by strengthening our union with Christ, who assures us that “cut off from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). Thus, we see the importance of our monthly days of recollection and of our annual retreat.*

The “Materials...” propose 3 main points to perform during monthly day of recollection: 1. morning prayer with half-hour meditation, 2. prayer meeting with conference, 3. house meeting.

**According to the decision of the Superior General, the topic for proximate months will be eight principles of Resurrectionist Spirituality.** Moreover, I would like to inform, that the “Materials...” are published in three primary languages of the Community (English, Polish, Portuguese).

With fraternal greetings,

Fr. Wojciech Mleczo, C.R.

Director of the Resurrectionist Spirituality Center in Rome

## **Message of the Superior General for November 2009.**

November begins joyfully with the celebration of the Feast of All Saints. Quickly the tone changes on the next day, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, when we turn our attention to death as we observe the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. Within two days we have reflections upon joy and sorrow. During the Renewal Program in Rome this past October as a part of our agenda we celebrated Mass at the Catacomb of St. Sebastian. As you know, a catacomb is a place where the dead were buried, but for us Resurrectionists it was a place of life. In this very catacomb Father Peter Semenenko was the first Resurrectionist to publicly profess the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and then, receive the vows of the others who were with him. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of this month we commemorate the 123<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the death of Father Peter Semenenko. With grateful hearts we are thankful that he had the courage to follow Bogdan Janski and observe this holy man's counsel because this enabled Father Peter to become a willing instrument to assist many on their life's journey. During November we recall Father Peter's death as well as that of our family members, benefactors, friends and fellow CR's. I pray that we like Father Peter have the courage to assist those other searchers who may cross our path. Also, enclosed with this note are some materials that are designed to help us focus our attention on the development of our spiritual lives. May we use these materials not only for the monthly day of recollection, but also for our personal meditation.

*Fr. Norbert Raszeja, CR*

Sunday, October 11, 2009

## **PART I – Morning prayers with half-hour meditation**

### **Scheme**

1. Morning prayer: Morning prayer with meditation.
2. After Reading – meditation (30 min).  
Text for meditation: s. 2 (as well as ready-to-print handout at the end of the materials).
3. At the end: Beatification Prayer.

### **Preparations needed**

1. Books for The Liturgy of the Hours.
2. Meditation handout (a copy for everybody - last page of the materials contains ready-to-print handout).

### **Text for meditation:**

Excerpts from C.R. Constitutions:

“We believe that God's love for us is merciful and unfailing. We have not earned his love.” (Charism)

“Convinced of God's unconditional love for us (...)”  
(Mission Statement)

“A similar life-long process is involved in our coming to know God's unconditional love for each of us as the most fundamental fact of our lives. We experience our nothingness without God. We know the misery of our inherited weakness and the corruption which results from our personal sins. But this knowledge leads to a new experience of God's love because he is ready to forgive and to come to our aid. At the same time, our renewed experience of God's unconditional love leads to a recognition of our own unworthiness. This paschal dynamic continues throughout our whole life. As Resurrectionists we will strive to witness to this transforming power of God's love, not only in our own personal lives, but also in community life. We will allow this love to overcome the fears and heal the wounds that keep us isolated from one another, so that we can become a true community of disciples united in mind and heart.”  
(Excerpt from art. 1)

“Salvation history is a continual manifestation of God’s love for us. It was out of love that he created us.<sup>1</sup> It is also out of love that he has redeemed us<sup>2</sup> and made us his sons.<sup>3</sup> In our own day God continues to manifest this love for us in the person of the Risen Christ, who is still present among us and sanctifying us through his church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. A very special manifestation of God’s love was made to our founders and to all who have followed them in the Congregation of the Resurrection because we have received Christ's invitation to leave all and follow him.”

(Article 2)

<sup>1</sup> “For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned.”  
(Ws 11: 24).

<sup>2</sup> “Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life.”  
(Jn 3: 16)

<sup>3</sup> “See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God: Yet that is what we are.” (1 Jn 3: 1)

### **Beatification Prayer**

O Risen Jesus, you called Bogdan Janski, Peter Semenenko and Jerome Kajsiewicz to proclaim your unconditional love for all people and witness to the Resurrection by dying to self in order to live a new life by the power of your Spirit. Glorify your servants by the way of beatification so that the example of their lives after conversion may bring the hope of Resurrection to all who continue to struggle with sin, error and their own human weakness. Amen

## **PART II – Prayer meeting with conference**

### **Scheme**

1. Common prayer, e.g. part of the Liturgy of the Hours (suggested: *Midday Prayer*)
2. Prayer to the Holy Spirit (e.g. song, hymn, etc.)
3. Conference – to be read by the superior or a house member
4. Distribution of meditation handouts (could be used during adoration)
5. Exposition
6. Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
7. Adoration in silence (1/2 h, occasion to reflect on the conference)
8. Prayer for vocations for our Congregation
9. Song of Praise
10. Benediction
11. Antiphon to Virgin Mary (e.g. song, hymn)

**Duration: app. 1 hour 15 min.**

### **Preparations needed**

1. Books for The Liturgy of the Hours
2. Printed text of the conference (pp. 6-10)
3. Everything what is needed for Exposition

### **Course of the meeting**

- 1. Common prayer: Liturgy of the Hours (Midday Prayer).**
- 2. Prayer to the Holy Spirit (e.g. song, hymn). (Proposal:)**

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

- 3. Conference:**

*First Principle of the Resurrectionist Spirituality:*

***GOD LOVES US UNCONDITIONALLY***

(**Notice to reader:** it would be worthy to read this text first in private as well as to pray to the Holy Spirit, that the text which will be proclaimed would find its way to the hearts, minds and will of the listeners.)

**“We ourselves have known and put our faith in God’s love towards ourselves. God is love and anyone who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him.”**

1 John 4:16

John’s message is clear and direct: “We have known and put our faith in God’s love towards us.” How wonderful to be able to make such a statement, to be able to say, “God loves me and that is the basis of my life.” Unfortunately, many of us never manage to say such words, or if we do, they express an abstract idea we have, and not our lived experience.

It appears that our founders were able to identify concretely with the evangelist’s words. Their conversions were a struggle which gradually enabled them to understand, and more importantly, to experience with their whole being, that they were personally loved by God. They came to know God not only as the creator, the all-knowing and all-powerful Lord, but as a loving and personal Savior. God’s love for them was something they were able to recognize in their daily lives. For this reason it was only natural that it became the centerpiece of their spiritual lives and of our Constitutions.

Quotations from the evangelist John on the theme of God’s love became the scriptural foundation of the earliest community Rules. For example, The Rule of 1850 stated in article 4 that the Congregation “shall treasure these words: ‘God is love’ (John 4:16); His love created us: ‘for you love all things...that you have made...because they are yours, O Lord and lover of souls’ (Wisdom 11:25,27). Having created and redeemed us, he further extends his love by making us his sons: ‘Behold what manner of love the

Father has bestowed upon us, that we are called children of God; and such we are' (I John 3:1).”

Although God’s love for us is the basis of authentic Christian spirituality, it is not a truth we easily arrive at and personally experience. Thus, in the very first article, our Constitutions refer to God's love as “the most fundamental fact of our lives,” and then continue to explain how a life-long process is required in order to understand and experience it with our mind, will, heart and emotions. The possibility exists for our experience of God’s love to surpass our experience of all other loves extended to us. This is true because that is the nature of God’s love for us.

Unfortunately, the reality is often different; our experience of God’s love for us is frequently a shadow of the other loves which we experience. Bogdan Janski recognized the slow and hesitant progress that most of us, like himself, make in grasping this basic truth. He wrote, “This must be proclaimed to sinful man, something which he was unable to find for himself: God loves him...” (USRS page 19). Janski was not referring to a proclamation consisting of mere rhetoric. His own life modeled the type of proclamation which he had in mind. He reached out to others through charitable deeds, wishing others to taste and feel God’s love for them through his own concrete acts.

There are good reasons why we are slow to experience God’s love. Our experience of love and our notion of love are derived from our relationships with those who surround us. People teach us about love through their manifestations of love. Very early in life we come to know that others are able to love us in only a limited way, sometimes only under certain situations and conditions. We learn that it is best to conform to their expectations and to act in a manner acceptable to them if we hope to receive their love. It is only natural for us to conclude that such must be the case for all persons, including God, who loves us.

It is sometimes difficult to suspect that God’s love is very different and that God could love us at all times and under all circumstances despite our behaviour, good or bad; that his love is not earned, but was present before we existed and perdures even when we sin; that it will never be withdrawn.

We are generally conditioned to think that others' love for us is a consequence of our good behaviour, whereas with God the reverse is true: our good behaviour flows from his love. Our goodness is an expression of his love for us.

If God's love for us is so different from our common experience of love, it is natural to ask: How do we come to know and appreciate God's love? Unfortunately, some people never do so or only in a slight way; but it is possible, because from time to time we do receive true unselfish love from others. Moreover, God can make us directly aware of his love. We will focus on the first. Truly blessed is the person, child or adult, who has the conscious experience of being loved by another in good times and in bad. The experience is not only wonderful in itself, it prepares the person to recognize and to accept God's love as the marvelous gift that it is.

Once a person has come to accept the possibility that another can love him without demanding something in return, it is more likely that he will recognize through scripture, the sacraments, prayer and nature the love which God has for him. The reading of sacred scripture becomes the story of God's love for us (cf. Constitutions, Article 2). This is especially true of the gospel narratives in which God's love becomes manifest in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. After accepting the scriptures in this way a person can then turn to his own personal history and reexamine it as an expression of divine love for him. Prayer and the sacraments are no longer merely or primarily human efforts on his part, but rather occasions to accept the love of God.

The reading of the Old Testament can be beneficial as well in this regard. Love and fidelity (*hesed*) were the characteristics which the Hebrews attributed to God from the earliest times. *Hesed* is what prompted God to make a covenant with his people, and to be faithful to this gratuitous covenant regardless of the response of the Hebrews. The word *hesed* encompassed God's loving forgiveness and benevolence. For the Hebrews it gave God his personal identity and was the key to understanding his basic character. The first Christians saw the death and resurrection of Christ as the perfect manifestation of the *hesed* of God (cf. Romans 5:5,6).

One's vocation takes on a new perspective and dynamism when one has come to see life primarily as a response to God's love. The religious life, holy orders and marriage are then viewed not merely as one's personal decision to take on a specific life style for one's own benefit, but as a response to an invitation from God to be loved by him in a specific way. Since it is the religious life which concerns us, let us explore this concept further in reference to this particular vocation.

God loves us and wishes that we experience his love through a personal relationship. Our whole life is his gift to us and an expression of his love. Our vocation to religious life is a specific instance in which God invites us in a particular way to deepen the loving relationship between himself and us. He is giving us special gifts which will permit us to relate to him in a specific way, namely through a life of chastity, poverty and obedience lived in community and directed to apostolic service.

The religious life is not something we take upon ourselves, it is a response to the gifts which the Lord has given to us (cf. Constitutions Articles 3 and 147). These gifts are intended to help us experience his love in a new way, a way that in the mystery of grace is ideally suited to us. The religious life is one of the wonderful ways that God has of saying to an individual: I love you and wish to express my love for you by relating to you in a particular manner. For the religious this means a relationship mutually expressed through a life of chastity, poverty and obedience (cf. IE, nr 5).

[...]

In these final paragraphs let us consider the role of prayer in helping a person come to an appreciation of God's love for him. Our founders were great examples in this regard. When all three were together in Paris (1835-1837) they spent extended periods of time in prayer at Solesmes and La Trappe. On various occasions between 1835 and 1840 Janski would spend up to a month or more at these places. Semenenko and Kajsiewicz set aside a month for retreat in preparation for ordination in 1841. It was during these times that they came to understand and experience the basic principle of the community which they were in the process of founding.

The founders' view of the importance and the role of prayer is set down in The Rule of 1850, "The Brothers must realize that the total perfection of religious life consists in tending to a most intimate union with God by love. The necessary means of attaining this end is prayer, for God's grace depends on prayer, and grace alone leads to this intimate union with God through love" (Article 88). It is God's grace, his love for us, which enables us to pray and to love in return. Prayer is the necessary means to make this relationship of love mutual, because through prayer we experience God's love.

Text taken from:  
International Formation Commission,  
*Formation in Resurrectionist Spirituality*,  
Rome 1993, pp. 7-19

#### **4. Distribution of pages with points to reflect on**

(Notice: After the conference reflection points should be distributed. They can be printed in needed amounts using the ready-to-print handouts, located at the end of the materials).

#### **Points to reflect on after listening to the conference (to use e.g. during adoration)**

*O God! May the holy sentiment with which you inspired me,  
dwell in me without interruption. Then my life will be an expression of your love,  
a means to perpetuate your glory on earth,  
an effort to erect for you a temple in which all people will love you,  
in which the whole world will honor you!*  
(Bogdan Janski, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1830)

1. Do I believe that God loves me unconditionally, no matter what I do? Do I believe that God surrounds me with His enormous love every day? Do I believe that God cannot stop loving me? What is my experience of God's love?

"God's love was revealed in our midst in this way: he sent his only Son to the world that we might have life through him. Love, then, consists in this: not that we have loved God but that He has loved us and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins." (1 Jn 4: 9-10)

2. What does my personal relationship with God look like? How does my relation to God look like? Is it a relation of love, intimacy, or a formal and official kind of relationship? What does my meeting with God during prayer look like? Do I just 'say' prayers or do I pray from the depths of my heart? "See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God! Yet that is what we are." (1 Jn 3: 1)

3. "Though the mountains leave their place and the hills be shaken, My love shall never leave you, nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the Lord, who has mercy on you." (Is 54: 10)

"With age-old love I have loved you; so I have kept my mercy toward you." (Jer 31: 3)

"Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.' Can a mother forget the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name; your walls are ever before me." (Is 49: 14-16)

**5. Exposition                      Eucharistic Hymn.**

**6. Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

Lord, have mercy	<i>Lord, have mercy.</i>
Christ, have mercy	<i>Christ, have mercy.</i>
Lord, have mercy	<i>Lord, have mercy.</i>
Christ, hear us	<i>Christ, hear us .</i>
Christ, graciously hear us	<i>Christ, graciously hear us.</i>
God the Father of Heaven,	<b><i>have mercy on us.</i></b>
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,	
God, the Holy Spirit,	
Holy Trinity, One God,	
Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father,	
Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin	
Mother,	
Heart of Jesus, substantially united to the Word of God,	

Heart of Jesus, of Infinite Majesty,  
Heart of Jesus, Sacred Temple of God,  
Heart of Jesus, Tabernacle of the Most High,  
Heart of Jesus, House of God and Gate of Heaven,  
Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity,  
Heart of Jesus, abode of justice and love,  
Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love,  
Heart of Jesus, abyss of all virtues,  
Heart of Jesus, most worthy of all praise,  
Heart of Jesus, king and center of all hearts,  
Heart of Jesus, in whom are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge,  
Heart of Jesus, in whom dwells the fullness of divinity,  
Heart of Jesus, in whom the Father was well pleased,  
Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received,  
Heart of Jesus, desire of the everlasting hills,  
Heart of Jesus, patient and most merciful,  
Heart of Jesus, enriching all who invoke Thee,  
Heart of Jesus, fountain of life and holiness,  
Heart of Jesus, propitiation for our sins,  
Heart of Jesus, loaded down with opprobrium,  
Heart of Jesus, bruised for our offenses,  
Heart of Jesus, obedient to death,  
Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance,  
Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation,  
Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection,  
Heart of Jesus, our peace and our reconciliation,  
Heart of Jesus, victim for our sins  
Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who trust in Thee,  
Heart of Jesus, hope of those who die in Thee,

Heart of Jesus, delight of all the Saints,

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,

spare on us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,

graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,

have mercy on us, O Lord.

V. Jesus, meek and humble of heart.

R. Make our hearts like yours.

Let us pray:

Almighty and eternal God, look upon the Heart of Thy most beloved Son and upon the praises and satisfaction which He offers You in the name of sinners; and to those who implore Your mercy, in Your great goodness, grant forgiveness in the name of the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You forever and ever. Amen.

**7. Half-hour adoration in silence.**

**8. Prayer for vocations to our Congregation:**

(Translation from CR Prayer Book in Polish)

Lord we are deeply aware of your words to your disciples:

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few,

therefore ask the Lord of the harvest

to send laborers into his harvest” (Mt. 9:37).

We ask you at this time when we, your laborers,  
are fewer and the harvest is more plentiful,  
to inspire through your Holy Spirit  
the men to whom you are calling to join  
us in the Congregation of the Resurrection.  
Also Lord inspire us, your present laborers,  
to live out our charism and mission with the enthusiasm and joy  
which will attract new laborers.  
We make this prayer in your name  
our Risen Lord and Saviour.  
Amen.

**9. Song of Praise.**

**10. Benediction and Reposition.**

**11. Antiphon to Virgin Mary.**

## **PART III – House meeting**

### **Outline**

1. Prayer for house meetings (see below).
2. Discuss and establish date for monthly day of recollection in December.
3. What have we done in the previous month to better live the Priestly Year, on the personal, community and parish level? What more can we do?  
How can we in a better way live and proclaim the truth about God's unconditional love towards all?
4. Current issues.
5. "Resurrection Prayer".
6. At the end superior will bless the community.

### **Preparations Needed:**

1. Coffee, tea, cookies, fruit, etc.
2. List of discussion points / agenda.

### **Prayer for house meetings**

(Translation from CR Prayer Book in Polish)

**Lord Jesus Christ**, You promised that where two or three are gathered in your name, you will always be present. Allow us to feel your presence with us and surround us with hope, joy and peace, and fill us with truth and love. Who live and reigns forever and ever, Amen.

**Risen Jesus**, you brought us together into one family and long that our community be full of God's life. Make faith, hope and love be an expression of this community and grow in each of us. Who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

**God our Father**, all in our community with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that we would zealously try to recognize your will and willingly worked to fulfill its goal, making ourselves visible witnesses of the gospel values. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Monthly Day of Recollection – NOVEMBER A.D. 2009



Our monthly day of recollection  
will take place on ..... November 2009.



**Topic: *First Principle of Resurrectionist Spirituality –  
God loves us unconditionally.***

### **I. Morning prayer with meditation:**

time: ..... place: .....

### **II. Prayer meeting with conference:**

time: ..... place: .....

### **III. House meeting:**

time: ..... place: .....

### **OUR DUTIES,**

who is responsible for:

Morning prayer with meditation	
Leading the Liturgy of the Hours	
Conference will be read by	
Exposition of Eucharist + prayers during exposition	
Preparation of place for house meeting	

## Points for morning meditation

Monthly day of recollection: November 2009

### ***God loves us unconditionally***

#### **Excerpts from C.R.'s Constitutions:**



I. "We believe that God's love for us is merciful and unending. We have not earned his love."

(Charism)

II. "Convinced of God's unconditional love for us (...)" (Mission Statement)

III. "A similar life-long process is involved in our coming to know God's unconditional love for each of us as the most fundamental fact of our lives. We experience our nothingness without God. We know the misery of our inherited weakness and the corruption which results from our personal sins. But this knowledge leads to a new experience of God's love because he is ready to forgive and to come to our aid. At the same time, our renewed experience of God's unconditional love leads to a recognition of our own unworthiness. This paschal dynamic continues throughout our whole life. As Resurrectionists we will strive to witness to this transforming power of God's love, not only in our own personal lives, but also in community life. We will allow this love to overcome the fears and heal the wounds that keep us isolated from one another, so that we can become a

true community of disciples united in mind and heart." (Excerpt from art. 1)

IV. "Salvation history is a continual manifestation of God's love for us. It was out of love that he created us.<sup>1</sup> It is also out of love that he has redeemed us<sup>2</sup> and made us his sons.<sup>3</sup> In our own day God continues to manifest this love for us in the person of the Risen Christ, who is still present among us and sanctifying us through his church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. A very special manifestation of God's love was made to our founders and to all who have followed them in the Congregation of the Resurrection because we have received Christ's invitation to leave all and follow him."

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<sup>1</sup> "For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned."  
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(Jn 3: 16)

<sup>3</sup> "See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God: Yet that is what we are." (1 Jn 3: 1)

## Points to reflect on after listening to the conference



*O God! May the holy sentiment with which you inspired me, dwell in me without interruption. Then my life will be an expression of your love, a means to perpetuate your glory on earth, an effort to erect for you a temple in which all people will love you, in which the whole world will honor you!*

(Bogdan Janski, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1830)

**1.** Do I believe that God loves me unconditionally, no matter what I do? Do I believe that God surrounds me with His enormous love every day? Do I believe that God cannot stop loving me? What is my experience of God's love?

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**2.** What does my personal relationship with God look like? How does my relation to God look like? Is it a relation of love, intimacy, or relation of formal and official kind? How does my meeting with God during prayer look like? Do I just 'say' prayers or do I pray from the depth of my heart? "See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God! Yet that is what we are." (1 Jn 3: 1)

**3.** "Though the mountains leave their place and the hills be shaken, My love shall never leave you, nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the Lord, who has mercy on you." (Is 54: 10)

"With age-old love I have loved you; so I have kept my mercy toward you." (Jer 31: 3)

"Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.' Can a mother forget the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name; your walls are ever before me." (Is 49: 14-16)

## Points to reflect on after listening to the conference



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