



Seton Home



Study School

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◆ *“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”* ◆

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The Miraculous Medal

On November 27, we celebrate the feast of the Miraculous Medal. It was on July 18, 1830, that Our Blessed Mother appeared to Catherine Labouré, a member of the Sisters of Charity in France. In her apparition, the Blessed Mother gave Catherine instructions to have a medal made which was to help people all around the world as they requested heavenly favors. She specifically told Catherine that the medal was “to the whole world and to every person.”

The medal was designed by the Blessed Mother herself. She gave Catherine a vision of the front and the back of the medal. It was originally called the Medal of the Immaculate Conception because it includes a beautiful image of the Blessed Mother surrounded by the words: “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”

The medal was made and distributed within just a few years. Because so many miracles occurred immediately, it quickly began to be called the Miraculous Medal. Certainly one of the biggest miracles is that St. Catherine’s body remains incorrupt as it rests in the convent in Paris, France.

The front image of the medal has a message for us homeschooling parents who can easily become downcast when we hear daily of the denial of Jesus Christ, rebellion against Him, and the subtle and overt persecution of His people. The image of the medal shows the Blessed Mother standing on top of a globe, her feet crushing the head of a serpent.

This picture gives us parents reassurance that, in an apparently chaotic and confused world, the Blessed Mother is a pivotal figure in Jesus’ victory over Satan, a victory that began with His death and resurrection and that will be finished in His glorious return at the end of time. Jesus as the one and only Lord and our Blessed Mother as Queen of the angels and the saints “must reign until [they] put all his enemies under his feet” (I Cor. 15:25).

Our Blessed Mother was faithful to the Father and her son, Jesus, in the seeming meaninglessness, chaos, and horror of Jesus’ crucifixion. Likewise, we must be faithful to Jesus and His eternal Father, in the seeming meaninglessness, chaos, and horrors of the contemporary world. We need to remind ourselves and our children of the necessity of trusting God as our merciful and righteous King, worshipping Him as the Most Holy Trinity, and obeying His commandments.

On the front image of the Miraculous Medal, we also see rays emanating from the Blessed Mother’s hands. She explained to St. Catherine that these rays represent the graces that she gives to those who ask for them. She said that she has many more graces to give that are not asked for. Starting the day with prayer, or saying the Holy Rosary throughout the day, will make Our Blessed Mother even more ready to grant our requests.

The stars surrounding the head of the Blessed Mother, as well as the stars on

the back of the medal, remind us that Our Blessed Lady is, indeed, the Queen of Heaven. As the Queen of Heaven, she is very powerful with her Son, Christ the King, who listens to her requests. We as well need to listen to what she says. All that she has said in her earthly life and in her apparitions across the centuries can be summed up in her remark at the Wedding Feast of Cana, as recorded in the Gospel of John: “Do whatever He tells you” (2:5).

One final thought: remember that during the month of November, we should be requesting that souls in Purgatory, especially souls of our deceased relatives and friends, be released from their sufferings. In our homeschooling family, our daily requests should be for help in fulfilling our duties as parents, as teachers, as students. We should not hesitate to ask for help as we begin each subject throughout the day.

Let us daily pray: O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. Then let us add: O Blessed Mother, bless and protect our homeschooling family. Help us to believe in all the truths of the Church, and help us to live according to the commands of your Divine Son. Amen.

-MKC

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Questions We Are Asked
 by *Dr. Mary Kay Clark*
 Director, *Seton Home Study School*

Why do you have so many writing assignments in the high school courses?

We should point out that the only required assignments are those which need to be sent to Seton for grading. Almost all of the end-of-chapter tests are for study and review purposes. These assignments may be written or they may be done orally. If they are done orally, we recommend putting them on a tape recorder so they can be played back for study purposes.

Parents sometimes say that seven book analyses in the tenth grade are too many. It may seem too many but some teachers will tell you that in the Catholic schools, some children are being required, even in the elementary grades, to do a book report each month.

In this current society, reading is not a popular past time for young people who are attracted by a great deal of color and movement easily available on television, videos, computer games, computer disks, DVD's, and so on. However, reading is important because the reader is intellectually, even emotionally, and possibly spiritually, involved, not just a superficial observer as with television. Writing demands even more involvement, some true thinking, giving proofs for certain statements, and coming to conclusions. Nothing is more difficult, or more rewarding.

Reading and writing are especially important for Catholics because we need accurate and precise thinkers in our society, who read and understand God's Truths, especially relating to social justice, the right to life and liberty, and the right to the

free practice of religion. We need Catholic leaders who realize that there should not be a complete separation of Church and state because the state is bound by the immutable laws of God.

How do I study for a high school test?

Begin each day with prayer, pray frequently during the classes, and pray while studying for a test. This was the regular procedure for the daily work in the Catholic schools. One favorite prayer was to St. Therese, the Little Flower: Little Flower, in this hour, show your power. Many of us said this prayer time and time again during the day, especially when we took our tests. The nuns used to remind us about the saint of the day, and every day our teacher would read something from the life of a saint.

Many students and parents ask about a Study Guide or how to study for a test in different high school subjects. There is no one best way for each person. Some people learn better by reading and studying the written word, some learn better by hearing and discussing. Our best advice is to use as many senses as possible, reading and re-reading, listening and re-listening, writing an outline, and reviewing. (See "The Art of Smart Studying" on page 4 of this newsletter.)

In books which you own, consider highlighting and outlining in the margins of the text. This is especially helpful in the science books.

Parents and grandparents can help students by discussing the material with them, or even by simply listening to an explanation. Discussions on our message boards with other students might be helpful also.

Taking the course online may help some students because of the graphics, the colors, and the links. Eventually, we hope to have some interactive-type activities.

We have software for high school catechism, vocabulary (especially geared for taking the SAT tests), Spanish, French, Latin, and Algebra. We also have software learning games for the Bible and the Catechism.

Sometimes I feel overwhelmed with homeschooling and housework. Can you give me some ideas?

Go to daily Mass. Life is different when you go to Mass everyday. Your priorities are much clearer. You don't get so upset over details.

Reading and writing are especially important for Catholics because we need accurate and precise thinkers in our society, who can read and understand God's Truths.

It is important to be organized. Be sure to read the chapters in my book, particularly the chapter on "Home Management" by Ginny Seuffert, homeschooling mother of twelve children.

In both homeschooling and housework, the key to success is having your children and your husband help. Older children can help by listening to reading or helping to drill math with younger children. For the housework, establish teams of two children. An older child can train and then work with a younger child to pick up clothes or do laundry, or clean off the table.

Your husband might be able to help by building book shelves. Each child should have a bookcase with his schoolbooks and other related items, in a location safe from the babies, perhaps inside a closet.

You need to be organized too, perhaps with a filing cabinet or two, not only for your homeschooling-related items but for your bill-paying, family pictures, and other important documents.

One of the biggest helps with not being overwhelmed is to get rid of everything you don't need, like extra furniture, dishes, and clothes.

One of the best ways to avoid becoming overwhelmed is to get rid of everything you don't need, like extra furniture, dishes, and clothes. An area you might especially want to look at is your collection of toys. Many families accumulate toys over the years until it becomes overwhelming. If you have toys that your children have not played with in the last two years, get rid of them! A local crisis pregnancy center or women's shelter would be happy to take them. Remember: the more you have, the more you need to clean and pick up.

If you have a friend or a relative who seems to be organized, go for a visit and get some ideas. Your friend might even come over for a day and help you to get things organized. You could even have a throw-away day!

Work hard to establish a homeschooling schedule and try not to deviate. Flexibility is wonderful but keeping to a

schedule is better! Don't try to be flexible until after you establish a schedule and have it working.

Is combining two children in the same grade level a good idea?

It often is a good idea if the children are in adjacent grades. It makes it easier on you and more fun for the kids. You cannot move a child up beyond his ability, however. It makes more sense to have the older child review, or take the course over again, than to have a younger child struggle.

Most older children understand that in a homeschooling situation, certain sacrifices need to be made. For homeschooling to be successful, particularly in a large family, some children may need to work with a younger child. Retaking an English course or a math course is not a terrible sacrifice for most children. However, you don't need to combine all the courses. If you have an older child who is doing extremely well in one subject, let him go ahead in that subject, and have him repeat the other subjects.

If an older child does not need to repeat a subject, you might have the child do tutoring with a younger sibling during that normal class time.

Having seven sons and doing some reading on the subject, I believe boys should start academics a year later than girls need to start. In most cases, putting a boy in a grade level with a younger sister might be better for both. He can help her in the math and sciences, in which boys are often more interested, and she can help him in the spelling and English. It does work. Perhaps best of all, the kids learn to appreciate each other's abilities.

Why don't you have a Message Board for teens?

We decided to remove the Seton message board for teens because we believe our message boards need to be for discussion of academics or for parents to discuss homeschooling. In addition, the

teen board we had was definitely a "social" message board, and we don't have the manpower to monitor or supervise it. Many teens who formerly used the Seton Message Board have moved over to boredonline.net, a private message board owned and operated by Seton graduates and students.

Why did no one answer my email?

We receive hundreds of email messages everyday. We try to answer all the emails in a timely manner. However, some emails we may never receive for a variety of reasons. One thing will help: if you have a general question, don't send an e-mail to a particular person, send it to a department.

For example, if you have a counseling question, and you send the question to a specific person rather than to the counseling department, that staff member may be on vacation, on sick leave, or may have left us. Your email may therefore sit for a week or two before being answered. For more certainty and promptness in receiving answers to your email, please send them to a department, such as admissions@setonhome.org, or counselors@setonhome.org, or grading@setonhome.org.

Our counselors also report that when they reply to an email, they sometimes receive the message "undeliverable" or "invalid" because your e mail address has changed. Also, some parents have a block on their emails, and have not listed our emails in their "okay" list so they can go through. We have also noticed a delay of a few days with AOL email addresses.

Remember, if you do change your email address, you can log on to your My Seton page, then click on "My Account" to inform us of your new address. After you change your email address this way, we send an automatic confirmation email to your new address. If you change your address and haven't received a confirmation notice from us at your new address within a few days, something is probably wrong.

The Art of Smart Studying

by Bruce T. Clark, Seton Historian

Nearly fifty years ago, a Jesuit college professor gave a little talk to my freshman class. He said that we could either ignore the great gifts God had given us, in the form of intellect and external senses, and work hard, or we could utilize our God-given talents and work smart. I quickly discerned that my survival in that academically-rich environment required hard work and smart work.

The Jesuits were unceasingly and increasingly demanding. At the end of the first semester of Modern European History, I received a hard earned, and, I believed, well-deserved 94%. My elation was boundless, but brief. Beholding my beaming countenance from the corner of his penetrating eye, Father Joe Finan demanded: “Mr. Clark, what is the reason for the foolish grin that I behold? Surely, it is not a grade of 94, which my abject pity for your poor performance tore from my charitable heart.” He paused, then allowed a sly smile to barely crinkle his left eye (his right eye remained stern) before he concluded: “Oh, I see it clearly now! Your euphoria is the result of a vision that your future grades will be more in line with your talents, since you now realize, as do I, that it is time to stop your unconscionable lollygagging, and give back to God that which He deserves.”

Occasionally, when I hear comments from Seton students that I am a hard taskmaster, I fondly recall the smile on Father Finan’s whole face when my dismal 94 was followed by three 100s. I still can hear his firm admonition that “the only way

we have to repay God for his wondrous gifts is by using them to the best of our abilities.”

I agree with Father, and try to emulate him. He never let anyone lollygag on his watch and neither do I. Excellent performance cannot be judged fairly by comparison with others, or even by earning an excellent grade. The only accurate gauge of any student’s increasing utilization of his God-given talents, is a continuously diminishing difference between his capability level and his achievement level. There are only two yardsticks in existence that can measure that distance—the student has one, and God has the other.

Now that I’ve thrown out this challenge, and perhaps pricked a few somewhat-uneasy consciences, I shall, in fairness, provide some keys that will offer easier access to a better performance.

Answering most questions, certainly all those about history, is similar to reporting an accident that you have witnessed. Information can be divided into these six categories:

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

The first four are easiest because they are objective. The last two are more difficult because they are subjective. They may not, and often do not, have readily fathomable answers. They provide one of history’s greatest joys—a chance to analyze and interpret the reasons for the actions of the famous people of the past.

In your answers, always include those first four checkpoints, and if

possible, add the last two. This not only provides a guideline for taking a test, it offers an outline of things to look for, and learn, while you are in your study cycle. During the study cycle, you may want to follow the Cassette Method.

The Cassette Method

1. Read your assignment slowly and clearly, with expression, into a tape recorder.
2. While you listen to your recording, read the material silently.
3. Close the book, and play back the recording. Take brief notes, in outline form if you can. Stop the recording, and replay it whenever necessary to ensure that your main points are complete.
4. Before you take your exam, listen to the recording once more, and highlight your notes as you go along. If possible, discuss the material with your parents.

The timing for each of these steps can vary. It might take a day, or a week to complete, but the secret is in the sequence. You are seeing it, saying it, hearing it, writing it, reviewing it, discussing it, and highlighting it. You are using all of your senses and your intellect. Great chunks of data gather in your memory, where they will remain.

This system may seem difficult and time consuming, but in the long run, it will save a great deal of time, and greatly improve grades for most people. Try it, and let me know.

The Way of Sanctity

by Fr. Thomas J. Euteneuer

No one is exempt from following Christ's call to holiness. Our vocation as baptized Catholics commits us to this way of holiness which is a lifelong task.

While Protestants are very clearly concerned about the ultimate end of man's existence, namely, salvation, we Catholics have historically concerned ourselves more with the question of "sanctification," that is, growth in holiness which leads to salvation. An analogy may be appropriate here: If salvation is the end point of the journey, sanctification is the action of diligently walking down that road. Christ is the Road, but each one of us has to walk it. No one can walk it for us, and one does not drive in a luxury car down this highway to its end. The process of sanctification is rather a step-by-step process where we place one foot in front of the other which takes us to the endpoint, which is heaven.



There are a few fundamental insights which one must keep in mind when pursuing a life of holiness. I list them in no particular order, but each one could be the subject of an entire retreat.

1. No one "earns" heaven.

Catholics often are accused of putting too much emphasis on "merit", that is, subtly assuming that good activities in themselves qualify us to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This idea is not found in the Bible however, nor in the Tradition of the Church nor in the writings of the Church Fathers or of any saint. Our detractors are right in holding us accountable for the awful mentality that we can win heaven by our own good deeds. In fact, this idea was condemned as a heresy in the earliest centuries of the Church because it taught that human effort was more important than grace for getting to heaven. There is no system of "brownie points" for heaven.

The only merit we have is in believing that Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead to save us from our sins. This act of Faith is made by our parents and godparents at the time of our Baptism, and we confirm that belief at the moment we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. After this, the only merit we gain is through our continuous repentance from post-Baptismal sin and our participation in the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. Our participation in the other Sacraments merits us the particular graces that flow through them from Christ's Passion, but no one can say that

our efforts earn us these graces. The very term grace means a free gift of God.

Accordingly, daily petitions for the grace of sanctification augments God's life and grace working in us. The prayer itself is a recognition that we cannot demand to be saved. Rather, we must ask to be saved, and Christ will never turn away from such a humble prayer! We can also ask for the salvation of others.

2. Everyone participates in his own process of sanctification.

St. Paul had to confront the opposite heresy. He dealt with those who thought that God's grace would do everything and that they therefore had to do nothing to live a moral life. He told the Thessalonians that "those who would not work should not eat..." (2 Thes 3:10). We are not passive participants in our own process of sanctification. In fact, we must be actively involved in the works of holiness through prayer, regular acts of charity, and above all through the total gift of ourselves through our state in life.

Everyone is called by God and endowed with specific graces to do something heroic for His Kingdom. The specific meaning of each person's life is discovered when he finds that one particular thing that God wants him to do. The significance of each person's life is found in his wholehearted surrender to his own vocation. This gift of self is the avenue of holiness for each person. Holiness is not found in longing to live anyone else's life, no matter how attractive that life may seem. Holiness is found in living the life that God has carved out for me, and then living that with heroic generosity.

I cannot be a married person because God has called me to the

Priesthood. I will then give my all to the Priesthood without lamenting the fact that I could have been a happily married man. In fact, even that image of the “happily married man” is an illusion because it is not what God wants for me! That is my brother’s challenge! I make no progress in the way of holiness by being anything other than a priest, and that to the fullest extent possible. Each person has the same call to embrace his own particular vocation to the fullest, and God readily offers us the spiritual assistance to keep us going.

3. We do not walk the way of holiness alone.

The lives of the saints show us that no man is an island when it comes to the spiritual journey. While no one can walk the way of holiness for me, I necessarily need others to walk the road with me. There are a few reasons for this.

First, I cannot see myself as I really am. I need the reflections of others to help me see even my own sinfulness. In actual fact, other people reveal this to me whether I like it or not. I know that I am lacking in charity when I treat others as I would not want to be treated, and if I am lucky they will let me know about it. I see the pettiness of my heart when I talk to others in gossip. And every now and then a bold soul will confront me with the truth and tell me that I am falling down on the job. I have had a few of those honest encounters in my life, and I have always grown most from the tough love that some tough lovers bestowed on me. I need others to help me see the things that I need to change because usually I think that these things are virtues!

Second, I cannot come out of myself without the help of others. Others give me a reason to be

generous and to practice the virtues. Sometimes they do so without knowing it. The people who have the most trying personalities are the ones who give me the greatest possibility of developing the virtue of patience – of course. Those who are the most dependent are the ones who require the most selfless generosity, etc. I cannot walk this way of holiness without the help of others, even if their help is inadvertent.

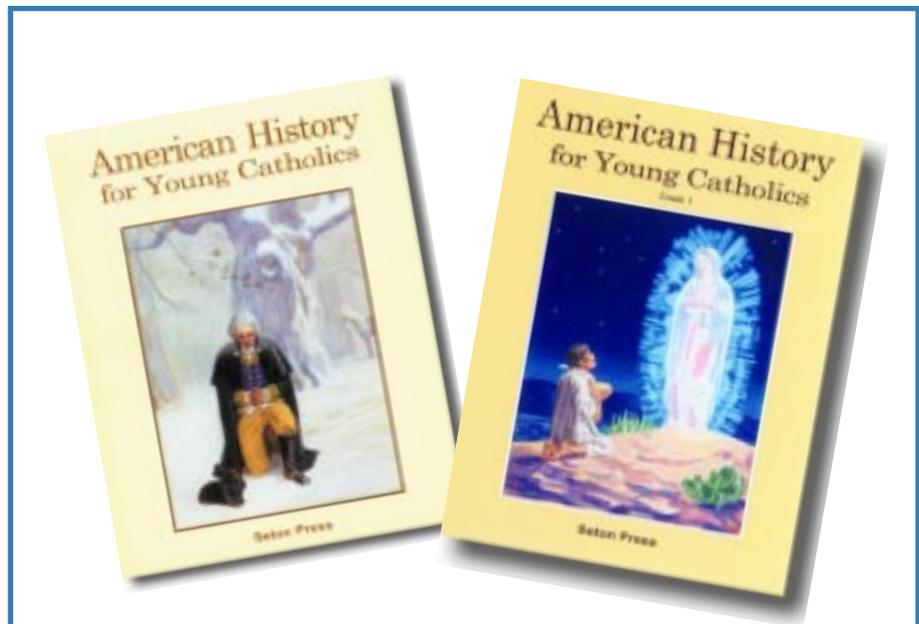
Finally, I need spiritual direction to help me stay on the straight and narrow. In most cases the normal means of sanctification that the Church offers suffice to help us stay on the right path. Jesus answered the young man who was concerned about holiness by telling him that he must simply follow the commandments. Prayer, the Sacraments, and the teaching and healing ministries of the Church

should suffice for most people to maintain their spiritual integrity. But every now and then we need a little advice, and so we seek a wise man or woman to help us follow the way of the Lord more generously.

Conclusion

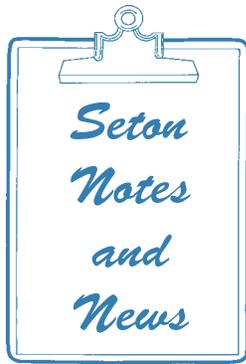
Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. Be not discouraged that the way is hard and narrow. God blesses that way which He Himself trod. It is the only way that leads to Heaven, and while no one can be a substitute for you or me on this arduous journey, at least we take comfort that we are not walking alone. We have all of our companions in the faith, the Virgin Mary and all of the angels and saints to walk with us.

Fr. Euteneuer is President of Human Life International in Front Royal, VA.



History 1 is 60 pages with color and black and white illustrations, as well as student coloring pages. History 8 is 276 pages with black and white illustrations. The covers are from original paintings by Patrick Diemer.

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Conferences

Many state and local groups are now sponsoring their own conferences, inviting various Catholic vendors and curriculum providers. Seton is happy to participate at these conferences as a vendor. Dr. Mary Kay Clark is often available to speak at these conferences. For more information, contact Mary Lou Warren at 540-636-9990.

Harrisburg, PA. April 5, 2003. 9th Annual Catholic Homeschool Conference & Curriculum Fair, Holy Name of Jesus Parish. For more information, contact Ellen at 717-866-5425.

Algebra I Tests Online

After overcoming some technical hurdles, we are pleased to say that the tests for Algebra I are online. You can reach them through the My Seton website at www.setonhome.org/MySeton.

Letters from Families

With only one quarter remaining of my last year in high school, I must say I could not, would not have gotten here without Seton Home Study. Besides the academic excellence, I appreciated the fidelity to genuine Catholic religion. That is something I will carry with me always, no matter where I go or what I become. It will serve me especially well this fall as I move beyond the shelter of home.

Thank you for giving me so, so much. I sincerely will do my utmost to live up to the faith you put in me.



Many of our neighbors, friends, family members, and acquaintances at church ask us how do we homeschool our children, and still have a clean house, time for recreation, and time to volunteer at church; we tell them we couldn't do it without God's grace, and a great curriculum that offers lots of ideas and help! To all the staff at Seton Home Study our sincere gratitude for making our job of parenting a joy, and for helping our family to realize that homeschooling is a lifestyle, not a six hour a day job. Your encouragement to pray constantly helps us to live our lives, as best we can, as true Catholics. You encourage families to seek God's grace in our daily challenges. We acknowledge that

if our children would be in any other type of educational situation we would not have been able to live our lives in support of one another, but would be pulled in various directions. May God continue to bless all of the work that the staff of Seton Home Study provides each day for the many homeschooling families in their care.

Job Openings Available

We are in need of someone with a Special Education degree as well as at least two years of experience in this area. Job involves patience and sensitivity, designing individual curriculums, examining transcripts, interpreting professional evaluations for students with a variety of special needs. Strong interpersonal and communication skills necessary.

BA or BS required, MA or MS a plus. Send resume or contact tsayre@setonhome.org.

We are also in need of someone with strong English skills, with excellent communication skills on the phone, to help students in the Seton English courses, with literature interpretation and composition help. BA required, MA a plus. Send resume or contact tsayre@setonhome.org.

Both these jobs are full-time positions, which would require the employee to work at Seton's headquarters in Front Royal, VA.

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The Authors of Education

Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.

This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered.

Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs.

It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the Faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor.

Here, too, they [the children] find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church.

Finally, it is through the family that they are gradually led to a companionship with their fellow men and with the people of God.

Let parents, then, recognize the inestimable importance a truly Christian family has for the life and progress of God's own people.

Para. 3
Declaration on Christian Education
Second Vatican Council

Seton Home Study School

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