



Seton Home



Study School

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Newsletter 20th Anniversary Year

August 2003

Queen of Apostles

On August 15, we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mother into Heaven, body and soul. In a glorious heavenly event, surrounded by angels and saints, she was crowned the Queen of Heaven by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

While we often speak of Our Blessed Mother as Queen of Heaven, Queen of Angels, and Queen of Saints, perhaps her title as Queen of Apostles is more relevant for us homeschooling parents. As we teach our children at home, bringing the truths of Jesus Christ to our children, we are acting in many ways like the first twelve Apostles.

Like the first twelve Apostles, we are evangelizing in our homeschooling enterprise! Though we do not travel to the ends of the earth, certainly the conversion of our children and hopefully our children's children could extend to many families yet to come. Perhaps one day our own children could be involved in helping to teach all nations through missionary work.

Several of the first twelve Apostles were poor fishermen of Galilee. With Christ by their side, and after His Ascension, with Mary by their side, they accomplished the conversion of the world to Christianity.

Converting our children to Christ, converting the "world" of our family, we can participate in converting the whole world, at a time and place just as pagan as the Roman world of the first twelve Apostles. We can do it,

however, only with Jesus and Mary by our side.

Queen of Apostles, help us and our children to preach the doctrine of Jesus by living a life of holiness. With devotion and perseverance, with patience and courage, help us and our children to overcome our weaknesses. Through daily frustrations and sufferings, through the difficulties of teaching and learning, teach us to grow closer to Him who loves us so much as to die for us.

Queen of Apostles, as the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, you gave us the Source of Eternal Life. Your self-giving was essential for Jesus to be born into the world, and for His work of Redemption. Today, you are essential in our homeschooling to bring Jesus to our children. Through your constant intercession, through your prayers, through your love, you give us the consolation and courage to continue in our daily work of teaching our children.

Queen of Apostles, as you spent the days with the Apostles before Pentecost, leading them in prayer and giving them words of wisdom and encouragement, we ask you to give us wisdom and encouragement in our daily teaching of our children. Certainly, the Apostles' courage and fortitude was due directly to your presence and your words reminding them of the promises of your Son.

Queen of Apostles, it must have been during those days before Pentecost when you spoke about the

hidden years of Jesus, those years when you taught Him at home. Though you kept all those things pondering in your heart, you must have shared them with the Apostles at that time.

Queen of Apostles, share with us those things hidden in your heart to help us teach your least brethren, your smallest apostles, our children. Share with us, from your heart to ours, some hidden wisdom as we struggle to help our children become strong apostles for your Son.

Queen of Apostles, after the Ascension of your Son, we know that you must have been the teacher of the Apostles. You must have been instrumental in encouraging the Apostles to go forth to all the nations. Your heart, filled with love for each person in the world, must have influenced those first Apostles to spread the divine love of your Son.

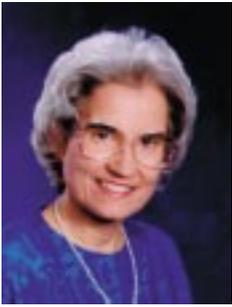
Queen of Apostles, help us to be apostles for our children, by what we teach and by our good example, by our kindness and charity, by our patience and good works.

Queen of Apostles, pray for us homeschooling parents as we struggle day by day to be the teachers we need to be for our children. Help us to convert our children and the world to know Jesus, to love Jesus, and to serve Jesus.

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

by Dr. Mary Kay Clark
Director, Seton Home Study School

This is my first year homeschooling. How do I give my 5th grader help in becoming an independent learner so I can devote more time to my younger children?

The first year of homeschooling is a learning experience for everyone. A child of this grade level will definitely need daily help and direction, an explanation of instructions, and so on. However, by the second year, for a child at this level, several subjects could be done independently. Your child has a pretty good idea of what is expected after a full year with Seton.

While the subjects which could be done independently should be determined by your own observation of what your child can handle, usually the subjects the child can do on his own at this grade level are spelling, vocabulary, phonics, and perhaps history or science. Some subjects, such as religion and math, or history and science, can be done independently on some days, but need more help on other days. Subjects which need daily attention at this level would be English and Reading, and math for some students.

Start out the new year with a little experimentation. Start some classes with a brief explanation, and then ask your child to go to another room and continue the assignment by himself. Explain that you need to work with a younger child.

Tell your fifth grader to try to do all the assignment and not to come to ask you any questions until he has gone through the assignment. Even if he has a problem with one question or problem, tell him not to come to you until he has done all the problems except for that one. This way you are training your child to learn to work on

his own, and to find the answers for himself. Often a later problem will help answer an earlier problem.

Eventually, as the year goes along, your child will gain confidence in his ability to work at times on his own, or to realize which subjects he can do on his own. By the time they are in high school, students should be able to do their work very independently. However, you do want to keep a good eye on exactly what your child is doing. Sometimes parents don't realize that students are not keeping up the way they say, or the way they should.

I notice that instructions are changing each year. Sometimes the grader does not know that I am using lesson plans from last year. What should I do?

One of the problems in responding to parents' concerns is that for the next school year, we do change the instructions in various assignments. However, that brings the problem of assignments being sent for grading which may be a one or two editions behind the current assignments or tests. This sometimes results in graders not realizing the work needs to be graded based on past instructions. For instance, one assignment may have asked for one paragraph on the topic, a later assignment may have asked for three paragraphs on the topic.

If you know that you have a particularly old version of a course, the best plan is to send a copy of the instructions for the assignment, especially in high school English where changes occur most often. Just tear out the page from the manual, or make a copy and attach it to the essay or report. We apologize for the inconvenience.

In the future, we plan to make cover sheets for essays and reports so the grader has the specific instructions for that assignment.

What do your online high school courses offer beyond the paper lesson plans? Must I choose one or the other?

Any student enrolled in a course can access the online version as well.

One of the things that an online course will offer is updated corrections and revisions. Such corrections and revisions are usually in response to parents' requests.

Start out the new year with a little experimentation. Start some classes with a brief explanation, and then ask your child to go to another room and continue the assignment by himself.

In addition, the online courses offer supplemental material we cannot include in the paper copies. These supplemental helps include chapter by chapter notes on the books for the Book Analyses. These helps include audio presentations for the vocabulary for foreign language courses.

Also included are links to helpful web sites. The links should help in understanding the concepts as well as offer motivational links and some links related to Catholic culture.

My high school student always finishes up past June. Can you help me help him stay on schedule?

Although homeschooled students with Seton can start at any time of the

year and proceed at their own pace, we have been thinking that, since most students start classes in August or September, it is possible for students to have more of a traditional schedule, if they choose. One of the features we have seen that colleges use to keep students on schedule for online courses is weekly lectures by the teacher. To see whether this would help our students, we are going to start providing weekly lectures by teachers which can be accessed on the online courses by a click on audio. These lectures will cover content material as well as study tips.

In addition to the weekly lectures, we are working on providing a special closed Message Board which will be available only to students enrolled in that particular course. Each week, students may ask questions or make comments, but only on the assignments scheduled for that particular week. We hope that students will stay focused and do the assignments each week as they read, listen, and discuss with other students in the class.

Sometimes it is easy to get bogged down in the details and not see the big picture. Our vocation as parents is helping our children to grow in holiness, to be the saints they are called to be.

While the lectures will be available past the relevant week, the closed Message Board comments will disappear, to make room for the next weekly assignment discussion.

The courses we are planning to have ready by the first week of September are: English 9 (soon to be followed by English 10), Latin I, either World History or American History, and Spanish I.

I would like my son to take a Spanish course locally with a Spanish tutor. Will you accept credit for that?

We accept credit for enrolled families for courses taken locally, either in a school or with a tutor, or with a support group which has a tutor. However, if the course is not taken in a regular school which gives report cards or transcripts, we ask that you enroll your child in our Independent Study program. In this program, we ask that you send us basic information, such as the books being used, and the name of the tutor or teacher.

In addition, at the end of each quarter, we ask that you send us the graded tests for the Independent Study course. We want to make sure that the course is on the high school level. In the case of music or art or physical education classes, a grade by the tutor and a short explanation of what has been taught is sufficient.

Independent Study grades will be counted for credit, but not for GPA (grade point average). As with most schools, the GPA is based solely on courses taken through Seton.

Independent Study forms may be obtained from Eric Kraske at ekraske@setonhome.org. In order to receive a diploma from Seton, the student must be enrolled in at least five Seton courses during his senior year.

I have been homeschooling with Seton for my children in the elementary grades, but I am not sure I can handle the high school grades. I am worried about their wanting to socialize and play sports with other kids their age, and I am worried also that I am not qualified.

Sometimes it is easy to get bogged down in the details and not see the big picture. Our vocation as parents is helping our children to grow in holiness, to be the saints they are called to be. At Seton, we are serious about education, but this is not a conflict. We have a program that is integrated with the Faith.

Before you put your children in a high school, especially a public high school, consider spending a day in the

school halls, offices, and classrooms. Before you send your child for 180 days a year into that environment, visit the place yourself. I know of one parent who sat in the principal's office waiting to be allowed to visit the classrooms. After waiting an hour and seeing the students coming and going, and listening to their conversations, he left and was determined never to allow his child to be in that building.

It really is a culture shock to go from listening to homeschooled teenagers to listening to teenagers from public school. The level of casual obscenity from the average teenager today is rather startling. Remembering that most adolescents try to "fit in" with their peer group, you have to ask yourself whether you want your child fitting in with the public school crowd. More than likely, the group into which they will fit will be profoundly un-Christian.

In any case, homeschooling and good socialization or organized sports need not be mutually exclusive.

Most homeschoolers have many opportunities to join social groups, either through a homeschooling support group or through a church teen group.

Regarding sports, as homeschooling has grown over the last several years, sports leagues for homeschoolers have sprung up. Also, in several states, homeschooled students can participate in sports leagues offered by local schools. Of course, in that case, you have some of the same socialization problems as if the student were attending the public school.

Probably the best-known homeschooler who is now a professional athlete is Jason Taylor, an All-Pro defensive end for the Miami Dolphins. Although he was homeschooled, Jason was able to play on the local public school football team during his junior and senior years of high school in Pennsylvania. He was then given a football scholarship by the University of Akron, and drafted by the Dolphins. Most homeschooled athletes will not be as successful as Jason Taylor, but sports teams and homeschooling certainly can coexist.

Academic and Spiritual Formation

There is a necessary link between spiritual and academic formation. Academic instruction cannot be properly accomplished without spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is essential for excellent academic instruction. True academic instruction is dependent upon spiritual formation. For academic instruction to be successful, it must be done in the context of prayer, sacraments, sacramentals, religious art and music, Scripture, stories of the saints, inculcation of virtue, devotions, and so on.

Academic instruction is necessarily distorted if is not immersed in and essentially dependent upon spiritual formation.

St. John teaches us that Jesus is the Light of men and the True Light which enlightens everyone (John 1:3, 9). Jesus said "I am the Light of the world" (John 9:5), "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," (John 14:6), and "I am the Bread of Life" (John 6:35). If Jesus is the Light, the Life, the Way, the Bread of Life, He simply cannot be ignored in such an important undertaking as academic instruction.

Academic instruction must be seen by young people to have a connection to what is important in life. It must be seen as having a "values" or moral dimension. Otherwise, academic instruction becomes merely a means to a utilitarian end, such as a job or a college. It becomes merely a "grind." Worse, we can see from the government schools, that academic instruction without God becomes a laboratory of false ideologies and immoral living.

If academics are seen as a window onto God's world, as the discovery of truth, if academics are linked to

eternal salvation, then students and teachers alike will approach academics, to teach and to learn academics, with a certain reverence, realizing they require seriousness and self-discipline, love and sacrifice.

The false thinking which has led the government educational institutions to reject God has resulted in poor academic education. We cannot allow this false thinking to establish itself in the homeschooling movement as well.

It is a concern that many Catholic parents who are just beginning homeschooling for academic reasons are turning to secular programs. Some are turning to government-funded public school programs, which, of course, do not include religion. These students are being listed in the local county school district census for the purpose of obtaining local, state, and federal funding.

We Catholic homeschooling families need to stay the course, to be faithful to Catholic homeschooling. We need to understand the urgent moral and spiritual needs of our children, to continue to persevere, to be strong and faithful in the difficult battle to save the souls of our children, and not to support a system which is undermining Christian values.

We need to have our children hear the words of Pope John Paul II when he addresses the young people. When he spoke to the young people of Cuba in 1998, he said, "I have been impressed by the fidelity which many of you have shown to the faith handed down from your forbears, a faith often learned on the knee of your mothers and grandmothers during the last few decades when the Church's voice seemed silenced."

"The growing crisis of values being felt throughout the world is casting its shadow over the young

people of this bright land. A dangerous crisis of identity is spreading, causing young people to live in meaninglessness, without direction, without plans for the future, suffocated by immediate concerns. There is a growing relativism, together with religious indifference and the lack of a clear moral sense. At the same time, people are tempted to worship the idols of the consumer society...

"Do not succumb to the lack of vision which leads to destroying one's personality through alcoholism, drugs, sexual irresponsibility, the constant pursuit of new experiences...

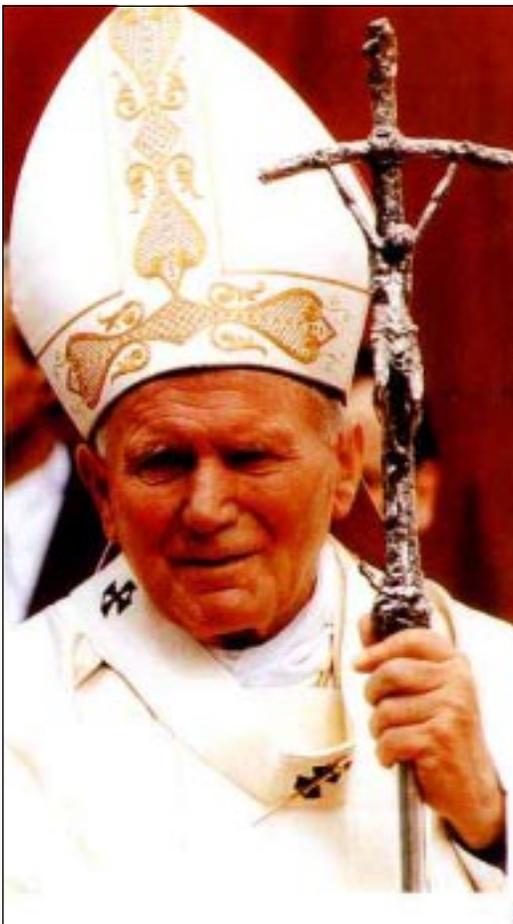
"Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous. Let all that you do be done in love (Cor 16:13-14). But what does it mean to be courageous? It means to overcome evil in all its forms. The worst evil is sin, which causes all sorts of suffering and can even lurk within us, negatively affecting our behavior. And so, while it is right to be committed to the struggle against evil in its public and social manifestations, the first duty of believers is to fight against sin, the root of all forms of evil, which can take root in the human heart, and to resist its enticements with God's help....

"The Church's traditions, the sacramental life, and a constant recourse to prayer are not just duties or rites to be performed. Rather they are unfathomable sources of grace which can enliven your youth and help it grow in virtue, apostolic zeal, and true hope.

"Virtue is that inner strength which leads to self-sacrifice for love of what is good, and which enables people not only to do good deeds but also to give the very best of themselves. Virtuous young people are what makes a country great....

"I also wish to speak to you about commitment. Commitment is the courageous response of people who do not want to let life pass them by but rather seek to shape their own personal history and the history of the society around them. I encourage you to make a concrete commitment, however humble and simple, but one which, if carried out with perseverance, will be the best proof of your love and the best path to personal holiness. Make a responsible commitment to your families, to the life of your communities, to civil society, and when the time comes, to the future direction of your nation."

Pope John Paul II also spoke to the young people of the United States when he visited in St. Louis in January, 1999. He began his speech by reminding them of the words of Jesus Christ: *You are the light of the world...Your light must shine before all men* (Mt 5:14, 16).



"Dear Young People, Ask yourselves: Do I believe these words of Jesus in the Gospel? Jesus is calling you the light of the world. He is asking you to let your light shine before others. I know that in your hearts you want to say 'Here I am, Lord.' But only if you are one with Jesus can you share His light and be a light to the world."

"Are you ready for this?" After a wild yelling of YES from the young people of St. Louis, the Pope asked again: "Are you ready for this?" The young people stood again, yelling "yes" and clapping enthusiastically. A third time the Pope asked, "Are you ready for this?" The young people yelled louder than ever, "Yes." They clapped and stamped their feet and waved their arms and yelled louder and louder, "Yes," for more than five minutes.

Then the pope continued. "If you look to Jesus, if you live the Truth that is Jesus, you will have in you the light that reveals the truths and values on which to build your own happiness, while building a world of justice, peace, and solidarity. Remember what Jesus said: 'I am the Light of the world; those who follow Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (Jn 8:12).

"Because Jesus is the Light, we too become light when we proclaim Him. This is the heart of the Christian mission to which each of you has been called through Baptism and Confirmation. You are called to make the light of Christ shine brightly in the world..."

"You are teenagers and young adults. But already

you realize that there is a kind of darkness in the world: the darkness of doubt and uncertainty. You may feel the darkness of loneliness and isolation. Your anxieties may come from questions about your future, or regrets about past choices. Sometimes the world seems filled with darkness, the darkness of the world.

"Young friends, in the days and weeks and years ahead, for as long as you remember this evening, remember that the Pope came to the United States, to the city of St. Louis, to call the young people of America to Christ, to invite you to follow Him. He came to challenge you to be the light of the world! 'The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it' (Jn 1:5). Jesus, Who has conquered sin and death, reminds you: 'I am with you always' (Mt 28:20). He says, 'Courage! It is I; have no fear' (Mk 6:50).

"On the horizon of this city stands the Gateway Arch, which often catches the sunlight in its different colors and hues. In a similar way, in a thousand different ways, you must reflect the light of Christ through your lives of prayer and joyful service to others. With the help of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the young people of America can do this magnificently.

"Remember: Christ is calling you! The Church needs you! The Pope believes in you and he expects great things of you! Praised be Jesus Christ."

Catholic homeschooling is about raising a generation faithful to the teachings of Christ. If a student graduates from a Catholic homeschool with all earthly knowledge, and yet does not answer the call of Christ, how can we consider the homeschooling a success?

The Neglected "R"

The National Commission on Writing, sponsored by the College Board, just published a report titled *The Neglected "R": the Need for a Writing Revolution*.

The report came about because the College Entrance Examinations are going to start including a written essay for the first time in 2005. This essay will be available over the Internet to admissions departments of colleges.

The board of The National Commission of Writing consist of college presidents from several major American universities.

Some suggestions for improving the writing of American students may apply to homeschooling students. The main recommendation is that the time that students spend writing should be at least doubled, and that more writing should be done in subject areas other than English, such as in history, science, and foreign languages. They recommend that students write every day, and that parents should be "writing partners" with their children, sharing their own writing, and reviewing the written work of their children.

Children should be writing stories, writing descriptions and observations, summaries, lab reports, book reviews, and persuasive essays. The writing should include analysis and research.

There should be "a cultural change around writing in the United States." The education, business, and policy-making communities are concerned that the quality of writing in this country must be improved. There needs to be a "cultural transformation that will improve writing in the United States."

"If students are to make knowledge their own, they must struggle with

the details, wrestle with the facts, and rework raw information and dimly understood concepts into language they can communicate to someone else. In short, if students are to learn, they must write."

"More than 90 percent of mid-career professionals recently cited the 'need to write effectively' as a skill 'of great importance' in their day-to-day work."

"...writing is best understood as a complex intellectual activity that requires students to stretch their minds, sharpen their analytical capabilities, and make valid and accurate distinctions."

"Writing is not simply a way for students to demonstrate what they know. It is a way to help them understand what they know. At its best, writing is learning. Writing competence builds confidence, which readily turns into creativity and fun. ...Facility with writing opens students up to the pleasure of exercising their minds in ways that drilling on facts, details, and information never will. More than a way of knowing, writing is an act of discovery."

"Recent analyses indicate that more than 50 percent of first-year college students are unable to produce papers relatively free of language errors."

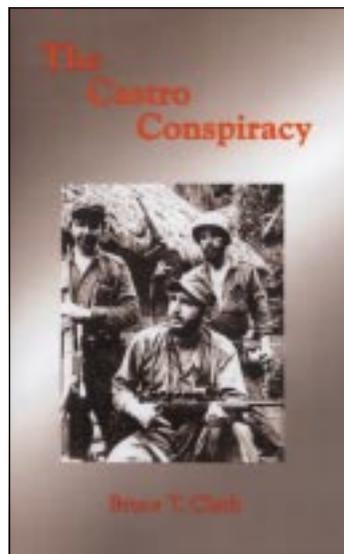
A survey conducted in 1998 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress concluded that while 84% of students are at or above a "basic level of writing," only about 25% of students are considered "proficient" in writing skills.

About half of high school seniors reported that they were assigned a paper of three or more pages about once or twice a month in English class, while forty percent reported such assignments were "never" or "hardly ever" assigned.

The Commission recommends that "the nation's leaders place writing squarely in the center of the school agenda."

"Writing is every teacher's responsibility: ...Developing critical thinkers and writers should be understood as one of the central works of education...curriculum guidelines should require writing in every curriculum area and at all grade levels."

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Why were ten attempts made on Castro's life? Why was President Kennedy assassinated? What role in the assassination of President Kennedy was played by Castro, the CIA, the Mafia, the war profiteers? Who actually killed President Kennedy? How were Hollywood movie stars involved? Who were Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby? Did President Lyndon Johnson play a part?

Bruce Clark's long-awaited second novel answers these and other questions. \$20 plus shipping, from Seton Educational Media. 436 pp.

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The Castro Conspiracy

Scenes from the 2003 IHM Homeschooling and Family Conference in Washington DC!



Clockwise from upper left

1. Dr. Warren H. Carroll
2. Fr. Thomas J. Euteneuer and friend
3. Fr. Shannon Collins
4. Congressman Robert Dornan and Fr. Robert Levis
5. Dr. Alice von Hildebrand
6. Fr. Pablo Straub

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Permeate Learning with Faith

In fact, in no period of life, whether in public or in private affairs, can religion be dispensed with, much less can that inexperienced age, full of life, yet surrounded by so many corrupt temptations, be excused from religious obligations.

Whosoever, therefore, organizes education so as to neglect any point of contact with religion is destroying beauty and honesty at their very roots, and instead of helping the country, is preparing for the deterioration and destruction of the human race. For, once God is eliminated, who can make young people realize their duties or redeem those who have deviated from the right path of virtue and fallen into the abyss of vice?

Religion must not be taught to youth only during certain hours, but the entire system of education must be permeated with the sense of Christian piety. If this is lacking, if this holy spirit does not penetrate and inflame the souls of teacher and pupil, small benefit will be derived from any other sort of education; instead damage will be done.

Almost every sort of training has its dangers, and only with difficulty will these be averted from growing youth, especially if the divine controls are lacking which restrain their minds and wills. Great care must therefore be taken so that what is

essential, namely, the pursuit of justice and piety, may not be relegated to a second place, confining youth to the visible world and thus leaving their vital potentiality for virtue to rot; so that, again, while teachers, with painful exertion, drill on boring subjects and analyze syllable and accent, they may not neglect that true wisdom, whose beginning is the fear of the Lord and whose precepts demand obedience in every circumstance of life.

A wide knowledge should go hand in hand with care for spiritual progress; *religion must permeate and direct every branch of knowledge* whatever be its nature, and by its sweetness and majesty must make so great an impression on the minds of youth as to be an incitement to better things.

Since it has always been the Church's intention that *every branch of study be of great service in the religious formation of youth*, this particular subject matter not only must have its place, and the principal place at that, but nobody should be entrusted with so important a teaching role who has not first been declared suitable for the purpose in the judgment and by the authority of the Church.

(Pope Leo XIII, *Militantis Ecclesiae*)

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