

Saints Alive

Newsletter of All Saints Anglican Church
Northcote
Parish of South Darebin

Volume 2 Number 10

“Not another boring church!”

The Venerable Andrew Oddy

I have travelled to Europe twice with my children and each trip was punctuated with cries from Jessica or Alexander: “Not another boring church!” From May to July this year, Pamela and I travelled to Europe (without the children) as I took the remainder of my Long Service Leave. We travelled for eight weeks and spent some ten days recovering before I returned to duties with the celebration of the Centenary of worship at St James, Thornbury.

Of course, in most of the places we visited, we toured the impressive cathedrals and important churches. After all, they could be expected to have something familiar which we could understand. They also had the ability to show how people had understood the faith we share in ways that were new and unexpected.

Very early on in our travels we attended even-song at Canterbury Cathedral. This Cathedral is an extraordinary building with a choir completely enclosed and elevated from the floor of the nave by some twenty steps. At the side of the choir, at the bottom of the steps, is the place where St Thomas Beckett was murdered in 1170. The site is marked by a simple altar above which stands a Cross made up of swords to indicate the way the martyr was slaughtered.

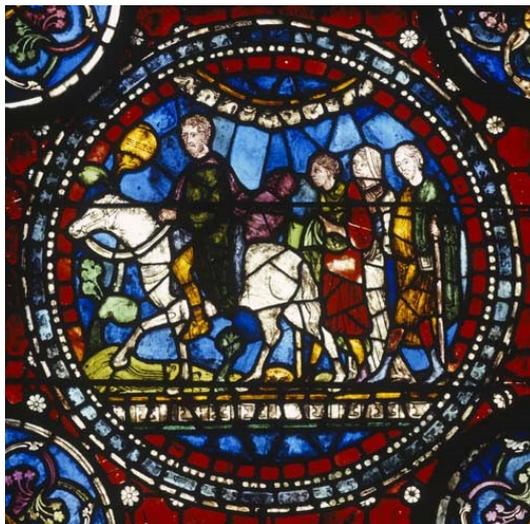
As we walked from the choir towards the sanctuary which focuses on the “chair” (*cathedra*) of Augustine, the very seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, there is a bare area of floor marked by a single candle. This is the site where previously stood the ornate shrine of St Thomas Becket, where the body of the Archbishop had been, the goal of pilgrimages which made Canterbury Cathedral the most important church in England. With the Reformation and the dissolution of monasteries under King Henry VIII, the shrine was removed. Now, as we stood in the Cathedral, looking at the bare floor where Becket’s shrine had stood, it was hard not to resent its loss.

When we got to France we found a very different story in Toulouse. There, one of two central churches is the Basilica of Saint Sernin. The Basilica is an enormous Romanesque church. Saint Saturnin (Sernin) was the first Bishop of Toulouse and he was martyred in 250 CE, during the persecutions under the Roman Emperor Decius. Sernin’s tomb lies within the Cathedral. In addition (upon payment of a small fee), the 21st century visitor is admitted to an ambulatory and crypt where many holy relics are stored in 15 to 20 large reliquary chests. The most magnificent of these chests houses a relic of the True Cross.

St Sernin’s Basilica was constructed so that pilgrims could walk around the reliquary chapels while, at the same time, the prayers of the

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On the road to Canterbury: pilgrims depicted in a window of Trinity Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral.

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“...these relics declare the historicity...of the events they represent...the events of the faith actually occurred—they were not fictitious or imaginary.”

church could proceed undisturbed in the choir, led by the clergy and the monks. The Basilica was an important stopping place on the pilgrim’s journey (the Camino) to Santiago de Compostela and the monks of St Sernin realised the importance of collecting relics to attract the pilgrims. Hence, what could be regarded nowadays as a vaguely excessive collection!

The guide-book to the Basilica says, “*The places of pilgrimage that still attract people today give some idea of what it must have been like when crowds pushed and jostled their way around the church, the ambulatory and the crypt. Although we cannot today fully understand the attitudes, beliefs and spirituality of people in the middle ages, it is evident that they experienced the same combination of fervent prayer and ‘tourist’ curiosity, a desire to be part of the intimate atmosphere surrounding the tomb of the saint-intercessor, to touch the tomb, to kiss it, to lay a wide range of gifts and votive offerings on it, and to light candles all around.*”

Relics are a peculiar phenomenon. I well remember the startling dictum found in Marina Warner’s book on the Virgin Mary to the effect that, had Our Lady been in constant lactation for all of the years of a very long life she would not have been able to produce the

amount of milk said to be hers in the monasteries of medieval Europe!

Nonetheless, I have a friend who annually attended the display of the relics of the Cross in Rome during Holy Week. There the Cardinals hold up the various relics – a thorn from the Crown of Thorns, a nail from the Crucifixion, a small walnut board on which is written “Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews” and a piece of wood from the Cross of Jesus. My friend was not convinced that these relics were in any way genuine. What he was celebrating was the idea that these relics declare the historicity, not of the relics themselves but of the events they represent. For him the ceremony was an insistence that the events of the faith actually occurred – they were not fictitious or imaginary.

Something of the same lay behind my regret that the shrine of St Thomas Becket was no longer to be found at Canterbury.

These two great churches were among those at which I spent time to remember in prayer the churches of South Darebin Parish as we travelled.



Up for some homework?

Do you have an education background in a particular subjects, or skills in research, essay writing, exam preparation and time management? Do you know about pathways into tertiary education and careers? Do you have patience, empathy and an interest in helping young people? Any of these skills and attitudes, and a bit of your time, might make you useful to the Brotherhood of St Laurence in its Homework Clubs. One of these runs in Fitzroy at the Library in Moor Street, where some learning facilities are provided.

The Club operates from 4 to 6 pm every school day during term and for some sessions during school holidays, offering specialist and general help and support to students from Year 7 to 12 and language learners up to 25 years of age. Along with help with English,

some additional time and support outside school hours is of enormous benefit to students, especially those who have had interrupted schooling or interrupted lives, having arrived in Australia as asylum seekers or refugees.

If you’d like to find out more, contact the Fitzroy coordinator, Joseph Lorback, on 9426 1581 or 0408 344 413 or by email at

joseph.lorback@bsl.org.au

The Brotherhood appreciates the donation of quality furniture and whitegoods and will collect them from you. To have large items picked up, phone

1300DONATE



Blackout

Or perhaps that should be 'Redout'.

Jenifer Watson recalls a remarkable event...

This is about a one-off event that happened when I was in Grade 2 at primary school, and I have never been able to forget it. We had a very strict teacher who was unable to control her temper, and the physical abuse she inflicted on seven-year-olds would certainly not be tolerated now. Behind her back she was called 'The Red-Haired Terror', mostly by parents.

The schoolroom windows were high up, so all that could be seen from our desks was the sky. Darkness started descending and the sky turned red. The teacher rushed to shut the windows and, as she looked out, actually gave a scream. Certainly it was only a little one, but she had never been known to scream, except at us.

The lights were turned on but it was still dark. Red dust was still coming in. We could see streams of it coming through the ventilators. Nobody spoke. About forty frightened children sat in petrified silence, not knowing what was happening, while red dust piled up on the floor.

Eventually the dust eased and a strange coloured light appeared. We were dismissed quickly from school and told to go straight home, unless our parents were coming to pick us up. Dad appeared with the old Dodge car and drove my brother and myself home. He dropped us off and had to leave immediately to go back to his wool-buying business and check for storm damage.

This was not the end of the storm. It was only a lull in the middle. Mum and our elderly Irish neighbour were inside waiting for us. The neighbour always called Mum "girly", which sounded strange to me – she was "Mum". When the sky turned red, Mrs O'Rourke had come running in to Mum waving her arms in the air and called out "It's the end of the world, Girly!" We quickly went into the dining room, in the centre of the house. There was already a teapot on the table and Mum rushed to get us some comfort food.



A red dust storm on its way to Broken Hill, 2009

<http://geelong-visual-diary.blogspot.com.au/>

The house had verandas on three sides, and one side had been closed in with weatherboards on the lower metre and a half, and fly-wire above that. There were large canvas blinds on the outside. Mum had closed these when she saw the storm approaching.

We sat there, undoubtedly in shock, and still in awe of our sudden encounter with a force more powerful than anything we had ever seen. The dining room had glass doors looking out to the closed-in veranda, or sleepout. Just as we thought the storm was finishing, there came another blast of red dust as the tail of the storm hit. We could see through the glass doors the dust piling up on the floor, and then, suddenly, it was all over. We went out to survey the damage and saw that great dust cloud disappearing into the distance, and only a gentle breeze was left to blow the last grains of sand away and dump them somewhere else. Of course there was a huge clean-up to follow.

My brother, who was only five at the time, still remembers this storm. Many years later, when I was living in Melbourne, there was another big dust storm. Afterwards, all the shops had 'Dust storm' sales to clear out their damaged stock. That storm was mild compared to what we remembered from our childhood. A different perspective, you might say. Get real! I grew up in an area where dust storms were frequent, and only this one stands out in our memories.

*'frightened children sat in petrified silence, not knowing what was happening...
"It's the end of the world, Girly!"*

Saints Alive

Why my answer is ...



Fr Ken Cahill

The current debate about marriage equality has raised a variety of reactions on both sides of the argument. There has been concern not only about arriving at a decision one way or the other but also about how the public discourse should be conducted so as not to further alienate or estrange many young people discovering and exploring their own sexual identity.

It is well recognised that young people who identify as same-sex attracted have a greater rate of suicide and self-harming behaviours than the rest of the population of similar age. The question then becomes about the message that many same-sex attracted young people are receiving from the community at large about their value, worth and acceptance based entirely on their sexual identity and the value placed on any relationships they will develop.

The government has passed legislation for the life of this poll that limits and controls the language that people use so as not to be vilifying, inflammatory or hateful. This worries some who see this as some form of censorship for the curtailing of free speech. The issues in what seems to have been a straightforward debate continue to grow like Topsy. Indeed, it seems sometimes the issue of marriage equality is about anything but marriage.

It's a sad fact that the church is known more for what it disapproves of rather than for what it promotes. The reality also is that many in the gay and lesbian communities have long seen the church as one of their enemies and opponents. Despite this the church has several significant and compelling roles in this debate – to say something about marriage and its primacy in our faith, to safeguard and protect some very vulnerable people in our community, and to act justly and lovingly - to be the

leaven in the lump.

The legal definition

The Commonwealth Marriage Act defines marriage as “the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life”. You will remember that this is the result of a specific amendment under John Howard’s government by an Act of Parliament without any kind of public vote.

The requirements for marriage are minimal: don’t already be married, don’t marry a close blood relative, consent to the marriage, both be of marriageable age and give written notice to a celebrant. What that means is that if a man and a woman lodge all the requisite paperwork and find a celebrant who will marry them, they can get married. And once married they have a whole set of rights under federal law that set them apart from people in other relationships.

As an Anglican priest and an authorised celebrant under the Commonwealth act I was not compelled to marry anyone. I would marry only those couples I was of a good conscience about. Only once did I refuse to marry a couple. When I was a chaplain at Pentridge Prison (you may need to read my book) I had prepared a prisoner and his fiancée for marriage for one Friday and the day came for the wedding. The bride-to-be turned up very late. It was very clear when I met her at the main gate that she was under the influence of some substance and was in no condition meaningfully to say her vows, so her ability to consent could be questioned. I decided to postpone the wedding on that day and try again on the following Monday (her dress had been hired for the weekend) when she might be in a much healthier condition.

Aren’t all relationships already recognised?

The recognition of a married couple is in contrast to de facto relationship legislation. In every state and territory in Australia, de facto relationship rights are not conferred automatically as occurs with the signing of a marriage certificate. There are significant variations between states.

Although it is understandable that many same-sex couples refer to their relationships as ‘marriage’, it is a myth that they already enjoy the same rights as married couples. Crucially, none of the state-based ‘registered’ or de

facto relationships afford same-sex couples the full range of rights and remedies under the federal *Family Law Act*. Married couples are automatically entitled to property settlements and spousal maintenance if they separate, but de facto couples must prove certain factors are present in their relationship to be granted such entitlements.

There have been many well-publicised, shameful examples where one partner in a long-term same-sex partnership has not been allowed visiting rights of the other in hospital or even when that person has died, the partner has not been recognised as either the de facto partner or the next of kin. In a number of tragic and terrible examples, the partner has been excluded from the funeral and any funeral arrangements by the deceased person's family because their relationship was not approved of or recognised. There is little wonder then that many campaigning for a YES vote present as so strident and come across with such anger when having experienced this type of exclusion and much more.

Religious views

The church and other faiths have a high regard for marriage and have developed theologies and dogma about marriage over the centuries which reflect the views of the relevant culture, time and place.

It is only recently that our liturgies reflected social change by dropping a promise by the wife to obey her husband. The new liturgy also marked a change in the view of a woman as property to be given away.

There are so many varying traditions and particular cultural expressions within the marriage ceremony and the surrounding events. Sometimes it is hard to remember what they are all about and what is fundamental. For Anglicans the central view of the wedding is that it is a sacramental act and a symbol of the love of Christ for his church. Love is central and marriage becomes another reflection of God's amazing love. How can Christians then withhold such a thing from two people and their families? The issues are not only about emotion or sentiment: there are issues of inclusion and social justice here that need to be addressed.

The church's ministers will always be able to refuse to marry those they are not of a good conscience about. There are already conditions for those approaching the church for marriage, primarily that at least one of the two

needs to be baptised. And it appears from the promises made that the churches' rights to conduct marriage or not will remain the same as now.

The real issue

When all is said and done, when you cut through all the noise and misdirection, the issue is not: Will this change to legislation mean that someone can be allowed to marry the Sydney Harbour Bridge or their pet goldfish? Or will the change affect the future of Australian beef and lamb exports to conservative countries, or the funding of the Safe-Schools program, or the protection of our religious freedoms, or whether we can freely celebrate Christmas, or any other issue?

Simply put, the issue is: Do I think that every adult citizen in Australia should have the freedom of choice to be able to commit themselves in a loving relationship and have access to the same recognition, rights and entitlements, including social and legal status, as those who are currently able to marry?

My answer is Yes. What do you reckon? Yes or No?

"How can Christians then withhold such a thing from two people and their families?...there are issues of inclusion and social justice here..."

TREES

Trees, trees all around
Just about everywhere to be found
On sloping hills and mountains high
reaching, reaching for the sky

From forest thick to desert lone
To the little birds to whom it's home
Blessed be the trees that shade
Each and all on those summer days.

From mountain ash to lemon tree
to mountain range to sea's foreshore
To windswept pines upon the rise
That gently sway and breathe their sighs.

Yes trees, trees everywhere
Like sentinels standing upon the ground
Big ones, small ones to be found
Trees, trees all around.

—Rob Lane



Saints Alive

BRUCE
CLEZY'S FILM
REVIEW



“...a kind of old morality tale for a new dark age. It is well worth a look...”

Priest (1994)

He wasn't human enough ... the son of God. He had certainty. Heaven! Everlasting life! He knew it all ... with absolute certainty. Well give me that and fine, no problem, you can crucify me as well. All the agonies of the world; no bloody problem whatsoever; because I'd be certain that God exists. But I am not certain. All I've got is faith. And something evil comes along ... grinning, sickening evil ... And faith just runs away in terror.

Father Greg Pilkington, in
Priest (1994)

Priest (1994) is not a great movie. I like it; I recommend it; but it is not a great movie. Indeed, in his 1995 review for the *San Francisco Examiner*, Gary Kamiya noted,

“After watching this film, you feel as if Martin Luther had hammered every one of his 95 theses onto various parts of your anatomy, using dull thumbtacks. And although *Priest* is not without intelligence, humour and pathos, in the end it's little more than a tendentious melodrama.”

I think part of the problem here is that *Priest* relies on a strong history of socialist realism prevalent throughout much of British arthouse cinema. There is not much room left for art. Yet having said that, perhaps of all the films I have reviewed for our newsletter, *Priest* takes on with gusto some of the deepest questions of what it means to be Christian and what it means to be moral, in a modern world.

Father Greg Pilkington (Linus Roache) is a young Catholic priest, newly assigned to St Mary's parish in inner city Liverpool. He is young, conservative, and clearly hoping to “save souls”. As he settles into his new-found home, Father Pilkington's religious views are challenged by both his superior, Father Matthew Thomas (Tom Wilkinson), and also by the deeply disturbing events going on in his community. Taking confession one day, Father Greg uncovers a case of child abuse within a family.

Linus Roache starred in *Priest*, directed by Jimmy McGovern.

The film was condemned by the church in Ireland, which called for a ban on its distribution. In its first break with the church, the Irish Film Censor Board decided to release it.

Photo: https://imagemag.rulimg-ba_linus-roache-wiki.html



A young parishioner, Lisa Unsworth (Christine Tremarco), confides she is being sexually abused by her father. Father Greg now faces the moral dilemma of whether to break the sanctity of the confessional and report the abuse, or uphold the teachings of the faith and thereby allow a young girl to continue to suffer. The film makes much of Father Greg's inner turmoil, but his deliberations are further complicated by the fact that he carries a secret. Father Greg is secretly gay.

Now over 20 years old, *Priest* has aged well. It is easy to forget that in 1994, the year of the movie's release, HIV and AIDS was the leading cause of death for all Americans between the ages of 25 and 44. To show a priest engaging in consensual, loving gay sex, while homosexual men were simultaneously being demonised in public therefore took courage by the film makers; and it was deeply shocking and highly controversial. Similarly, seen through the prism of our own Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and more recently the postal survey on whether same-sex marriage should be legalised, the film is a timely reminder of the humanity of the clergy. Priests must struggle with all the vicissitudes of being human, but at the same time uphold the word of God. What makes the film so clever is that it shows that this struggle is not binary in nature (Priest vs God), but results from a tripartite relationship mediated by the political manoeuvres of religious doctrine (Priest vs God vs Doctrine). Father Greg's struggles are not so much with God, but rather the regulatory authority of the church that backs his decision-making process into a moral impasse.

It is this three-way relationship that makes *Priest* a kind of an old morality tale for a new dark age. It is well worth a look if you like a good story, with great acting and just a little bit of religion to make you think about what you believe and how you would sort out a particularly difficult problem.

Loving our neighbours

Alma Ryrie-Jones

All of the public housing on the Walker Street estate opposite the church is scheduled for demolition and replacement by new apartments. This is just one of ten projects collectively called the Social Housing Renewal Program. Although it is clear that all 87 existing dwellings will be knocked down, it is much less clear whether this can be regarded as part of a 'renewal'.

The plan is to replace the existing 87 units by 95 new units – all of a much higher standard, as they will be accessible (with lifts, not just stairs), modern and attractive, energy efficient and therefore environmentally better. Sounds good so far, doesn't it? The catch is that while this will result in about a 10 per cent increase in the number of dwellings available to public housing tenants, almost all of the units will have only 1 or 2 bedrooms, reducing the capacity to house families (46 of the current units have 3 bedrooms). It is possible that the project will result in fewer people having access to this housing. That is a shockingly poor outcome for a policy that is supposed to be doing something about the public housing waiting list, which now includes 37,000 households (not individuals), 3,000 in the City of Darebin alone. And that's only those on the list—some have given up hope and are no longer registered.

It gets worse. The plan is also to build on this publicly-owned land 127 more new units to be sold and owned privately. This means that 127 households will be able to live in new accommodation on land that was previously reserved for the poor; put another way, the energy and capital and design expertise are available to expand the number of units on the block by more than double, but not for the benefit of public tenants. Only 43 per cent of the resulting housing will be available to public housing tenants. The main beneficiaries will be private developers or housing associations, those who can afford to purchase new properties in this highly desirable location, and those who can afford to live in them.

The Darebin Council is opposed to this, so why doesn't it just stop the plan going ahead? It no longer has that power: the Department of Health and Human Services has applied for a modification of the planning scheme affecting this land so it is now no longer a Council matter. The State Government has the role of

deciding on whether the plan (its own plan) will go ahead.

The Darebin Council, Fair Go for Pensioners, Friends of Public Housing and other groups have protested against the scheme both in principle and in detail. Some churches in other areas have also become involved. As 'residents' and ratepayers we have been invited to give our views and the Wardens and clergy have been attending meetings. We have made no comment on issues like traffic and parking, building heights, housing density or tree conservation, although we understand that some other residents may have strong views about these. Instead we have consistently presented the view that the rights and interests of the current tenants must be upheld, that if more units are to be built they should be made available to more public housing tenants, and that the government must continue to be responsible, on behalf of the whole community, for providing and maintaining low cost housing for those who have no access to affordable rental properties, much less home ownership.

Shelter for the poor and homeless is a core Christian issue, and we have become involved from that perspective, not from the viewpoint of party politics or our own interests.

To view a copy of our submission to the planning process, visit the Publications page of our website. If you would like to help, it is very worthwhile to send a letter to the Minister of Housing.

The Hon Martin Foley MP
Minister for Housing
50 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE 3000



martin.foley
@parliament.vic.gov.au



Welcome!
We give thanks for the safe arrival of Lucie.
Congratulations to Brett and Bronwyn.



All Saints Anglican Church
Northcote
Parish of South Darebin

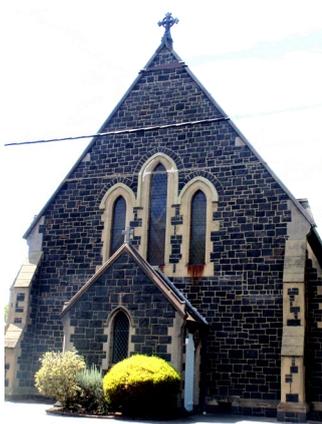
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1860 — 2015

*We acknowledge the
Wurundjeri people as the
traditional owners of the land
on which our church was built,
and pay our respects to their
Elders, past and present.*

Just checking in

A minister passing through his church
in the middle of the day
paused by the altar
to see who'd come to pray.
Just then the back door opened,
a man came down the aisle.
The minister frowned as he saw
the man hadn't shaved in a while.

His shirt was kinda shabby
and his coat was worn and frayed.
The man knelt, bowed his head,
then rose and walked away.
In the days that followed,
each noon time came this chap,
each time he knelt for a moment,
a lunch pail in his lap.

Well, the minister's suspicions grew,
with robbery a main fear.
He decided to stop the man and ask,
"What are you doing here?"
The old man said he worked down the road.
Lunch was half an hour.
Lunchtime was his prayer time,
for finding strength and power.
"I stay only moments, see,
because the factory's so far away.
As I kneel here talking to the Lord,
this is kinda what I say:

"I just came again to tell you, Lord,
how happy I have been,
since we found each other's friendship
and you took away my sin.
Don't know much of how to pray,
but I think about you every day.
So, Jesus, this is Jim, checking in today."

The minister, feeling foolish,
told Jim that was fine.
He told the man he was welcome
to come and pray any time.
"Time to go," Jim smiled, said "Thanks."
He hurried to the door.
The minister knelt at the altar,
he'd never done it before.
His cold heart melted, warmed with love,
and met with Jesus there.
As the tears flowed, in his heart,
he repeated old Jim's prayer:
"I just came again to tell you, Lord,

how happy I have been,
since we found each other's friendship
and you took away my sin.
I don't know much of how to pray,
but I think about you every day.
So, Jesus, this is me, checking in today."

Past noon one day, the minister saw
that old Jim hadn't come.
As more days passed without Jim,
he began to worry some.
At the factory, he asked about him,
learning he was ill.
The hospital staff was worried,
But he'd given them a thrill.
The week that Jim was with them
brought changes in the ward.
His smiles, a joy contagious.
Changed people, were his reward.

The head nurse couldn't understand
why Jim was so glad,
when no flowers, calls or cards came,
Not a visitor he had.
The minister stayed by his bed,
He voiced the nurse's concern.
No friends came to show they cared,
he had nowhere to turn.

Looking surprised, old Jim spoke up
and with a winsome smile:
"The nurse is wrong, she couldn't know,
that in here, all the while,
everyday at noon he's here,
a dear friend of mine, you see.
He sits right down, takes my hand,
Leans over and says to me:

"I just came again to tell you, Jim,
how happy I have been,
since we found this friendship,
and I took away your sin.
Always love to hear you pray,
I think about you every day,
and so Jim, this is Jesus, checking in to-
day."

Contributed by Aileen (author unknown)
Reprinted from <https://2jesus.org/inspstories/just.html>

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