December 12th 2021

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN JOSEPH, ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK AND METROPOLITAN OF ALL NORTH AMERICA

HIS GRACE BISHOP THOMAS, AUXILIARY BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON, OAKLAND, AND MID-ATLANTIC

PASTOR: REVEREND FATHER STEVEN SHAHEEN
REVEREND FATHER SERAPHIM MOSLENER

We take this opportunity to welcome those guests praying with us. Anyone wishing to request prayers for Health and Well-being, or a Trisagion prayer, or if you would like to request a candle to be lighted, please contact the office.

The Orthodox Church understands that the visible sacraments we experience are a fundamental part of the sacred life of a worshipping community that shares in "one body…one faith". (Eph. 4:5). Thus, we can only share Communion with those who are Orthodox and who have prepared themselves by prayer, fasting and Confession. If you are not Orthodox, or are not properly prepared, you are welcome to come forward and receive a blessing and then to take a piece of the blessed bread. Please see Father Steven after Divine Liturgy.

Divine Liturgy Variables on Sunday, December 12, 2021 Tone 8 / Eothinon 3

Sunday of the Forefathers (Ancestors) of Christ &

Spyridon, bishop of Trimythous, the Wonderworker John, metropolitan of Zichnon; Hieromartyr Alexander, archbishop of Jerusalem

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE EIGHT

From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three day burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our Resurrection, O Lord, glory to Thee.

APOLYTIKION OF THE FOREFATHERS IN TONE TWO

Thou hast justified by faith the ancient Forefathers, and through them Thou hast gone before and betrothed unto Thyself the Church of the Gentiles. Let the saints, therefore, take pride in glory; for from their seed sprouted forth a noble fruit, and it was she who gave birth to Thee without seed. Wherefore, by their pleadings, O Christ God, save our souls.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. SPYRIDON IN TONE ONE

Thou wast shown forth as a champion of the First Council and a wonderworker, O Spyridon, our God-bearing Father. Wherefore, thou didst speak unto one dead in the grave, and didst change a serpent to gold. And while chanting thy holy prayers, thou hadst Angels serving with thee, O most sacred one. Glory to Him that hath glorified thee. Glory to Him that hath crowned thee. Glory to Him that worketh healings for all through thee.

TROPARIAN OF SAINT JOHN

O Apostle John, speaker of deity, the beloved of Christ our God, hasten to deliver your people, powerless in speech, for He on Whose bosom you lean accepts you as an intercessor. Beseech Him therefore to disperse the darkness of ignorance, and pray for peace and great mercy to be shown upon us.

THE EPISTLE

(For St. Spyridon)

The saints shall boast in glory. Sing unto the Lord a new song. The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians. (5:8-19) Brethren, walk as children of light—for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth—proving what is acceptable to the Lord; and have no communion with the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them; for it is a shame even to speak of the things which they do in secret. But all things when they are exposed are made manifest by the light, for everything that is made manifest is light. Therefore, he says: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon thee." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and chanting in your heart to the Lord.

THE GOSPEL

(For the Holy Forefathers)

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (14:16-24) The Lord spoke this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But, one by one, they all began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

KONTAKION OF PREPARATION OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY IN TONE THREE

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to * God the Word ineffably, * Who was before all the ages. * Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing * the glad-some tidings; * with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him * Who is willing to be gazed on * as a young Child Who * before the ages is God.

Christmas is a time of joy, wonder, and excitement. Of presents and tinsel and cookies and snow. Of warm cozy evenings in front of the fireplace spent with family and friends. For Orthodox Christians, though, it means far more, because it celebrates the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christmas, or the Nativity, as we call it within the Church, celebrates the Incarnation of the only-begotten Son of God. As such, we should prepare ourselves accordingly, so we can welcome Him with pure hearts and contrite spirits.

THE TRUE MIRACLE OF THE NATIVITY

The Nativity of Christ is incredibly important to Orthodox Christians. So important, in fact, that we spend 40 days preparing for this feast and celebrate it for two full weeks! The only feast day we celebrate longer than the Nativity is the Resurrection itself. Why does this feast day hold such a special place in the hearts of the Orthodox? The Prophet Isaiah answers that question for us:

> Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name His name Emmanuel.
> *Isaiah 7:14*

With these words, the Prophet Isaiah anticipated the coming of the Savior. This prophecy embodies the longings, hopes, and desires of God's people as we prepare to receive the One who comes to grant us new life. During the Nativity Fast (called Advent in the West) in the Orthodox Church, we are just like those who, in Old Testament times, anticipated and prepared for the Savior's birth.

The joy we experience on the feast of Christ's birth ultimately depends on how well we've prepared ourselves to receive Him. We all spend a great deal of time getting ready for Christmas, Orthodox or no. Families devote countless hours to shopping, decorating, and menu planning. They also slave in the kitchen to prepare food for their families and stay up late wrapping gifts their loved ones will find nestled beneath the tree. Important as these matters are, our spiritual preparation is far more critical if we are to catch the *true* Christmas spirit.

During the Nativity Fast, we must challenge ourselves to think more seriously about our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who took on our humanity in order to reveal God's love for us.

HOW SHOULD WE PERSONALLY PREPARE? As we approach the Nativity, we should reflect on where we are spiritually, and where we would like to be. We must prepare ourselves for the coming of our Savior. We must consider just how important the Nativity truly is to us as Orthodox Christians. The Church maintains the teachings of the Fathers, who stress the importance of five activities when preparing oneself spiritually for the coming of any liturgical Feast:

- **Prayer**
- **Repentance**
- **Fasting**
- **Reading of Scripture**
- **Helping Others**

Let's take a look at each of these in a bit more depth. Then, we'll touch on some things you can do as a family with your children.

PRAYER When we pray, we commune directly with God and His Saints. Prayer – whether it is *private* (by yourself/with your family) or *corporate* (with others in the Divine services) – helps us cope with the stress of our daily lives. And it is the perfect way to thank God and glorify Him for the many blessings He has given us.

The Nativity Fast is a time for us to focus more on prayer and devote more time to communing with God. We should especially reflect on and give thanks for the gift of eternal life made possible by the birth of Jesus Christ.

REPENTANCE

Repentance is the conscious effort to change our lives and turn from those things which create barriers between us, God, and others. During the Nativity Fast, we are offered yet another opportunity to devote time to self-reflection and confess our sins to the spiritual father at our parish. This conversation allows us to reassess our relationships with God and others, and reconcile and reunite with those from whom we've grown apart. Our thoughts should turn to the miracle of God's love and forgiveness which Jesus Christ proclaims and to the new life He offers.

FASTING

When we fast, we not only avoid certain foods and entertainments, but also anything that tends to control us in our day-to-day lives. Fasting is a means of spiritual discipline, a tool to help us put into proper perspective the things we receive from God. To gain control of those things and put them in their proper place, rather than allowing them to control us and become idols. It reminds us of the purpose of our lives: to attain perfect communion with God and enter into the joy of our Lord.

Following the Fasts prescribed by the Church in Her wisdom also provides amazing benefits to our health, allowing us to rebuild our immune system and reduce our risk of disease.

READING OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

The Holy Bible is the written word of God Himself, which reveals Jesus Christ, the Living Word. Because it records the story of God's plan for the salvation of His people, the Bible is essential reading for Christians. Especially in preparation for the Nativity!

This is not to say it is the *only* thing you should read, but it is an essential piece. The Nativity Fast provides an ideal opportunity to read and study the Bible, as well as the lives of the Saints, writings of the Church Fathers, and other spiritually edifying texts, on a daily basis.

HELPING OTHERS

While we fast and repent, it is equally important to share our time, our talent, and our treasures with those around us, especially the poor, needy, hungry, and lonely. By

reaching out to others, we in turn share His love with the least of these, His brethren.

THINGS TO DO AS A FAMILY

While personal spiritual preparation is most definitely important during the Nativity Fast, it is equally important to do things to help your spouse and children spiritually prepare along with you. Here are some things you can do as a family to prepare for this beautiful Feast:

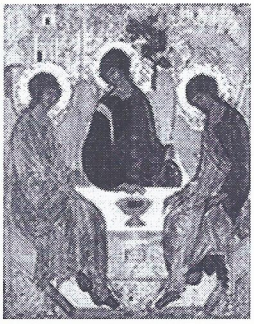
Display an icon of the Nativity of Christ in your home icon corner. Ask your children what they see in the icon and what those things mean (the cave, the animals, the Holy Spirit coming down from Heaven as light, etc.).

- Set up a Nativity scene that your children can keep in their rooms or in the family room. As you put the scene together, talk about the story of the Nativity and what happened.

- During your morning, mealtime, and evening prayers on Christmas Day, sing or chant the Troparion and Kontakion for the Feast. You can continue to chant these hymns for the Afterfeast as well (the eight days following the Feast).

- Read the Nativity Gospel lesson (Luke 2:1-20). If you have younger children, you can try telling a version from a Bible Storybook. If you have a Nativity scene nearby, consider using it with your children to illustrate the story. You can read this Gospel several times throughout the Nativity Fast, on Christmas Day itself, and during the Afterfeast.

- Attend the Vesperal Liturgy on Christmas Eve or the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Day as a family. This will keep the focus of this Holy Day on Christ's birth and its importance in our life and salvation.
After Liturgy, visit a shut-in parishioner or friend. Plan ahead so you can bring Antidoron, the Blessed Bread from the Liturgy, and a bulletin. You could also include a homemade gift from the children.



Acrylic Icon Painting Workshop at St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

Duration: 7 days, 5 hours per day in total.

Level: Beginner and Intermediate

Number of students: 10

Cost: $400 per student; art materials are included and will be provided by the instructor

The materials included for each student will be:

- One 8x10" wood board – it will be pre-prepared with acrylic gesso
- One sheet of 8x10" watercolor paper
- 1 set of artisan brushes
- Acrylic paints, which will include these colors: titanium white, mars black, burnt umber, burnt sienna, yellow ochre, cadmium red, cadmium yellow, and primary blue.
- Disposable palette paper
- 2 print-outs of the icon of choice – one in black and white and the other in color
- Tracing paper
- 1 Pen
- A plastic or Styrofoam cup with water

Students can choose one of these icons to paint, which are also pictured below:

- Christ Pantocrator based on the Hagia Sophia version
- Archangel Michael based on the Andrei Rublev version (from the chest up)

March 21-25th 2022. Please see Joann to enroll!

Prayers Offered

"For mercy, life, health, peace, salvation, visitation, forgiveness, and remission of sins..."

Katina, Sawyer and NB Cecilia, Dayanna, Phillip and UB Child, *Tanner, John, Marci, Evelyn, Linda, Maria, John, Mary Jo, Christopher, Paris, Judy, Sassic Family, Larry, Carol, Rick, Mark, Angie, Andrew, Joyce, Rikki, Adam, Ann, Ashley, Dave, O'lear Family, Janis, Cindy, Mary, Yvonne, Leonard, Bryan, Adeline, Kh, Patricia, Andrew, Dr. Rosetti and Family, Timothy, Buster, Joyce, Joanne, Pat , the Sullivan Family, Frank, Kathleen, Patty and those afflicted with the Covid Virus.*

"For eternal memory and blessed repose..."

Anne, Frank, Eva, Emil, Andy, Ralph, Sue, Richard, Hercules, Chrisoula, Mary, Stanley, Helen, Mary, Andy, John, Mary, Joe, Gert, Michael, Anne, Ralph, John, Wapner Grandparents, Pich Grandparents, Catherine, Rada, Milicia, Bertha, Nick, Ann, Mike, George, Steve Helen, Ronald, James, Patricia, and Jennifer.

The Fathers have declared the singing of psalms to be a weapon, prayer to be a wall, and honest tears to be a bath ... without which no one subject to passions will see the Lord. -- St. John Climacus

NATIVITY FLOWERS

WE ARE CURRENTLY ASKING FOR DONATIONS FOR NATIVITY FLOWERS FOR THE CHURCH!

YES! FATHER, I would like to contribute towards the flowers for the Church during the Nativity Season.

For the Health, Salvation and Visitation for the Servants of God:

For the Memory and Blessed Repose for the Souls of the Servants of God:

Name:

Donation Amount:

AN OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET

PROPHET DANIEL remains to this day one of the most fascinating figures from ancient Israel. He was one of the multitude of persons taken to Babylon some six hundred years before Christ. That period when the Israelites were taken by the Chaldeans from the "land of milk and honey" is known as the Babylonian Captivity.

Daniel became one of the leaders of the people in exile. He became, in fact, one of the chief advisors to the king. But the kingdom was pagan, and Daniel and God's people would not bow down and pray to false gods. This led to difficulties. The Book of Daniel tells about three young men who were thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to worship an idol. They walked in the fire unharmed as the Angel of the Lord protected them from the flames.

During the reign of King Darius, some of the native princes became overly jealous of Daniel, who occupied an important position. They found a way to trap him. They got the king to decree that anyone who made a request to any god or man, other than the king, was to be thrown into a den of lions. Thus the king was deemed divine. Daniel knelt as usual praying three times a day by his window open towards Jerusalem. There the enemy princes found him praying to God, and reported him to Darius. The ruler was troubled, but consigned Daniel to the lion's den. Our Lord saved him and Daniel was restored to position and favor of the king. His spiritual strength had protected this man of God.

The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin . . . . . Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey . . . . . Litho in U.S.A.

CHECK WEBSITE FOR FEAST DAY SERVICES

WWW.SAINTJOHNCHURCH.ORG

OFFICE HOURS

By Appointment

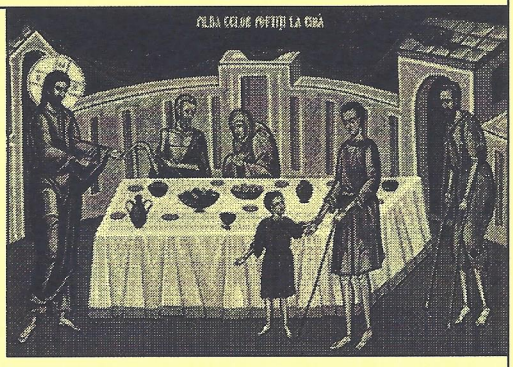
The Children's Word

"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them, for to such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Mark 10:14

Sunday, December 12, 2021 Volume 9, Issue 50

A Ministry of the Orthodox Christian Network

The highways and hedges



Do you like looking at maps? Do you sometimes wonder how far away things are on a map? When you read the Bible, have you ever thought about how far away from you is the place where Jesus spoke? Have you ever tried to find the Holy Land on a map?

In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus tells a parable about bringing people from far away into God's house. Most of us live far away from Palestine, where Jesus told this parable. Although we are far away from the Holy Land, Jesus said that people far away would come to God's house to a great banquet—a joyous party! God wants His house to be filled—not just with His family and friends, but with everybody!

In the Gospel today we read, "the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled." We are the ones far away, in the highways and hedges. The servant in the parable is like an apostle, going to far away places to bring people to God. That's us! God said a long time ago and far away that many people from far away from the Holy Land will be invited to His house, to His great banquet! Let's always say yes to that invitation. And even more, let's help others come to this banquet too!

WORD SEARCH

Can you find these words in the jumble?

Alaska
America
Apostle
Banquet
Hedges
Herman
Highways
Invitation
Maps
Missionary
Saint

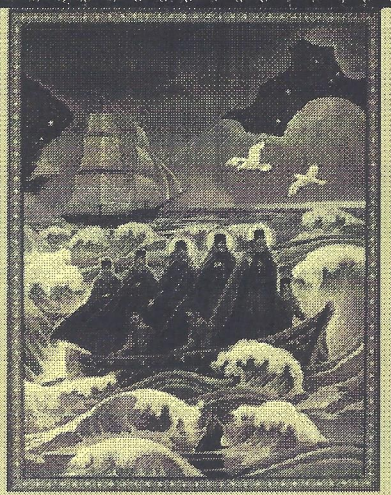
I	T	H	U	E	X	A	B	A	N	H	V	C	D	R
N	N	Y	R	F	K	A	R	L	E	A	I	O	E	W
V	I	Z	H	S	N	E	I	D	T	Q	M	A	S	B
I	A	Y	A	Q	W	H	G	Q	H	B	N	R	P	P
T	S	L	U	V	V	E	J	H	I	N	C	F	E	I
A	A	E	A	D	S	G	U	A	G	T	C	J	F	H
T	T	P	N	C	V	T	T	J	H	X	N	W	X	X
I	A	G	O	H	N	Z	D	D	W	J	S	I	X	H
O	A	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	A	R	Y	N	A	V
N	S	I	V	O	T	F	D	R	Y	H	K	F	N	S
Y	B	N	W	H	H	L	G	A	S	J	B	G	Y	T
L	K	L	Q	K	E	F	E	A	C	I	R	E	M	A
P	I	H	Y	U	D	S	P	A	M	C	Y	J	P	Q
B	P	W	D	N	Q	O	F	I	Z	W	G	Y	O	N
Y	M	K	X	R	O	S	X	I	G	B	Q	J	L	M

What's in an icon?

In this icon, you can see Saint Herman in a boat with some other monks.

They are traveling from Russia to Alaska.

What do you think? Does it look like a pleasant trip in the stormy, icy sea?



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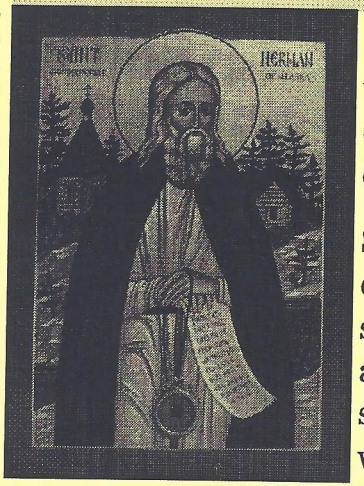
SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA
THE FIRST AMERICAN SAINT



Did you know that 221 years ago, when George Washington was still president, our first American saint lived in our very own country?

Saint Herman was born in Russia, and he became a monk there. In the 1700s, lots of Russians were living in Alaska so they could get animal furs and then sell them back in Russia. It was a big business! These Russians were Orthodox, so they wanted to have priests and churches there in their new land. The Russian government also wanted to teach the native people about Christ and to help them become Orthodox Christians too.

So Saint Herman left Russia, along with a few other men, to help the Russian fur traders and to try to help the native people on Kodiak Island. But they had lots of problems. Their main problem was the fur traders!—they were not nice to the native Alaskans, and they forced them to work for them, cheated them out of money, and were awful to the innocent people.

Saint Herman lived in Alaska for almost 40 years, and he had many problems there. But he always stuck up for the native people, teaching them about God, but even more, showing them Christ's love with his own life.

We celebrate St. Herman tomorrow, December 13th (OC: Dec. 26th).

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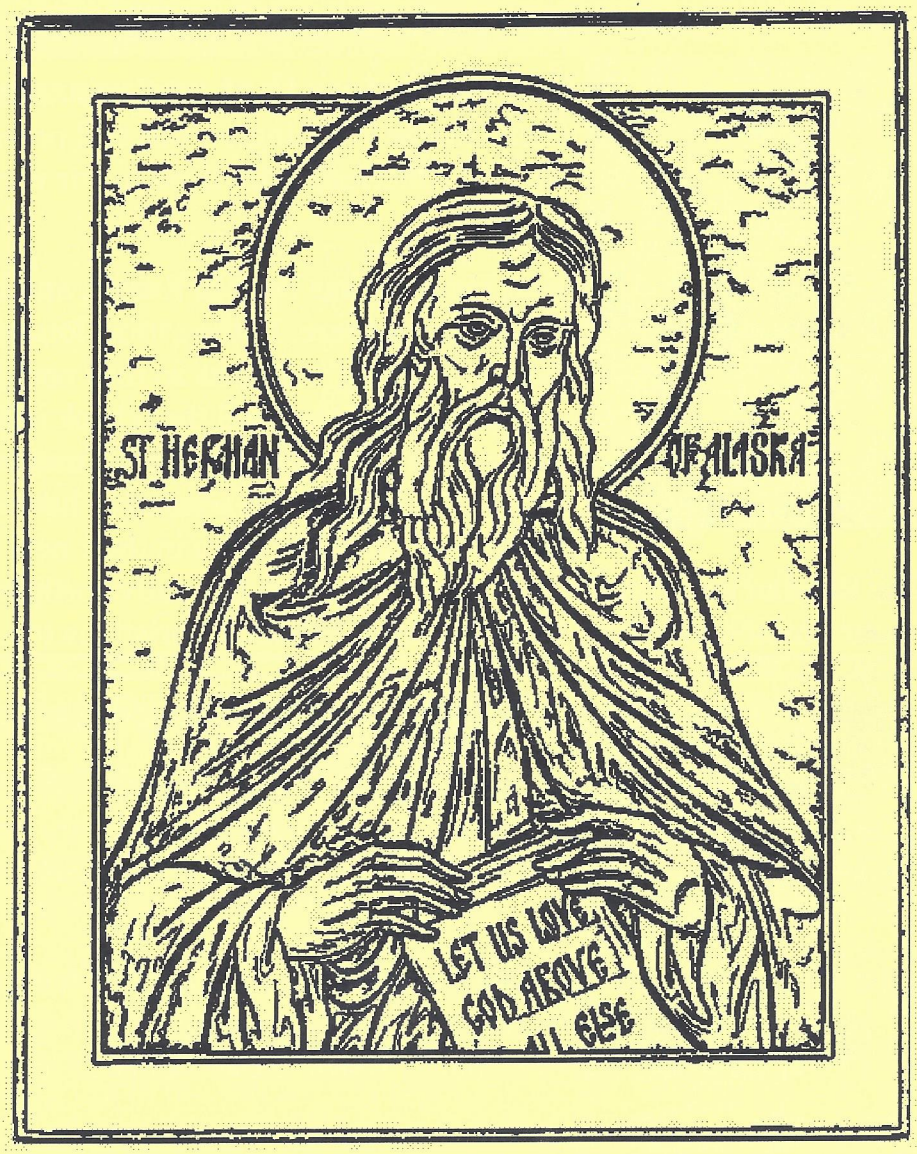
Saint Herman, pray for us!



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