Would you dare an encounter with Africans “in the style of Jesus”?

A journey to Africa... A few years service... A lifetime commitment...

The Missionaries of Africa, sons and daughters of Lavigerie, are present and active in 25 countries of Africa, as well as in the African World outside the continent.

Since 150 years, their aim is to commit themselves by words and actions in the “style of Jesus”. Their motivation is to expand the action of God in the history of humankind, as we understand it when reading the Bible and the Gospels. At present, there are more than 500 young people between the ages of 20 and 35 who are in formation in our Missionary Society.

Are you interested? Curious? We offer you a preparation before joining those who dare an encounter with Africans in “the style of Jesus”.

For more information, you can contact Father Serge St-Arneault:
E-mail: sergestarno@gmail.com
Telephone: (1) 514 849 1167 # 217
or contact the Missionaries whose addresses are listed on the last page of this Newsletter.

The Missionaries of Africa on the Internet
Do you know these Websites of the White Fathers?

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<tr>
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<td>American Website: Washington</td>
<td><a href="http://www.missionariesofafrica.org">www.missionariesofafrica.org</a></td>
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If you wish to change your address or to cancel your subscription, please contact us: e-mail: medias@mafr.net or Phone: 514-849-1167 # 111
Éditorial

150 years listening to the peoples of the African World

We could write, everywhere in our country, this employment notice: «We are looking for adult persons of all ages for a service that has become quite rare in today’s world. We urgently need persons with “large ears”, who will accept to give some time to listen to others freely and with love.» It is an ideal work for pensioners having grand-children, or who live far away from a Centre for the elderly, or at the heart of the city where we often find people living alone or marginalised, and who want to make this world more human.

I just came back from Africa after many years of service, being in charge of training houses for our future candidates to missionary life. I have spent many hours listening to these young men coming from different countries and continents. I was struck by the great need, alas less fulfilled, to be personally heard with an attentive and caring ear.

During the Lenten season, we prepare ourselves for the victory of Life over death. This is the positive awareness of God our Father on the quality of the life of his Son, Jesus, who himself knew how to listen to the cries and the complaints of his people.

Let us imitate him by allowing some space in our timetable, by offering a time to listen to those who are dear to us, as to those who are lonely.

Indeed, many Africans whom I have met in all the countries where I have worked, do remember many religious persons, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, not so much for their skills in building or teaching, but rather for the quality of their presence among them. “They loved us, they spent time with us, we felt like being heard by them”. Yes, so much time spent listening, consoling, encouraging, being put back on one’s feet… 150 years of listening.

This work was done not without risk for the lives of our confrères. From our foundation up to now, more than fifty companions were murdered and many of them because of their faith. They are true martyrs. On the 8th of December 2018, four Missionaries of Africa with 15 others, all killed in Algeria because of their faith, were beatified in that country. You will find an interesting article about that on page 13. It is worth reading about South Africa which has also been blessed by the beatification of Benedict Daswa, the first recognised local martyr in the country of Nelson Mandela.

Finally, the testimony of Fr. Michel Meunier will remind you of the beauty of a dedicated life to the proclamation of the Good News. Enjoy your reading and may the Lord bless you with peace, hope and joy in your heart.

Réal Doucet, M.Afr.
Several Countries, One Africa

Like many of us, when I was young, I thought Africa was a great and mysterious country of legends and dreams. Since then, I have discovered, through my missionary vocation, that Africa is a huge continent, with more than 50 countries, living under God’s Spirit who precedes us. Didn’t Jesus as a child learn his first steps on the African soil?

I was born in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, the second of four children. Our parents were good Catholics, devout and sincere. I am very grateful to have grown up in a good family.

I spent my youth busy with my studies at the Séminaire de St-Jean and my activities in Scouting. Every year, after the summer boy-scout camp, I worked for two months in order to pay for my studies. Scouting brought me a lot. During those years my missionary vocation took roots. I was much impressed by the witness of late Father André Lymburner, M.Afr., who was then our scoutmaster. He never spoke explicitly about his vocation or about mine, but his human and Christian qualities influenced me a lot.

On May 24, 1969, I took my missionary oath and was ordained a deacon. On May 23, 1970, I was ordained a priest. And finally, in early September, I left for Africa! After a few days in Uganda, where I visited the Martyrs’ shrine, I arrived in Malawi.

My first country: Malawi

After a few months learning the language and customs of the Achewa, I arrived in Mua, my first mission. I will never forget my first Christmas Mass in the midst of 180 lepers who, despite their disfigured faces and distorted limbs, sang with joy ‘... he was born in a stable, poor like us’. I could see Jesus in everyone of them.

In 1973, I moved to Dedza parish with two colleagues of my age. We formed a young and dynamic team! Following the decisions of the bishops, we visited our 18 prayer centres, and within a year, they mushroomed into 78 small Christian communities! In their weekly meetings, each community shares the Sunday Gospel, prays and discusses on how to live it in their daily lives. They also come up with several concrete actions to improve the lives of people in their neighbourhood, especially the poor and the sick.

I was also involved in the youth apostolate. Scouting was banned in Malawi, so I formed similar groups using names of Saints. Through games, songs and dances, young people receive Christian teachings based on the lives of these models: Saints Charles Lwanga and Kizito (Ugandan Martyrs), and Saints Bernadette and Maria Goretti.
In 1978, I spent nine months in a pastoral Institute in Kenya. With 40 priests, religious and lay people, we deepened our faith while trying to find more appropriate methods to pass it on. It was a truly rewarding period, as much for the topics presented in a modern way, as by the interaction with the participants who hailed from more than 15 countries of Africa and as far as Papua New Guinea! We could feel the universality of the missionary Church.

Back in Malawi, I became Diocesan Chaplain for secondary schools, Colleges and YCS groups (Young Christian Students). I regularly visited 14 schools. There I met hundreds of young people eager to learn more about Jesus Christ. The Catholic Action method “See, Judge and Act” helps students to change their milieu. Principals and Headmasters agreed that the members helped create a better atmosphere in the school environment.

Then, I became the YCS National Chaplain for two years. In 1982, I took part in the YCS World Congress in Montreal. An experience of dynamic faith with three hundred young people from 80 countries!

**Service in Canada**

In 1984, I went to Ottawa for missionary and vocation awareness. I also worked among African communities, including the African Students Association of the Ottawa University. In 1986, for the centenary of the Martyrs of Uganda, with the help of my community, we put up a musical play entitled “Until When?” History repeats itself: Christians have always been and are still persecuted. With 16 actors and sound and light technicians, we made a tour, giving twenty performances in Eastern Ontario and Quebec.

As regards vocations, I found no candidate! But in 1999, I received a letter from a young man who wrote that, upon visiting his school, my presentation touched him so much that he decided to become a missionary with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate! Pierre-Olivier Tremblay is now Auxiliary Bishop of the diocese of Trois-Rivières! The Lord has a sense of humour: I went to that college run by the Spiritan Fathers, to talk about the Missionaries of Africa, and the only one who responded, joined the Oblates!

**My second country: Kenya**

From September to December 1987, I spent a time of biblical and spiritual renewal in Jerusalem. It was an unforgettable faith experience. Then, I was appointed to Kenya. After three months in Tanzania studying Swahili, I went to Nairobi, the capital city. South B was a vibrant parish with a good pastoral team. I was entrusted with the Youth Ministry. I soon noticed that young people here had a real talent for music. Therefore, we started producing
musical plays, especially for Christmas. These projects mobilized more than 150 youths and adults. Moreover, every Sunday, we celebrated Mass with more than 700 young people.

Fifteen young adults decided to create a team of ‘young evangelisers’ to reach out to their peers who had distanced themselves from the Church. After a period of preparation, they started to go on ‘outreaches’ in high schools, colleges and universities. As a spiritual adviser, I intervened only when they were stuck!

At the insistence of the youths, and helped by the parish, we started a Drop-in Centre for street children. Until today, I am happy to hear from them and see that several former street boys have been helped and are now in secondary schools, colleges, and some even in University. Others have found good jobs, and take good care of their families.

**Sabbatical time in Canada**

In 1996, I was appointed to work with people from Africa in Toronto. Wearing my small pectoral cross bearing the effigy of Africa, I contacted Africans wherever I could. A small community took shape, and then, in 1998, the Toronto Archdiocese asked us to take Our Lady of the Assumption Parish. Our only condition: make room for the Africans. With two confreres, we ran this lively parish, and we held an African Mass every Sunday. The news spread and soon we welcomed between 100 and 150 Africans for their spiritual and social life.

In 2003, the Archbishop asked us to take Sacré-Coeur Parish, downtown Toronto. Still, we put our condition: the African community should feel welcome. Then we continued our apostolate with 150 to 200 Africans from over twenty different countries. In my visits to families, I learned a lot about their home countries, so I could understand them better. These visits always ended with a prayer, and often with the blessing of their homes. I often reminded them that Jesus himself was a refugee with Mary and Joseph in Egypt.

**My third country: Angola**

As there were many Angolans in Toronto, the Provincial allowed me to spend a year in this South Western African
country unknown to us, Missionaries of Africa. Between 2002 and 2003, I spent eleven months in a Salesian community. No one here spoke French or English. So, I was compelled to quickly learn Portuguese, and soon I managed to preach.

My fourth country: South Africa

In 2008, I was appointed to South Africa. After four months of learning the Zulu language, I started on missionary and vocation awareness. Though based in Johannesburg, I visited almost all the dioceses of this great country, including Lesoto and Swaziland. I looked for missionary vocations, but South African youths are not keen at the idea of leaving their rich country. Then, after more than eight years, only one candidate is now preparing to become a Missionary of Africa, and he is not South African!

My fifth country: Zambia

After an unfortunate injury on my left hand, I still agreed to become Provincial Secretary, and in July 2017, I moved to Lusaka. Zambia is a beautiful country where the Church is celebrating 125 years of presence; the Missionaries of Africa are its Founders.

I spent a year there as the Secretary of the Southern Province of the M.Afr., which comprises Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia. But my work was becoming more and more difficult because of that hand injury and also a numbing pain in the right hand due to a carpal tunnel syndrome. I often felt tired and had frequent headaches. So, in prayer, reflection and dialogue with my spiritual advisor, I asked to return to Canada.

My retirement?

After a good rest and medical care, I am now at our Provincial House in Montreal, as coordinator of our community. Being near my family and friends gives me the opportunity to meet them more often. In all these contacts and some pastoral commitments, I try to keep alive my missionary witness. The Mission continues over there and here as well. Many have wished me a happy retirement, but I hope it will be an active one and in the line of my missionary vocation received from the Lord.

Michel Meunier, M.Afr.
Benedict Daswa is the first South African officially on the road to sainthood. He was born in 1946 in the north-eastern Province of Limpopo. At the age of 17, he was baptised as a Catholic. He married and was blessed with eight children.

A teacher and school principal, Daswa was considered a highly skilled educator and an exemplary husband and father. He was also involved in the parish community as catechist, liturgical animator, promoter of works of charity, and a builder of justice and peace. With the help of the parishioners, he built a church for the area.

As a family man, he knew how to improve the lives of his wife and children. He never looked down on house chores deemed to belong to women only, and he helped his wife whenever it was needed. This drew upon him some contempt from his fellow men; but he always said that in marriage, husband and wife must learn to help each other in whatever needs to be done. He managed to build a modern house and planted trees, a very fruitful orchard and a vegetable garden. He knew how to organise his life and save his earnings to such a point that he could buy a vehicle which he used not only for his family, but to help people in need of going to the hospital, which was far from his remote village.

He was also a member of the village council of elders. Although one of the youngest, he was not afraid to voice his opinions and express his Christian convictions. In January 1990, during a heavy thunderstorm, several thatched houses were struck by lightning. In Benedict’s absence, the village council decided to collect money from each villager in order to hire a sangoma (witch doctor) to find out the witch who had sent the lightning. Of course, Benedict objected strongly, and on 2 February, he was killed by an angry mob, because of his opposition to the practice of witchcraft. He was 43 years old.

Benedict was beatified on 13 September 2015 in front of a crowd of more than 5000 participants. During the ceremony, his 94 year old mother danced around his relics! His feast is on 1st February.

Blessed Benedict Daswa, pray for us!
Project 53: The sun as energy

The community of the Good Shepherd of Niamey, in Niger, is made of four missionaries of Africa. Our pastoral work is to lead a Christian community of nearly 300 persons. We also have as a priority, a vital dialogue with the Muslim community, including a pastoral concern regarding Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation, and our presence among the migrants and the prisoners.

For the operation of all the facilities in our house, the community at present depends on the National Electrical Company, that cannot cope with all the increasing needs of energy in Niamey and in all the country. This Company uses partly some fuel for the production of electricity which causes numerous power cuts. As a result, some of our electric facilities get damaged, such as our refrigerator; some food is lost, and it can lead to food poisoning.

Nowadays, the installation of solar panels reduces and constitutes a cleaner way as a source of energy. The sun provides a constant source of energy since it comes from a reliable and free and natural source.

It is nothing new to say that the traditional forms of energy, such as coal and petrol, are taxing on the environment, since it produces and emits a large amount of greenhouse gas. It is important that we Missionaries of Africa in Niamey follow the example of many pioneers throughout the world by using solar energy. We hope to encourage all people of goodwill to do the same so as to get a better planet.

We seek your help to install this mini project of solar panels that will take care of our kitchen and our dining hall. We figure the cost of this project will amount to $8,700 Can.

This facility in solar energy will help us to be independent during the long power cuts in the city, and avoid the inconveniences due to changeable current. Thanks to this facility, we will be able to buy food when it is less expensive and keep it without fear of it getting lost during the cut periods, as well as avoiding the risks of poisoning.

We thank you for your financial help which will allow us to fulfill our project. We keep you in our prayers.

Father Innocent Habimana, M.Afr.
Project 54: Sunday Training School for children

The Catholic church of Saint Joseph, at Bolgatanga, Ghana, was started in 1996, as an outstation. Later on, in 2015, it was established as a parish. This parish is part of the Diocese of Navrongo-Bolgatanga. It has four outstations for a population of nearly 2,200 people. The mission of the parish is the following: to proclaim the Good News through a serious and adequate Catholic teaching.

The main activities of the Parish

- Two Eucharistic Sunday celebrations.
- Bible study and sharing on Wednesdays
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament every day of the week.
- Celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation on Fridays.

The parish offers also some social activities in education, help to the people in need, the sick and the aged.

The needs of the Parish

- The buildings used for the teaching on Sundays to the 500 children are too small and overcrowded. We need to build a larger one. It is for this project that we need your help.
  - We plan to build a decent house for the priests.
  - The funds are not sufficient to build the classrooms for the catechumens.
  - There is also the need to find the funds to have some cement seats in front of the grotto.

The development committee of the parish has established a procedure that will take into account the help of the parishioners so as to obtain their manual and financial involvement. A budget totaling 13,420 dollars is fixed. 4,570 dollars will be provided by the parishioners, while 8,850 dollars will come from outside of the parish.

We wish to thank you, our Canadian friends, for sustaining this process of development of our parochial community at Saint Joseph.

Father Pierre Boro              Father Kevin Rand            Father Erus Kishor
«Remain faithful to your charism!»

When we speak of Cardinal Lavigerie we often stop at the different stages of his outstanding career: at the age of 29, he was a professor at the Sorbonne; at 31, he was the director of the work of schools of the Orient; at 38, Bishop of Nancy; at 41, Archbishop of Algiers. We also know his missionary instructions, his forefront insights, his struggles for the Church of France.

Lavigerie was really, as it is often repeated, a giant of the Apostolate. In the aftermath of his death, a newspaper in Rome wrote: “At the bold initiatives of this great man from now on will succeed the gradual and peaceful development of his works. He has cut the task for many generations to come. As the conquerors and founders of Empires, he has shaped history for centuries. The Missions, the White Fathers, the White Sisters, the Anti-Slavery, the Sahara and the Sudan, the Africa of the Lakes, everything will go further under the impulse received from his hand. The harvests will blossom, the sowers are on the way out”.

But himself, who was he?

At his death, we have found no personal paper, no notes from his retreats, no diary, nothing concerning his spiritual life, very few confidences about his personal life. “We can only suspect the wealth of his interior life” said Father Renault, “but we have to stop at the threshold of his intimate life, without being able to discover its depth”.

At Algiers, we know that he got up at 4 o’clock in the morning, and spent a full hour in prayer before celebrating his mass. He had practices of a simple piety. He always carried, in a pocket of his cassock, a little statue of Saint Joseph, his funds provider, as he was saying. We know also that he had a great devotion to Mary, Queen of Africa. On his death bed, he had his window opened so that he could fix his eyes on the church bell tower of the Basilica of our Lady of Africa. Whenever he left for a journey, and on his way back home, he would pray at our Lady of Africa.

Humility

He seemed to be seeking the honors such as the Cardinalate, to be combining the Archbishops of Carthage and Algiers, which is against the rules of Canon Law. He made some approaches in Rome so that the Society will not have a Superior General during his life time, but a simple Vicar General. And yet, he gives signs of a true humility. After his death, a simple carton box was found containing an impressive number of decorations that he had received and that he practically never wore (except one or the other when he had an official function). He would genuflect in front of a Secretary whom he had rebuffed, to ask for forgiveness. On his epitaph, he had all his titles carved and at the bottom, he had asked to add these
words: “et nunc cinis” which means: “but now, all this, is ashes”.

To one of his admirers who had sent him a book that he had just written about him, he answers: “I made the vow of never read your book so as not to open my ear to the temptations from which I know alas so much the danger”.

A man respectful of all that is human

We all know his famous cry at the church of the Gesu, in Rome, during his anti-slavery campaign, a sentence taken from an ancient philosopher Terence, of Carthage: “I am a man and nothing that is human is foreign to me”. At the end of his life, he would let go this complaint: “Few people, very few people have this superior vocation: humility”.

We know better through his writings and instructions to his missionaries how respectful he was of the ways of living and doing of other peoples, of what we call today the culture. Respect of the Oriental Rites. In Africa, respecting the customs, learning the languages, avoiding to make of the Africans European Christians. To his missionaries, he will ask to wear the clothes of the Arabs among whom they lived.

A man of the Church

He got to know the temptations of power and honors, but we can say that he did not seek them as a more efficient mean of fulfilling his role in the Church, while doing his humanitarian work. We know his action in the Church of France, the toast of Algiers, his friendship with Leo XIII.

He looked hard and energetic, and yet he was a man with great sensitiveness. He was very impressionable. The delays, the slowness to obey would deeply irritate him, and thus his outbursts were frequent and a few, quite famous.

I would like to conclude with this excerpt of a prophetical text of the Cardinal, among the most beautiful that he has ever written:

“He speaks of this Africa that will one day become Christian, and he concludes by saying:

“This day, my brothers, my eyes will not see it in this world; but I will wait for it, at least with a firm trust that will follow me beyond my grave.

There, if God has mercy on my soul, my prayers will seek to hasten this coming. Prostrated before the throne of the Lamb, for which his blood has redeemed all the peoples of the world, I will unite my voice with that of the martyrs, the doctors, the bishops of Ancient Africa, to implore, since so many centuries, the rising of their homeland.

This day, when these vows will come true, my cold ashes will exult from the depth of my tomb”.

Jean-Marie Tardif
January 20, 2018. Excerpts of the Algerian Bishops’ official statement, on the beatification of 19 religious (men and women). Four of them were White Fathers, killed by the armed Islamists at Tizi-Ouzou, on December 27, 1994. From top to bottom, and left to right: Alain Dieulangard, Jean Chevillard, Charles Deckers and Christian Chessel.

« Our Church rejoices in the Lord. Pope Francis recently authorized the signature of a decree for the beatification of Bishop Pierre Claverie and his 18 companions ». This blessing is given as a reminder of our nineteen martyred brothers and sisters. Witnessing of the greater love, the one that is self-giving life for the beloved ones. Daily facing an omnipresent danger of death in the country, they consciously opted to live out to the utmost their patiently woven loving lives with the Algerians.

Our brothers and sisters would never have accepted to be separated from those in whose midst they gave up their whole lives. Their deaths witness to a broad brotherhood without any border, and to a love that gives way to no difference. Their deaths enlighten the martyrdom of so many Algerians, Muslim men and women, who, as peacebuilders, were looking for a meaningful life. As upright persons, they have been persecuted for justice and remained faithful to their conscience even in accepting death during the black period of the bloodstained Algeria.

Our hearts unite in the same and similar homage all our Algerian brothers and sisters, thousands of them who did not fear death, being faithful to God, to their country, and to their conscience. Among them, 99 imams who lost their lives because they refused to justify violence. Also, among them, scholars, writers, journalists, scientists and artists, members of the armed forces, and thousands of family fathers and mothers, humble unknown persons, who refused to obey to unacceptable orders. Our nineteen brothers and sisters died because they chose the Gospel rather than prudence, keeping good human relationships, going on sharing small services. Weren’t they their neighbours? Their deaths reveal that their lives were totally given to them: women in special difficulties, the poor and handicapped persons, youth, all of them being Muslims. A murder ideology, which is a distortion of Islam, was unable to accept other different ideas and persons: as nationalities and faiths. After each tragic murder, the most saddened people were their Muslim friends and neighbours, horrified that Islam is used for such killings.

These beatifications are a prophetic word for our world. Hatred is not the right answer to hatred, and there is no inescapable spiral of violence. They are a bridge towards forgiveness and peace for all humans. Our martyred brothers and sisters become models on the path to ordinary sanctity. Their humble daily lives given to God and the others witness to the possibility of reaching to the highest realisation of a real human vocation. It had become clear for each of them that love for the other also means impossible retirement in times of difficult trials. This is a miracle of brotherhood.

P.S.: The celebration of the beatification of Bishop Pierre Claverie and his 18 companions took place on December 8 2018, in a vast area near the cathedral of Oran where thousands of Muslim Algerians, and Christians coming from Algeria and from abroad gathered together, surrounded by the armed forces.
In all simplicity… to help us
Parents, benefactors and friends
If you wish to help the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers),
* Donation for a specific project (see page 9)
* Donation for the works of the White Fathers, in general
* Life annuity investments
* Requests and legacies
* Bursaries for Missionary of Africa candidates
* Gift of publicly traded securities
You can use page 15 of this letter to our friends, fill it according to your intentions, cut it out and send it with the return envelope to one of our addresses on the last page.
You can equally go to our Website (www.mafr.net) to make a safe online donation.
You can also go and meet a missionary at one of our houses.
Thank you for keeping Africa in mind

The policy of the Missionaries of Africa concerning the projects published in the Letter to our friends:
1- All the projects published in the Letter to our friends are exclusively for Africa
2- The whole amount received is sent to Africa
3- Under the section “Acknowledgment” in the Letter to our friends, the beneficiaries inform the readers about the progress or the completion of the project
4- It is essential to have a Missionary of Africa (White Father) as a respondent.

Proverb
You can’t teach a fish how to swim (Gabon)
The meaning
“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”
I wish to help the Missionaries of Africa

(For an ONLINE DONATION: www.mafr.net > Online Donation)

Donation .........................$ for the Missionaries of Africa.

Donation ..........................$ for Projects No 53, 54 (CF page 9-10)

For a donation of $10 or more, you will receive a receipt for tax purposes.

Other ways of helping the Mission:

• Life annuity investments
  - I you are 60 or over, you can put your money into the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) Life annuity investment. This annuity is guaranteed for life and offers a varying rate according to the life expectancy.
  - You will receive a tax receipt for at least 20% of the sum paid. Only a small part of the payments you receive could be liable for tax.

• Bequest and legacies
  - “Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend, and do not let it rust under a stone and be lost.” (Si. 29:10)

• Bursaries for our 500 Missionary of Africa candidates
  - One-year scholarship: $ 1,700
  - Three-year scholarship: $ 5,000

I enclose a cheque payable to the Missionaries of Africa

I prefer to pay by credit card (tick which card)

Card number........................................your CVV............................... Expiry: ..................................................Signature:.................................................................

• Gift of publicly traded securities
  - You will receive a charitable donation receipt.

N.B.: If you do not receive this newsletter “Letter to our friends”, on request it will be sent to you free of charge, once a year, as well as a calendar.

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Thank you!
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