

SUMMER 2022

CPPS TODAY

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

“Building a New House”



*Missionaries
Form the
United States Province*

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Our Mission Remains the Same

Our cover story in this issue is an inside view of our joint provincial assembly, held in June in Indianapolis, where together the Missionaries of the Cincinnati Province and the Kansas City Province celebrated the formation of a new province, the United States Province. Once the decree creating the new province was read, we began to elect its leadership. I was humbled when my brothers in the C.P.P.S. elected me to lead the new province. You can read more about our new leadership team in the cover story.

We have been talking about this step for many years. Along the way, there have been many gatherings, large and small, among the Missionaries and our lay associates, Companions, to talk about our vision for the future of the Congregation and to make concrete plans. It is our firm belief that if we are open to the voice of the Holy Spirit, this step can strengthen our ministries and lead us to new ways to serve. Our province's name is changing but our mission remains the same: to accompany God's people on their faith journey and to serve God to the best of our abilities and maybe even beyond the best of our abilities.

We have been careful not to set too many parameters for the new province as we live into it. We have seen the miracles that God can perform when people pull together and accompany each other in faith.

A great example of that is the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR), celebrating its 20-year anniversary in 2022. When it was first formed in 2002, even those Missionaries who were deeply involved in the ministry were not sure how PBMR would evolve over the years. Thanks to the support of many, many people, including many from its own Back of the Yards neighborhood on Chicago's south side, PBMR today is a living, breathing example of God's mercy at work. The center, where Missionaries and CPPS sisters are in ministry, offers what it calls "radical hospitality" to show young people—indeed, people of all ages—that they are loved and valued, that they have a place in God's family.

Starting out on a journey can be challenging. It can be easier to keep on the path that you have always taken. And there are times when that is perfectly appropriate. But we are starting out as the United States Province with the assurance that we are following the same call, with the same mission, that God gave to our Congregation more than 200 years ago. Please pray for us as we find our way, and join us in thanking God, who lights our way.

**Between
the Lines**
by Fr. Jeffrey
Kirch, C.P.P.S.



“Building a New House”

*Missionaries
Form the
United States
Province*

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood of the former Cincinnati and Kansas City Provinces have come together to form the new United States Province.

The decree that created the United States Province was read during the Missionaries' assembly on June 13–16 in Indianapolis.

For the four days of the assembly, Missionaries from across the U.S., along with their lay associates, called Companions, were together to witness and take the very first steps of this new province, which had been discussed and planned for several years. By ministering together, they hope to bring new life and new dreams to their shared mission, which is to help all of God's people see and experience the redemption and healing offered by the Precious Blood of Jesus.

Monday, June 13

The assembly began with a presentation by the provincial directors of both the Cincinnati and Kansas City Provinces. Fr. Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S., provincial director of the Kansas City Province, called forth representatives who had brought water from their own province. They poured the water together, Fr. Richmeier blessed it, then blessed all assembled.

"We are building a new house with an open door to the world," he said. "As we carry forth Jesus' mission, may Jesus strengthen us to continue this work. May we be refreshed inwardly by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Fr. Jeffrey Kirch, C.P.P.S., the provincial director of the Cincinnati Province, told the assembly, "It's good to be together finally to celebrate, to build relationships and to create a new province. A lot of hard work has gone into making this a reality. It's a good place to be."

The Missionaries were helped in the creation of the new province by Fr. Frank Donio, S.A.C., the executive director of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, an organization that represents all of the men's religious communities in the United States.

Fr. Donio, who met many times in recent years with both provincial councils to help guide them through the



“Standing in the breach means that we stand with Others. We stand with our hearts and hands open and accompany them to some kind of hope and healing so they are not alone.”

— Fr. Joe Nassal (at left), vice provincial director of the United States Province

process, served as the keynote speaker at the assembly.

“The Holy Spirit has been moving this process forward over time,” Fr. Donio said. “Is it an easy process? No, of course not.” Fr. Donio said that in founding the Congregation in 1815, St. Gaspar del Bufalo was responding to the urgent need of his times—as all religious congregations are called to do.

The urgent need of our times, Fr. Donio continued, is “being in the ‘field hospital,’ as we hear Pope Francis describe the Church, immersed in the lives of God’s

people who are most abandoned, most in the margins, most in need.”

Fr. Donio said these are challenging times for all men’s religious congregations. In the U.S., 75 percent of men religious are over the age of 60, and only six percent are under the age of 40. “In 1970, the average age for diocesan priests and men religious was 35,” Fr. Donio said.

Fr. Donio is a member of the Pallottine Fathers, a religious community founded by St. Vincent Pallotti. St. Vincent and St. Gaspar were contemporaries

and friends, he told the assembly, and there is much to learn from their life stories.

"You might think we are coming to the end of religious life. No. We are coming to a greater reality," he said. "Let's look at our friends, Gaspar and Pallotti. Times were really bad for them—yet they moved forward in a way that was creative and transformative."

He praised the Missionaries for having difficult conversations and taking action to strengthen their Congregation. "It's not easy to have these kinds of conversations, but you're having them. A number of communities of men have gone through mergers, but there was nothing new. You as a community decided to reflect deeply and listen to each other. Pope Francis speaks about journeying together, being a listening Church. A Church of closeness, where there is caring and compassion. You have been engaging in this journey together, listening to the Holy Spirit, discerning."

Tuesday, June 14

After Morning Prayer on Tuesday, Fr. Richmeier and Fr. Kirch shared their thoughts on the leadership that the new province would need.

"We as a Congregation have been gifted by the Holy

Spirit," Fr. Kirch said. "The charism that we've been gifted with is precious, so we have to appreciate that gift, and we have to be very attentive to it.

"We have to listen to the Spirit. Most especially for elected leadership, we have to listen to each other. Listen to our brothers and sisters, listening to their needs, listening to people's pain and their joy. Elected leadership is about fraternity: we are brothers to each other. We recognize the gifts in one another, and ask, 'How do you hear the Spirit moving us?'"

In a later presentation, Fr. Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S., also spoke of the Holy Spirit, and how the guidance of the Spirit affects the movement of the Missionaries. "The Spirit sends us out to those places in the world broken by violence. That's where we belong. There's brokenness everywhere, and we stand in that breach caused by pain and hatred. Standing in the breach means that we stand with others. We stand with our hearts and hands open and accompany them to some kind of hope and healing so they are not alone. That's a part of the Eucharist, it's about real presence. And that's what defines us."

At the liturgy that evening, Gregory Evers, C.P.P.S., was definitively incorporated into the Congregation. Greg, who will

be ordained a deacon in August, promised to devote his life to the Missionaries. Fr. Ken Schnipke, C.PP.S., presented Greg with the mission cross that had belonged to his brother, the late Fr. Gene Schnipke, C.PP.S., who was one of the inspirations for Greg to join the Congregation.

"My brother, Fr. Gene, brought Greg into contact with other Missionaries, and shared his stories about life as a priest and a Missionary of the Precious Blood with Greg," Fr. Schnipke said. "That gave Greg a sense of his own vocation. And so, we entrust Gene's mission cross to Greg. I'm sure Gene is rejoicing with all of us today."



Fr. Ken Schnipke, left, presented the mission cross of his brother, the late Fr. Gene Schnipke, to Greg Evers as Greg was definitively incorporated.

Wednesday, June 15

At Morning Prayer, Brother Juan Acuña, C.PP.S., the secretary general of the Congregation, stepped to the podium and read the decree creating the United States Province. The decree had been signed by Fr. Emanuele Lupi, C.PP.S., moderator general of the Congregation, on June 12, the 68th anniversary of the canonization of St. Gaspar. Fr. Lupi was present at the assembly to witness this important step.

Fr. Lupi then came forward to lead the assembly, which he said "is the highest authority of the province. Among us, the

Missionaries of the Precious Blood, an electoral assembly is the most solemn moment because leaders are chosen who will reflect the will and the dream of the province.

"This is a historical moment: the election of the first leadership of the new province. This leadership has to plant the roots for the future of the province. We ask the spirit of the Lord to be upon us at the beginning of

the new chapter.”

Voting then began, and the Missionaries of the United States Province elected Fr. Jeffrey Kirch as its first provincial director.

Elected to leadership as vice provincial director and first councilor was Fr. Joe Nassal. Fr. Nassal, a noted author, speaker and preacher, formerly served as the provincial director of the Kansas City Province.

Fr. Kirch spoke briefly after his election: “It is a privilege to be asked by my brothers in community to lead the Congregation in the United States as we begin this important part of our shared life. I’m looking forward to working with Missionaries and Companions as we seek to bring to fruition Gaspar’s dream, as well as our dreams. I’m looking forward to continuing to build our relationships in the bond of charity and hearing from one another our hopes and dreams for the future of the Congregation.

“So many people have poured their lives into the mission of this Congregation throughout its history. And that continues. . . we don’t stop here. The work is just beginning. Our task now is to become new wine in new wineskins.”

During the liturgy that evening, Companions renewed their commitment to the

“So many people have poured their lives into the mission of this Congregation throughout its history. And that continues. . . The work is just beginning. Our task now is to become new wine in new wineskins.”

— Fr. Jeffrey Kirch, provincial director of the U.S. Province

Missionaries through their covenants, which are individual statements of faith and purpose.

Thursday, June 16

After Morning Prayer, Fr. Kirch read messages of congratulations from Missionaries around the world on the formation of the United States Province.

As voting resumed, the Missionaries chose the remaining councilors for their new provincial council. Fr. Ben Berinti, C.P.P.S., was elected second councilor. He is the pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Melbourne Beach, Fla., and St. Joseph Church in Palm Bay, Fla., and is also an author and retreat leader.

Fr. Ron Will, C.P.P.S., was elected third councilor. He is the director of the Missionaries' Precious Blood Renewal Center in Liberty, Mo. Brother Daryl Charron, C.P.P.S., was elected fourth councilor. He is a hospital chaplain and the Missionaries' director of initial formation. He lives in Chicago.

At the closing liturgy of the assembly, the new leadership was installed.

Fr. Ben Berinti was the homilist. He spoke of St. Gaspar, who was born on January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany. Fr. Berinti drew a line from the magi to St. Gaspar to the new United States Province.

"Perhaps those starry-eyed travelers (the magi) can teach us something as we venture forth. How do we find our way? The magi were in community, wise enough to know that this is the best way to go. All they had to illuminate their terrain was a star. That is where their map began: with a burning light, in the



The Missionaries' new leadership team clockwise from top left: Frs. Joe Nassal, Jeffrey Kirch, Ben Berinti and Ron Will; and Brother Daryl Charron.

company of others gazing in the same direction.

"Why did they risk it? My only certainty is they were being true to who they were. By remaining faithful to their vocation, they not only carried extravagant gifts, but they also received unbounded gifts.

"As it was for the Magi, as it was for Gaspar, so it is for us. Like them, our first calling is simply to be who we are called to be: Missionaries of the Precious Blood, proclaimers of the Word, the Word that leads to reconciliation and the renewal of the Church and the world."

3.1 Million Square Miles

At some point during our June Assembly, I became the vocations director of the United States Province. As daunting as that sounds, it really wasn't much of a change. I had already been serving for several years as the vocations director of the two provinces.

In theory, that means my territory runs from coast to coast and border to border, or 3.1 million square miles. However, if you draw a box that connects Kansas City, Des Moines, Detroit and Columbus, you capture eight of the 13 states where Missionaries live and minister. And the vast majority of our members grew up in and live somewhere in those 125,000 square miles.

That doesn't mean we don't get inquiries from men who have never met us. Recently, we've had men inquire with us from a variety of places not particularly close to us. And some who meet us at events may not live near us. We have had to get creative as we build and maintain relationships with people spread all over the country.

Zoom has become a much bigger tool, and not just because of the pandemic. Since these inquirers do not live near us, the conversations I have with them often need to be by Zoom. The face-to-face conversation, even when mediated by computers, is the better way to engage in the depth of discussion that is involved in discernment rather than simply using the telephone.

But in-person connections are still key. I travel to visit with inquirers in their hometown, and whenever possible, meet their family. I also work to facilitate opportunities for inquirers to meet our Missionaries.

Two inquirers were able to attend all or part of our assembly. For one, it was an opportunity to meet our membership for the first time. For the other, it was an opportunity for him to reconnect with Missionaries he knew from his hometown and his college years. For both, it was an opportunity to further their knowledge of us and advance their discernment.

While our footprint as a community may be smaller today than in the past, the sea in which we must cast our net is only getting bigger. Vocations ministry has to adapt and find a way forward for the sake of our future. The core of vocation ministry is facilitating relationship. It's about getting to know the inquirer and helping them get to know us.

**Call and Answer
by Fr. Steve Dos
Santos, C.P.P.S.**



Ministry in Chicago Offers Mentoring, Mercy

PBMR Turns Twenty

When four Missionaries of the Precious Blood first proposed opening a Precious Blood center in the Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood in 2002, there was no blueprint. Fr. David Kelly, C.P.P.S., one of the center's four founders and still its director after 20 years, is the first to admit that. It was more of a dream than a plan.

The four priests had been talking about it for a long time, yet it was still difficult to put into words. The center would be a place where youth from the neighborhood could gather, a safe place, a sanctuary.

Fr. Kelly had been ministering in that neighborhood with the Archdiocese of Chicago's Kolbe House for years, reaching out to people in Chicago jails. He knew about the trouble that erupted all



People of the PBMR, including Fr. Dave Kelly, back row center, celebrate its 20th anniversary this summer.

“In a lot of ways, what we are today is not that far off from what we envisioned 20 years ago.”

— Fr. David Kelly, C.P.P.S.

too often in the neighborhood. He and other Missionaries of the Precious Blood—Fr. Kelly, Fr. Joe Nassal, Fr. Denny Kinderman and Fr. Bill Nordenbrock—were proposing to open what Pope Francis would later characterize as a field hospital, a place of hope.

Some of their fellow Missionaries were skeptical. How many people would this serve? Undetermined. How would it be funded and staffed? On a shoestring.

The Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation opened nearly 20 years ago without fanfare. While Fr. Bill and Fr. Joe helped shape the ministry, Fr. Dave and Fr. Denny took to the streets. They walked around the neighborhood and talked to anyone who would sit with them.

"We knew we had to be invited. We weren't going to tell the community what it needed," Fr. Dave said. "So we walked around. We sat with a whole lot of people."

Before long, the center moved into the second floor of a church-owned school building on the corner of 52nd and Elizabeth. And there it remains.

The Missionaries define and embrace reconciliation as their main mission, carrying it out in many ways. Through the Precious Blood of Jesus, they strive to reconcile people with each other, people to their God. From this sense of mission came the name for the center: The Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation, or PBMR.

Many people who doubted if the PBMR could make a difference are now true believers. The PBMR's staff has grown from those first four to 32 people

plus volunteers, many from the neighborhood it serves.

Fr. Kelly, who started the ministry by walking around the neighborhood, has had to learn to be an administrator and a boss. He now works with a 12-member board that meets quarterly and helps determine the course of the ministry.

"In a lot of ways, what we are today is not that far off from what we envisioned 20 years ago," Fr. Kelly said.

Fr. Kelly is frequently invited to speak about the PBMR and its ministry. He is recognized throughout the Chicago region as one of the leading experts on restorative justice.

Likewise, Missionaries of the Precious Blood from around the world point to PBMR as a place where their spirituality is lived out.

"When we first started this ministry, some people may have thought, 'You're priests, why aren't you in a parish?'" Fr. Kelly said. "But with time and storytelling, we've tried to help people make the connection between the work we're doing and the spirituality we embrace. As Precious Blood spirituality came alive here, as we started to allow it to unfold in our work, Precious Blood people said, 'Wait a minute, this is what we're about.'"

Fr. Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S., who celebrates the 40th anniversary of his ordination this year, is often called upon to explain how daily life and ministry happen at the PBMR. Following are his own words.

PBMR ministers to those on the margins of society,

but we don't just stay on the margins. The margins are the margins for a reason. We need to go to the margins all the time: Jesus went to the lepers, and he brought them back home. He brought them back to community. We need to go to those places where people feel isolated and alone, and bring them back.

How Does Ministry Happen At the PBMR?

Our core values are hospitality, hope and healing.

We create a space of hospitality. A population that is not always welcome at other places is welcome here. Radical hospitality is not very easy. A lot of them come with a lot of trauma, a lot of pain. We want them and their family members to feel, "you're good, you're safe here."

We tell a young person,

"There is a place in this world for you." So many feel that they don't matter, that they are invisible. They may have been abandoned by their

parents. They may be in despair. We try to create an atmosphere that lets them know, you can have a family, you can get a job. That's the hope part. That's why we do what we do.

Often, we are talking with people who are in conflict.

And when people are in conflict, we always lead with values, rather than issues. Issues can divide you, polarize you. If you lead with issues, you're going to go into a camp. I suggest to you that we all share common values. Often, we need to ask, "what's important to you? What do you hold and cherish?" then after we talk about the values we may share, we're safe enough to talk about some of the harder issues.

Programs at the PBMR

Over the years, the PBMR has launched many programs to help young people and families in its neighborhood, including job training, summer work for youth, tutoring during the school year, and support for those coming home after incarceration.

- From its inception, people from the PBMR have ministered to incarcerated youth. The stories that they hear there and the desperate needs that they see help inform the work of the center. Fr. Dave Kelly puts it this way: “My work in the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center has been a constant commitment through the years. It has been a cornerstone of learning for me, and for what I am able to bring to PBMR.”
- Mothers Healing Circles, initiated by Sr. Donna Liette, CPPS, are offered to mothers, grandmothers, family members and friends of those who have been killed or injured by violence, and those who are imprisoned because of violence. Many experience hope and healing in this circle of sisterhood.
- Mother Brunner Home and other housing options in the neighborhood.
- A large and thriving community garden, where Sr. Carolyn Hoying, CPPS, can usually be found with the garden crew.
- Opportunities for young people to find artistic expression, including painting, drawing, photography, writing, and now music, through PBMR’s Precious Records Studio. A large unused space at the center has recently been converted into a recording studio that trains youth in audio production practices and techniques.
- Events for the community, where people of all ages and backgrounds can support each other and get to know each other.



Sr. Carolyn Hoying works in the PBMRs community garden.

To learn more about PBMR and its anniversary celebration, visit pbmr.org.

Editor's note: the obituary of Brother Daniel Eisenman, C.PP.S., was omitted from previous editions of C.PP.S. Today. We regret the error.

IN MEMORIAM: Brother Daniel Eisenman, C.PP.S., 88, died on November 15, 2020.

Brother Daniel was born on February 16, 1932, in Center Line, Mich., to John and Mabel (Doran) Eisenman. He entered the Congregation in 1945 at Brunnerdale, the Missionaries' former high school seminary outside of Canton, Ohio, and was professed a religious brother on Sept. 8, 1952.

Brother Daniel devoted his life to the support of his Congregation. After his profession, he was assigned to the Community's farm in Burkettsville, Ohio. In 1955, he went to work at Messenger Press, which was founded by the C.PP.S. at St. Charles Center, then a seminary, in Carthage, Ohio. Brother Dan worked as a press operator for 21 years.

In 1976, he was assigned to outdoor maintenance at St. Charles. For more than 35 years, he planted hundreds of annuals and tended to the flowerbeds. He mowed and took on other landscaping tasks. He painted rooms and hallways in the winter months.

Brother Dan also helped his fellow Missionaries in other ways. For many years, he delivered meals from the kitchen to the infirmary, and helped the priests and brothers who could no longer feed themselves. He was a Mass server in St. Charles' Assumption Chapel for decades.



Brother Dan Eisenman

Throughout his life as a religious brother, Brother Daniel did what his Community asked him to do. He knew nothing about farming when he was sent to work on the farm, but did so cheerfully. When he was sent to the print shop, he knew nothing about printing, but was willing to learn. It was in working outside that he was happiest, that and worshipping in the chapel, which he said was his favorite place at St. Charles. But he found all of his work for his religious community fulfilling. He wanted to be of service. "That's what a religious brother does," he said. "Help out wherever you can."

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on November 21, 2020. Fr. Jeffrey Kirch, C.PP.S., provincial director, presided and Fr. Ken Schroeder, C.PP.S., was the homilist.

Burial followed in the Community cemetery.

IN MEMORIAM: Fr. Joseph Rodak, C.PP.S., 87, died on May 18, 2022, in the infirmary of St. Charles Center, Carthagen, Ohio.

He was born on July 24, 1934, in Cleveland, to Peter and Victoria (Masuga) Rodak. He entered the Congregation in 1949 at Brunnerdale, the Missionaries' former high school seminary in Canton, Ohio. He was ordained on June 9, 1962.

Fr. Rodak had many ministries during his nearly 60 years as a priest. After ordination, he served as a chaplain at St. Elizabeth Hospital, Dayton, before enrolling in graduate courses at John Carroll University. In 1965, he was assigned to Saint Joseph's College in Rensselaer, Ind., where he was an instructor and director of seminarians.

After taking additional coursework, Fr. Rodak was assigned to Calumet College of St. Joseph in Whiting, Ind., in 1973. He was active in retreat and renewal ministry from 1986–90 then returned to Saint Joseph's College as a visiting professor of television beginning in 1990. In 1998, he was a chaplain at St. Margaret Mercy Healthcare Centers in Whiting.

Fr. Rodak was appointed the parish administrator of St. Mark Church in Cincinnati in 1999. He later returned to hospital chaplaincy.

In retirement, he lived at the Sorrowful Mother Shrine in Bellevue, Ohio, and at Mary Queen of Peace Parish in Cleveland.

While he spent more time as a teacher and a chaplain, Fr. Rodak had a pastor's heart. He enjoyed talking with people and hearing their viewpoints, taking it all in. He had a piercing, insightful expression and a sharp memory. He enjoyed telling stories, which served him well in all his ministries.

He was also a family man—family connections were always important to him. He was "Uncle Joe" to his nieces and nephews, to whom he offered his support and wisdom.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on May 24 at St. Charles. Fr. Jeffrey Kirch, CPP.S., provincial director, presided and Fr. William O'Donnell, C.PP.S., was the homilist.

Burial followed in the Community cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, United States Province.



Fr. Rodak

Eternal rest grant unto them, o Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

A Failed Franciscan

I was reading recently about the life of Sister Jose Hobday, who was described as a Franciscan warrior, a mystic and contemplative who served the poor in rural New Mexico. She was a wisdom figure for many who came to her austere house seeking peace and healing. She lived in purposeful simplicity.

I had to set my reading aside to start a load of laundry. Recently, I had to switch from white towels to beige towels since my sister talked me into trying self-tanning lotion, and the beige towels are piling up.

I doubt that Sister Jose Hobday ever tried self-tanning lotion, or heard of it. It's hard to picture a mystic in the health and beauty section. In my defense, I did buy the store brand.

Yet the truth is plain before me: I am not a Franciscan. The Franciscan worldview of simplicity and unity with all of God's creation is appealing to me. Also, I would like to be a wisdom figure. But whenever I go into our basement, the Franciscan vision is hard to maintain. There on a shelf of kitchen gadgets is a lemon juicer, last used in 2007. A container of bendy straws in case the whole extended family gets the flu over Christmas.

And off to the side, a silver-plated loving cup, the joke trophy for a family bowling tournament that we held during the weekend of my mother's surprise 80th birthday party. My brother-in-law etched the name of the winner into its side, my oldest nephew, who is good at everything. The fact that he won the bowling tournament was one part of the weekend that was no surprise. It was supposed to be a traveling trophy, but like so many things in my possession, it never traveled.

My mother was still spry at 80, amazingly so. She would have been capable of bowling but she chose to be a spectator instead. "God has given me good health so far," she told us. She wanted to keep her end of the bargain by not wrenching a thumb or a shoulder hefting a bowling ball.

I contrast and compare this with my mother-in-law, who was playing volleyball and shooting off Roman candles the night she died at age 82. While neither was a mystic, both loved and nurtured all of creation. They could grow anything: flowers, tomatoes, children. Many came to their homes seeking peace and healing.

I am a failed Franciscan. Yet I have been richly blessed by wisdom figures. Perhaps I will yet find the way.

**At Our House
by Jean Giesige**



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