

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mass Readings: October 5, 2025

First Reading: Habakkuk 1:2-1:3, 2:2-2:4

O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95:1-95:2, 95:6-95:7b, 95:7c-95:9

O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would listen to his voice!

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would listen to his voice! Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your ancestors tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-1:8, 1:13-1:14

For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Gospel: Luke 17:5-17:10

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” The Lord replied, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. “Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table’? Would you not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink’? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’”

Righteous Like Abraham...

It is hard to have faith today, if we're talking about natural faith. But this isn't the sort of faith about which God reminds us through the readings for today. Rather, it is faith as understood in Jewish tradition and Catholic teaching. It is about trust in God, abiding in God, and being therefore confident in our outlook because of the faith that enables us to trust God. If we lose or never had this, then there's no doubt that, looking at all the serious issues facing us on all fronts, we'll easily get discouraged and overwhelmed. We'll increasingly become frustrated and more easily be angry with God for letting all of it happen, even to the extent of willingness to negotiate away our God given freedom. The best of us, the best in us will recognize that we are the makers of our own mess, and ask God to fix the culprits, and the saints among us will first ask God for their own healing, then others – and do so without self-righteous judgement.¹

The message of the first reading, “the righteous live by their faith”, is echoed in the Psalm. The Psalm reminds us of our faith, that we're not alone in tough times, and to act with faith by responding to its inherent call to worship rather than rebel. It is there, in worship, where we can be aided; repent, be reconciled, be reoriented, be renewed, reframe, refuel, and reengage. St. Paul in his care for Timothy, reminds him of the importance of having this sort of disposition rooted in faith; caring words from which we too can learn. He tells Timothy to stir into flame the gift he received, meaning that Timothy should courageously and energetically strive to put into action the grace he has been given. He was also perhaps recalling the words of Jesus in today's Gospel. That we're not suffering from a 'lack' of anything. We have what we need to be faithful no matter the challenge faced, whether it be of an internal or external nature. We don't need 'more' faith; we just need faith and faithfulness itself. Faith makes all things possible, if we both confess our Faith, and entrust ourselves to God; “*whoever abides in God, whoever has been born of God, whoever abides in love overcomes the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Faith enables us to live out this abiding, while on God's part the Holy Spirit carries out this work of grace*”.²

One needs very little faith to exercise faithfulness. As Christ said, “*If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.*” I think this teaching is one that the children of God never cease to have great difficulty understanding. And, insofar as the world is still full of people who reject God, the truths of the Christian faith, and the teachings of the Catholic Church; and insofar as the authentic disciples of Christ are not yet saints; the human condition of being inclined to sin will continue to result in the experience of the prophet Habakkuk articulated in the first reading and experienced by many today even to the point of debilitating depression and despair. Many ask sincerely of their shepherds or in discouragement ask rhetorically: *Where is God in all this? Why does he not protect his children, especially the most defenseless?* Often people are reduced to a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, even the children of God. When we rely on natural faith, hope, and charity and do so according to natural reason we will find ourselves travelling a road that only leads to despair.

The followers of Christ, whether when challenged to repeatedly forgive, remain in peace during the storms, or recognize the need to rise and become more active missionary disciples; will turn to God and say, “*Increase our faith.*” Our own experience is like that of the apostles in the Gospel reading today, after Jesus had just warned them not to become stumbling blocks to others and enjoined them to forgive as often as an offender repents even if it is seven times in one day. To say that is difficult, is an understatement, in fact it's impossible for human beings without supernatural help! That does not mean, however, that with faith

¹ Habakkuk 2:4

²https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2014/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20140110_parrot-creed.html

Christian life will be free of all hardship and difficulty. Being a Christian, taking the Gospel seriously, is never going to be a tea party. God has promised his loving care, but never promised a life free of pain, difficulties, suffering, or even sudden and violent death. What God does promise, is to help us deal with it all, to be able to experience joy and peace in the midst of it all and remain focused on the promises of our salvation in Christ.

What are we really asking for when we speak of an increase of faith, if as Jesus says, we don't need that? First, it's important to understand what this usually means in scripture. For Jews, the example of Abraham clearly marks out what is meant by 'faith'. As scholar Rabbi Louis Jacob³ points out, *"when the Torah uses the Hebrew word for faith, 'Emunah,' it is rarely if ever talking simply about whether or not one believes in God. That was taken as a given in ancient times. Hardly anyone in biblical and rabbinic times doubted that God (or the Gods) existed, in biblical and rabbinic literature, faith was really about trust. Sure, we believe in God, the ancients effectively said. But what does that mean for us? What is our emotional and behavioral response to that belief? Do we trust in the relationship, and what does that mean?"*

The answer to these questions is embodied in the biblical accounts of the life of Abraham, called the "father of faith" because, despite human limitations, he demonstrated profound trust which led him to commit acts of faithfulness which God attributed to him as righteousness, and so establishing him as the spiritual ancestor for all who have faith in God. Abraham's story is the first time in the Torah that the word is used, the emunah which is not solely belief that certain statements about God are true; it is belief in God, trust and reliance upon God, all of which call forth behavior consistent with that stance of trust and reliance.

Behavior consistent with the stance of trust and reliance, is action consistent with the assertion of faith. Faith placed in God and all that He promised to us in Jesus is the means by which we possess the kingdom of heaven while on the earth. In fact, the word Amen is directly related as affirmation that Judeo-Christian faith is one that demands action. The word amen shares the root with Emunah. Amen means "so be it" or "may it be so," and shares the root also with *eman*, meaning "to confirm". Add to that *haemeen*, which means "to trust" or "confide in". Consider all their meanings together and you'll realize when we say "amen" at the end of a prayer, it is not just a closing statement or ritual word. It is an agreement to act upon what we have prayed! Think about that for a moment and allow the awareness of "amen" to serve as a reminder each time you pray. It's easy to ask something of God in prayer. But as His children, we are invited into a partnership with God.

When the Hebrews, the Jews of the 1st century, or we ourselves speak of needing more faith, it needs to be understood that we are expressing a desire for an unwavering trust, loyalty, and faithfulness. The apostles were asking for the grace to be more faithful in their practical application of faith. To increase in their ability to abide in God, bringing God's presence into every aspect of life. This involves living a life that reflects one's commitment to God's commandments, to listen and do. It means embracing God's presence daily by making prayers, rituals, and teachings a central part of one's day-to-day life. The goal is to bring a sense of holiness and spiritual connection into every action.

Increasing in faithfulness entails strengthening trust in God's plan. Deepening one's reliance on God, especially during challenging times, by trusting that God has a greater purpose and is faithful. A wee bit of faith is all it takes to be faithful. Acts of faithfulness are key. To make faithful choices in cooperation with the Holy Spirit who is at work to increase our faithfulness. Choices such as praying the Liturgy of the Hours

³ <https://booksof.louisjacobs.org/book/faith/>

regularly, getting to know and love God more through the living Word. As well, give to charity, do works of mercy, ensure you have a sabbath day of rest... to name a few.

Unfortunately for English speaking Christians of the west, the word 'Faith' has developed apart from its biblical meaning. The word has for many become synonymous with the word religion. "My Christian faith tells me I need to love my neighbor." "Every faith teaches its followers to be kind." "He established a reputation as a steadfast defender of the Catholic faith." This leads to much confusion when trying to understand what Scripture is saying. In most cases, using the word faithfulness instead of faith alleviates the confusion clarifying the 'active' part of the scriptural meaning. Therefore, it is important to review the teachings of the Church in relation to the words 'faith' and 'faithfulness'.

Turning then to the teaching of the Church, we can gain more clarity about what it is we need from God and what we ought to mean when we pray for an increase in faith. As we understand it, faith is first and foremost a free gift of God which remains in one who has not sinned against it. We refer to it as the foundational theological virtue of which there are three: faith, hope, and charity.⁴ This free gift of Faith is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie.⁵ Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that God has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because God is truth.⁶ By faith "*man freely commits his entire self to God.*"⁷ For this reason the believer seeks understanding since it is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has believed and to understand better what God has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, increasingly set afire by love. The grace of faith opens "the eyes of your hearts" to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation: that is, of the totality of God's plan and the mysteries of faith, of their connection with each other and with Christ, the center of the revealed mystery. The believer also seeks not only to know but to do God's will. "*The righteous shall live by faith,*"⁸ and living faith "*work[s] through charity.*"⁹ The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being.¹⁰ "The same Holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts."¹¹

"*All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks.*"¹² This means the disciple of Christ must work to increase the gift of faith by professing, bearing witness to it, and sharing about the object of faith, which is God.¹³ An essential part of faith is action, as we have heard, "*faith apart from works is dead*".¹⁴ Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "*So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.*"¹⁵ When the Holy Spirit grafts the Christian onto the "true vine," the believer is enabled to bear this fruit.¹⁶

⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:13

⁵ Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 157

⁶ Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 1814

⁷ Dei Verbum 5

⁸ Romans 1:17

⁹ Galatians 5:6

¹⁰ Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 1813

¹¹ Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 42-43.

¹² Lumen Gentium 42, Dignitas Humanae 14

¹³ Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 1816

¹⁴ James 2:26

¹⁵ Matthew 10:32-33

¹⁶ [Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church 390](#)

The *fruits* of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: “charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity.”¹⁷ Faithfulness signifies fidelity to the promises made to God, such as those entailed in Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, and Holy Orders, as well as personal vows or commitments of devotion. It is steadfast and reliable adherence to God, particularly in the face of difficulty.¹⁸ It is demonstrated by loyalty to friends, duties performed, promises kept, commitments fulfilled, contracts completed, vows observed and being true to one’s word. At its core, faithfulness mirrors the fidelity of God.¹⁹ It is a commitment to follow Christ daily, not just “by fits and starts,” willingly hearing the Word of God and accepting God’s Will, completing what God has begun with the help of His grace.²⁰

To understand what it means to be faithful, one must look to Christ, the “*faithful witness*,” who was, to the very depths of his being, set like flint to do the will of the Father who sent him, learning obedience through suffering.²¹ Our persevering faithful actions, in imitation of Christ, is ultimately a proof of the efficacy of Christ’s grace, not merely human strength or courage.²²

The “righteous person” in Catholic teaching is the Christian who, by the grace of God, has been transformed by the theological virtues and faithfully lives out the moral virtue of justice in every circumstance. Justice is defined as “*the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor*” and is “*distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor.*” Thus, the person of faith who acts faithfully can be said to be righteous.²³

By participating in the Eucharist and the other sacraments, the faithful are equipped to “live the new law of love given by Christ”, which is the concrete expression of the righteous life.²⁴ The Catechism states that Christ’s disciples “*have put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*”²⁵ This new man is the interior reality of the righteous person: a soul that has received the infused virtue of Faith, Hope and Charity and therefore shares in the divine life.

Executive Summary

This document synthesizes a theological exploration of the concept of faith, contrasting a modern, passive understanding with its deeper biblical and Catholic meaning. The central argument is that true faith—as understood in Judeo-Christian tradition—is not merely intellectual belief but an active, relational trust in God, termed *Emunah*. This trust necessitates a behavioral response, or “faithfulness,” which is the practical application of faith in daily life. Relying solely on “natural faith” or human reason in the face of suffering leads to despair and frustration. Conversely, even a small amount of true faith, expressed through acts of faithfulness, allows believers to navigate hardship, experience peace, and live a “righteous” life. The teachings of the Catholic Church further define faith as a foundational theological virtue, a free gift from God that is perfected by the Holy Spirit and inherently linked to action, witness, and the moral life. Ultimately, faithfulness is presented as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, modeled on Christ’s perfect obedience, and the defining characteristic of a righteous person transformed by grace.

¹⁷ Galatians 5:22-23

¹⁸ Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 1832

¹⁹ [13 October 2013: Holy Mass on the occasion of the Marian Day 2](#)

²⁰ [13 October 2013: Holy Mass on the occasion of the Marian Day 2](#)

²¹ [Lumen Gentium 42](#)

²² [Lumen Gentium 42](#)

²³ Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 1807

²⁴ <https://www.usccb.org/resources/7-703%20The%20Mystery%20of%20Eucharist.%20for%20RE-UPLOAD.%20JANUARY%202022.pdf>

²⁵ Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 2445

The Crisis of Natural Faith

Relying on "natural faith," hope, and charity according to natural reason alone is identified as a path toward inevitable discouragement and despair. When confronted with serious global issues, personal challenges, or the problem of suffering, this limited perspective can lead to significant negative spiritual and psychological outcomes.

- **Emotional and Spiritual Distress:** Individuals become easily discouraged, overwhelmed, and frustrated. This can escalate to anger with God for allowing hardship to occur.
- **Hopelessness and Helplessness:** This mindset can reduce people, including believers, to a state of helplessness and hopelessness, potentially leading to debilitating depression and despair.
- **Questioning God:** Many sincerely ask, "Where is God in all this? Why does he not protect his children, especially the most defenseless?"
- **Misguided Responses:** The text notes that "the best of us" will recognize human culpability and ask God to fix the "culprits," while only the "saints among us" will first ask for their own healing before praying for others, doing so without self-righteous judgment.

The source emphasizes that while God promises loving care, He "never promised a life free of pain, difficulties, suffering, or even sudden and violent death." The divine promise is not an absence of hardship, but the help to deal with it, find joy and peace within it, and remain focused on salvation.

The Biblical Concept of Faith as *Emunah*

The document argues that a common misunderstanding of "faith" in the English-speaking West has divorced the term from its biblical roots. The original Hebrew concept, *Emunah*, provides a more holistic and active definition.

- **Beyond Belief:** As explained by scholar Rabbi Louis Jacob, *Emunah* is "rarely if ever talking simply about whether or not one believes in God," as God's existence was largely taken for a given in ancient times.
- **Trust and Reliance:** The core of *Emunah* is trust. It answers the question: "What is our emotional and behavioral response to that belief? Do we trust in the relationship, and what does that mean?"
- **Abraham as the Archetype:** Abraham is called the "father of faith" because he demonstrated profound trust despite human limitations. This trust led to "acts of faithfulness which God attributed to him as righteousness." His story is the first time the word is used in the Torah.
- **Action-Oriented Language:** The Hebrew root of *Emunah* is shared with other action-oriented words:
 - **Amen:** Meaning "so be it" or "may it be so," it is not merely a closing word for a prayer but "an agreement to act upon what we have prayed!"
 - **Eman:** "to confirm"
 - **Haemeen:** "to trust" or "confide in"

This linguistic connection underscores that Judeo-Christian faith is one that "demands action."

Faithfulness: The Active Dimension of Faith

The distinction between passive faith and active faithfulness is crucial. When the apostles in the Gospel ask Jesus, "Increase our faith," they are not asking for a greater quantity of belief but for the grace to be more faithful in its practical application.

- **The Mustard Seed Analogy:** Christ's response—"If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you"—is interpreted to mean that a very small amount of true faith is sufficient to exercise faithfulness. The issue is not a "lack" of faith, but a need to activate the faith one already possesses.
- **Abiding in God:** The goal of faithfulness is to "abide in God, bringing God's presence into every aspect of life." This is achieved by making prayer, rituals, and teachings a central part of daily existence to bring holiness into every action.
- **Practical Acts of Faithfulness:** The source provides concrete examples of choices made in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to increase faithfulness:
 - Praying the Liturgy of the Hours regularly.
 - Getting to know and love God more through the living Word.
 - Giving to charity and performing works of mercy.
 - Ensuring a sabbath day of rest.

Theological Framework: The Catholic Church's Doctrine on Faith

The teachings of the Catholic Church provide a precise theological framework that reinforces the active and virtuous nature of faith.

- **A Foundational Virtue:** Faith is one of the three theological virtues, alongside hope and charity. These virtues are the "foundation of Christian moral activity" and are infused by God into the souls of the faithful.
- **A Free Gift of God:** Faith is "first and foremost a free gift of God which remains in one who has not sinned against it." It is certain because it is "founded on the very word of God who cannot lie."
- **Total Commitment:** By faith, "man freely commits his entire self to God." This commitment involves not only believing what God has revealed but also seeking to understand it better, as a "more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith."
- **Faith and Works:** The Church's teaching confirms the necessity of action. "Living faith 'work[s] through charity'" (Galatians 5:6), and "faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:26).
- **Witness and Service:** Disciples must be prepared to "confess Christ before men" and bear witness to the faith. Service and witness are deemed "necessary for salvation" (Matthew 10:32-33).
- **The Role of the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit "constantly perfects faith by his gifts" and enables the believer, grafted onto the "true vine," to bear fruit.

Faithfulness as a Fruit of the Spirit

Faithfulness is explicitly identified as one of the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are "perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory."

The Twelve Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)
Charity
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Generosity
Gentleness
Faithfulness
Modesty
Self-control
Chastity

- **Definition of Faithfulness:** It is defined as "fidelity to the promises made to God" (e.g., in Baptism, Matrimony), steadfast adherence to God in difficulty, and being true to one's word. It is demonstrated by loyalty, keeping promises, and fulfilling commitments.
- **Mirroring God's Fidelity:** At its core, human faithfulness mirrors the fidelity of God himself.
- **Christ as the Model:** Christ is the ultimate model of the "faithful witness," who was committed "to do the will of the Father who sent him, learning obedience through suffering." A believer's persevering actions are a proof of Christ's grace, not just human strength.

The Righteous Life: The Outcome of Faith in Action

The document connects the practice of faith and faithfulness directly to the biblical concept of righteousness, as declared by the prophet Habakkuk: "the righteous live by their faith."

- **The Righteous Person:** In Catholic teaching, a "righteous person" is a Christian who, by God's grace, has been transformed by the theological virtues and lives out the moral virtue of justice.
- **The Virtue of Justice:** Justice is the "constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor." A just person is distinguished by "habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor."
- **The "New Man":** The righteous person has "put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." This "new man" is the interior reality of a soul that has received the infused virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity.
- **Sacramental Support:** Participation in the Eucharist and other sacraments equips the faithful to "live the new law of love given by Christ," which is the concrete expression of a righteous life.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Amen	A word sharing a root with Emunah, meaning "so be it" or "may it be so." It is an agreement to act upon what has been prayed, signifying a partnership with God.
Emunah	The Hebrew word for faith, which in biblical and rabbinic literature is primarily about trust and reliance upon God. It calls for behavior consistent with that stance of trust.
Faith	The theological virtue by which we believe in God and all that He has said and revealed. It is a free gift from God, more certain than human knowledge, through which a person freely commits their entire self to God. It is also an active virtue, as "faith apart from works is dead."
Faithfulness	One of the twelve fruits of the Spirit. It signifies fidelity to promises made to God, steadfast and reliable adherence to God, and mirrors the fidelity of God. It is demonstrated by loyalty, keeping promises, and being true to one's word.
Fruits of the Spirit	Perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in believers as the first fruits of eternal glory. The twelve listed are: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.
Justice	The moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. It is distinguished by habitual right thinking and upright conduct toward one's neighbor.
Righteous Person	In Catholic teaching, a Christian who, by the grace of God, has been transformed by the theological virtues and faithfully lives out the moral virtue of justice in every circumstance. This person is a "new man" who shares in the divine life.
Theological Virtues	The three virtues of faith, hope, and charity. They are the foundation of Christian moral activity, infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and meriting eternal life.

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