

# St. Mary's of Parma, OH Monthly Newsletter

A PARISH OF THE WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

**January 2022**

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## Remembering Bp. John

“You know, Jason- I share a birthdate with your grandmother Emily- May 15, 1933...but she is much prettier than I.” If I heard it once or a hundred times, it didn't matter- it always made me smile. If the conversation ever approached New Hampshire (where my grandmother was from) or milestone birthdays, Bishop John Swantek would give me that reminder, always deferring to my father's mother's grace and charm.



Perhaps it is why I sought a degree in writing – it is much easier to convey emotions via a keyboard than a phone call or actual words...perhaps also a product of my generation. I recall doing the same some years ago upon the loss of Bishop Stanley Bilinski. It is cathartic for me, I suppose, and perhaps will allow others to know the man better because of my words.

In 1995, my home parish of St. Joseph's in Westfield, MA was holding its diamond jubilee, its 75th Anniversary, with it being a weekend long celebration featuring 3 Holy Masses celebrated by 3 bishops. The first, our former pastor and my dad's predecessor, the Rt. Rev. Robert Nemkovich, the Western Diocesan Bishop. The second

was the Rt. Rev. Thomas Gnat, our Diocesan Bishop in the Eastern Diocese...but the place was buzzing that the Prime Bishop was to be there for our anniversary. He also pastored St. Joseph's decades earlier, maintaining relationships even then.

It was genuinely exciting- and perhaps as a precursor of life events to come, I served all 3

Masses that weekend, just to say I did. That is when I first learned of Bishop John's attachment to my family via shared birthdates with my grandmother...but I learned more that day too. Sometimes, we clergy don't quite grip the power a conversation with a 13 year old kid may have – that day, 20 or so minutes before Mass (an anomaly- living next to the church, I was notorious for arriving at Mass within 3 minutes of the bell ringing), Bishop told me how my great-grandfather ordained him at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Manchester, New Hampshire in 1958... coincidentally, the same month my father was born.

Besides a Youth Convocation every 2 years, I didn't see Bishop John again until a trip to Scranton and an 11am High Mass at the Cathedral – he made it such a big deal that I was there, asking about my family, recalling the college I was enrolled at, and knowing about my successes on the Track and Field team. He said “it isn't often we have a Division 1 athlete worship with us!” I think I blushed purple and mumbled “it isn't often the Prime Bishop remembers your name!” His response was that he was praying that perhaps he'd be seeing me again at seminary in a few years.

A prophet was he! And upon entering seminary, I learned to not refer to him as “Prime Bishop” anymore- “There's only one now, and it isn't me!” From early on, Bishop John be-

### Fr. Jason's Article (con't)

came a mentor and an advocate. My entire clerical experience with him was after he held any parish or administrative position – he was retired and, well, comfortable. I've lamented how my relationship with Bishop Stanley changed once he was consecrated by the simple fact that he was now...my boss, and my bishop first and foremost.

Bishop John was my teacher at seminary and a retired clergyman, though he ministered extensively to the residents of the Manor at Waymart. This was a place where the patience of a father four times over and a grandfather many, many times over came into practice! He called us seminarians "fathers to be", which seemed so, so far off and laughable. He taught Sacramental Theology at a graduate level – with precision, with the proper difficulty and expectations attached. Class didn't begin until a hot mug of tea sat before him, and often the best parts were bouncing theological meanderings off of him. He'd take a deep breath, adjust that mug, and launch into answers from the points of view of the Fathers of the Church as well as how the Polish National Catholic Church might adjust off of them – invaluable teachings.

Bishop John was our advocate too- probably because he enjoyed not being in charge of the seminary anymore! We learned that he had no problem airing our concerns, questions, and frustrations. Sometimes this got us into some hot soup, but he didn't care about his own soup – just about ours. Or, maybe he just enjoyed being on the other side of that table after 16 years as Prime Bishop!

And finally, there was the sports. I lived in Scranton from 2004-2013. In that time, Bishop John and I laughed and congratulated each other on 3 World Series championships for the Red Sox, a Stanley Cup for the Bruins, an NBA Title for the

Celtics, and somehow only one Super Bowl for the Patriots. No worries on the last one, as we shared phone calls after I moved out to Ohio to consider Bill Belichick's and Tom Brady's chances at sainthood 3 more times. He would call Tom Brady such "an impressive young ball player", which sounds hilarious but, well, he was allowed to say that. As I was preparing to leave Scranton, Bishop started to transfer a portion of his library to me, for which I am exceedingly thankful. Theological timepieces from decades ago, along with others he kept sharp on. I've drawn upon dozens of them in the last half-decade in homilies, articles, and presentations. He would always ask me what I was reading...a prompt as good as any I have received to keep sharp on continuing education.

Until his health became an issue, he was always eager to lend his voice to any retreat I led or to fill a speaking timeslot in any chaplaincy I held. His retirement showed him itching to remain a teacher in Christ's Holy Church. In my last year or so in Scranton, I got great enjoyment at creating the "Celebrant's Schedule" at the Cathedral and Chapel- What "power" I had in being able to schedule him and two other bishops on a monthly basis- he was so thankful at that point in his ministry to be a part of that rotation. Though, if I ever mentioned that power, he'd give me "the look!": head lowered, peering over the top of his glasses with a furrowed brow.

Of course, there are many other thoughts and memories I can put on paper, but I close with this- though he was never my diocesan bishop, he was resolute to always build me up as a priest. Where most of us encounter life where one negative

outweighs the other 9 positives, he would remark on the positives in my ministry, however he could from his vantage point 300+ miles away. I was so, so honored when he called me early on in the pandemic to hand the phone to his granddaughter in order to figure out to watch St. Mary's broadcast Mass on a Sunday morning – that he went out of his way to allow me to minister to him on a Sunday morning.

May his memory be eternal – may the words at his funeral services be inspired by the Holy Spirit, and may our belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ be present and alive in how we remember his priest and bishop, the Most Rev. John F. Swantek.



## Zoo Trip

On Sunday, December 13, many parishioners and friends met at 5pm in the parish Fellowship Hall for some fellowship and from pizza from Napoleon's before hopping in cars and venturing down to the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo for the Winter Lights exhibit.

It was a beautiful, temperate evening which allowed the kiddos to stay out late and grab a number of photo opportunities around the Zoo. And while the groups \*tried\* to stick close to each other, some kids are just more easily distracted than others!

The evening concluded with much of the group riding the carousel and exiting to a dance party (!) right outside the carousel. After everyone busted considerate moves, we returned to our homes. A great night outside at the zoo! Thanks to Natalie Soltysiak for coordinating the evening.



## YMSofR Clothes Collection

Branch #29 of the YMSofR of St. Mary's in Parma took part in the National YMSofR clothing drive. This is a (mostly) annual event that involves all branches of the Polish National Catholic Church's YMSofR's to publicize a clothing drive and distribute the collected items to a local charitable organization. Branches are then encouraged to tally up what they collected and submit the numbers to the National YMSofR in order for them to keep a running tally. Branches are actually awarded by how much they collect with a bit of a

"kick-back" from the National YMSofR in order to further the progress of their respective branches. Thanks to all who donated and to the devoted men who spent a morning collating, counting, collecting, and bagging the clothing.

God bless you all! The items were locally donated to the "Rise in Love Center of Cleveland" a local organization designed to simply help those in need.



## St. Nicholas Day!

Mission Team - Thank you for bringing a smile to my face on St. Nicholas' Day. The handmade stockings, filled

with goodies, brought forth a forgotten childhood memory and the reminder to enjoy the simple joys of the Christmas season.  
*Susan Boehnlein*



## Rorate Mass

The tradition of Rorate Mass extends to many, but not all Catholic parishes. Rorate Mass is a Votive Mass, celebrated in (Marian) white in honor of the blessed Mother for the season of Advent. Our Lady shows herself in a special way as our leader through Advent to Christmas. Mass was celebrated on Monday, December 20 by natural (candle) light only. All candles in the sanctuary were lit, and the faithful having access to one. Tradition holds that it was to be celebrated “*in media nocte*”, according to the Missal of 1570 no Mass could be said after 12 Noon, so it had to take place after the midnight change of day and should conclude as the sun rises. Our Mass began at 7am and concluded exactly at sunrise –



*The brightness of a candlelit-only St. Mary's*

## Advent Sundays

A few snapshots from our December Sunday Liturgies during the Season of Advent, including a new sequence of events that concludes the Gospel, the lighting of our 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Advent Candles, and the blessing of Oplatki by Deacon Jim.



*Liturgical Practice of Entroning the Gospel, begun in Advent 2021*



*2nd Sunday of Advent Candlelighting*



*3rd Sunday of Advent Candlelighting and Blessing of Oplatki*



*4th Sunday of Advent Candlelighting*

## Bishop's Christmas Greeting to the Diocese

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus  
Members of the Polish National Catholic Church  
What a year it has been, and it is not even over yet! This year has been challenging on so many levels for so many people. I am susceptible to the grief and loss that many of you have experienced this year. Neither of us has ever seen anything like this. The pandemic has interrupted our lives, which has been hard for all of us.

However, these challenging times have also provided us with the opportunity to exercise our faith. We have witnessed acts of profound kindness and creative ingenuity that remind us of the better angels within us. We have helped and taken care of each other, and we have proved ourselves to be incredibly adaptable, flexible, and resilient. In many parishes, our staff and leaders have worked long hours and creatively provided digital resources and ministry to all of our people. I understand it is sometimes difficult to see the good when we feel so overwhelmed by despair, but Christmas reminds us of something critical to keep in our minds, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5).

My friends, there are many reasons to be grateful and filled with hope because of our faith. God has and will continue to help us see all of this through. Therefore, I want to remind us that we are Christmas people and that Jesus is incarnated in every act of love and kindness we extend to one another. God can reach us beyond all the barriers the world can create and revive us by giving us strength in times of great distress. So, we can do this, and we will overcome because we are the Church, the body of the risen Christ!

I am privileged to be your bishop, and I feel incredibly blessed and honored to be with you. My prayers are with you always.

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ Child.

Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever. Amen.

Merry Christmas!

Wesolych Swiat Bozego Narodzenia!

Feliz Navidad!

***Peace, love, and joy are what the Christmas season brings. Our job is to keep it alive all year long. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!***

***From Bishop Jerry Rafalko and Leslie***



## PTO Christmas Party

The PTO Christmas Party took place on a joyous Sunday, December 19. After Sunday worship that included a Penitential Service, we gathered to enjoy each other's company as well as various foods beyond our normal coffee hour. After just a little prodding, jolly ol' St. Nick himself arrived, with arms full of gifts and candy for the kids of our parish. They were all delighted to deliver some last-second Christmas present requests!

Thanks to all who moved to make this event even occur at our parish.

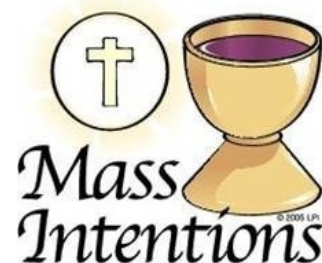


### Scheduled Mass Intentions at St. Mary's

January 2– Len & Hanna Pryer of. daughter Evonne  
January 9– Most Rev. John F. Swantek of. by Fr. Jason  
January 16– Open Intention  
January 23– Bruno Tracy of. by Son Randy  
January 30– Open Intention

February 6– Sophie & Martin Szpilka of. by son John Spilka  
February 13– Open Intention  
February 20– Open Intention  
February 27 – Walter Stepanik of. by son Gene Stepanik

Please reach out to Fr. Jason to schedule Masses for 2022



### Election of Officers Meeting

Thanks to all who attended the December 12 Election of Officers Parish Meeting. New officers were elected, who will begin their terms upon being installed during Holy Mass on an upcoming date.

Our newly elected Parish Executive Committee is: Susan Boehnlein, Chair; Eugene Stepanik, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice; Mike Wisniewski, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice; Josephine Ference, Treasurer; Nancy Roharik, Financial Secretary; Patty Temesi, Recording Secretary.

Our elected directors are: Cathy Avondet, Jim Boehnlein, Patti Dotson, Ron Ference, Steve Fesz, Greg Hodor, Rose Kronen, Jo Ann Long, Elaine Plos-



### Church Committees

konka, Charles Repede, John Spilka, and Barbara Wisniewski.

Our elected auditors are: Mark Avondet, George Bennett, Gail Perz, & Natalie Soltysiak. Parish Tribunal: Chris Paulus and Bill Zychowski. Seniorate Delegates: Cathy & Mark Avondet, Elaine Ploskonka.

The first monthly meeting will be January 23 after 9am Mass. 9am Mass will feature the Installation of all elected and listed previous here.

Susan Boehnlein will begin as parish chair upon the installation of that meeting. She is available via phone call, text, or email. Her cell number is 440-781-7912 and her email address is sboehnlein66@gmail.com.

Congratulations to all who were elected, be it for the first or 50th time. It is so appreciated that one would take on positions of leadership at our parish. Here is to a 2022 year of faith, devotion, growth, and promise for St. Mary's.

### Various Announcements

**ACME**—We are participating in the Acme "Community Cash Back" program. Please submit your receipts today!

**RECTORY AVAILABLE** — The rectory is available for rental. It is a 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath 2 story bungalow and we want to offer it to parishioners and friends/family/acquaintances of parishioners first. Please speak to Fr. Jason, Elaine Ploskonka, or Steve Fesz with info.

**RESCHEDULES**—Due to the breakout of Covid-19 amongst our parishioners and our nation, we have made the decision to postpone a few meetings and events. The installation of our parish committee and parish officers is bumped from January 9 to January 23. Our Annual Parish Meeting is bumped from January 23 to February 6. A reminder that parish reports for individual organizations are due by January 23.

**FOOD MINISTRY UPDATE** — continues on a weekly basis throughout December. We plan on serving ~3500 total meals in 2022!

**ADVISORY** — We had a number of parishioners test positive for Covid over this past week — we want you to be mindful of your presence amongst others today and understanding of those who keep distance. We are also strongly suggesting that you consider wearing a mask for the next few weeks at church.

**FOOD COLLECTION** —Thank you to all who offered support throughout the Advent Season for our Food Collection. Our helpers will keep some food in-house to help prepare to-go bags for any visitors in need and the rest will be donated to the Parma Hunger Center.

**RECENT FUNDRAISERS** — Our fundraisers from this last week, Christmas Kolaczki and the take-home Wigilia from the Mission Team both went extremely well, resulting in sell-outs for each. A need in our parish and community was absolutely met this holiday season!

**PARISH EMAILS**- Has anyone not been receiving emails from the parish/Fr. Jason on a periodic basis that would like

to? Or, if you used to receive them and do not anymore? Please let him know so our email lists can be appropriately updated.

**OPŁATKI** — Keep on eating any oplatki you brought home! Since it is a blessed item, you are to use all of what you take and are not to throw any of it in the trash.

**SOCK TREE**- The Mission Team's sock (and more) tree looks great! Did you chip in any new socks, hats, or gloves? Please do so!

**MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP** — Info for scholarships from the National United Choirs is available by talking to Chris Paulus or Deacon Jim.

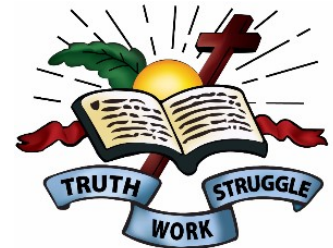
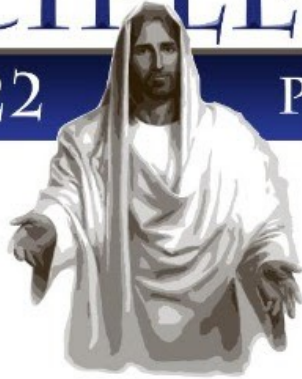
**PICK-A-NUMBER** — This fundraiser returns in quite the reimagined way! You've surely noticed the fancy tree in the foyer of the Fellowship Hall- instead of numbered envelopes \$1-\$50, the envelopes are marked \$1-\$20 and there are four sets of them. And while each envelope purchased is a contribution to the church, each envelope has a chance to return a prize, be it a bottle of wine, gift card, or more.

## PNCC Future Directions Update

# DISCIPLESHIP

2022

PNCC



### January 2022 – Preparing to Receive Our Lord in the Eucharist

As we begin this Year of our Lord 2022 our Holy Church for this Year of Discipleship will focus on Being Eucharistic People. Reflecting on that most sacred moment each time when we encounter the Divine as we receive our Lord Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

[Click Here](#) to watch a short video message on the Eucharist by Very Rev. Robert Nemkovich Jr.

#### Scriptures for Reflection

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

#### Reflection:

Receiving our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist is a sacred and important moment for which we should be prepared. This is not something to take lightly as we are receiving Jesus to strengthen us on our earthly journey in the way that God has planned for our salvation. We must prepare to meet Jesus by fasting, prayer and participation in the Holy Sacrifice of Mass.

From the PNCC Prayer Book: Fasting is an ancient religious tradition, helping one focus on the needs of the soul over the needs of the body; the need for Christ over the needs of self. As Jesus said during His own forty-day fast, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Fasting before communion helps us properly prepare for the solemn and reverent receiving of His sacred Body and Blood. Fasting before Communion is not primarily an act of Penance, but one of homage to our Lord.



The faithful are required to fast for two hours before receiving Holy Communion. This means eating no food of any kind (except when necessary with medication) and drinking nothing except water. Exceptions to this fast are when someone has a medical condition that requires eating or drinking, when someone has diabetes, when a woman is pregnant, when the Eucharist is taken to someone who is sick, homebound or dying. This does not discourage the pious practice of fasting from midnight.



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**Action Items:** Remember to fast and offer the Prayer before Holy Communion prior to beginning of Holy Mass and then remember to offer the prayer after Holy Communion from the prayer book.

Also consider a few minutes reading page 8 of the Mass Book prior to the beginning of Holy Mass. When approaching the priest for Holy Communion make sure to do so reverently.

**Song Recommendation:** "He Shall Reign Forevermore" by *Chris Tomlin*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVN2bnjBICU>

### Prayer Before Holy Mass:

My dear God and loving Father, I thank You for making it possible for me to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, during which I will be united with my Lord Jesus Christ. May Jesus fill me with His holy grace when I open my heart to Him in sincere prayer. May the sacraments I will receive, the prayers that I will say and the hymns that I will sing bring me closer to Jesus and help me to be more like Him in all that I say and do. May the Holy Communion that I will receive give me strength, so that I may share faith, hope and love with the people I will meet. Amen.

### Prayer After Holy Mass:

I am grateful to You, Lord, that I was able to come to church and participate in the Holy Sacrifice of Mass. I thank You for receiving Your gracious pardon, Your instruction and teaching through Your Word, and Your Body and Blood in Holy Communion. May Your sacraments continue to strengthen and help me to be faithful to You and Your Church. Help me to face all the challenges of life on my journey to Your heavenly kingdom. Amen.



NCC Future Direction is on Facebook. Like us and follow our updates on Facebook too. If you know of parishioners or friends who are not a part of our monthly email updates – please have them email us at [FutureDirection@pncc.org](mailto:FutureDirection@pncc.org) to become a part of this important effort for our Holy Church.

May God bless you; may our Lord calm the storms of life, may our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph intercede for us. Have a blessed, safe and healthy New Year 2002 living our lives in faithful witness and action following the teachings and example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

***PNCC Supreme Council Future Direction Committee***

Most Rev. Anthony Mikovsky, Prime Bishop

Very Rev. Robert M. Nemkovich Jr., Chairman

## January Days of Note



### January Birthdays

- 1 Barbara Wisniewski
- 5 Jeffery Tiffe
- 6 Katie Repede
- 7 Patti Dotson
- Natalie Soltysiak
- 12 John Kasperczyk
- 22 John Kobalka
- Tom Kugler
- 23 Pete Moritz



### January Anniversaries

- 7 Andre & Audrey Spanjol
- 24 Mike & Barb Wisniewski

*Have we missed a birthday or anniversary? Just give us a shout so we can fix any errors that have been made :-)*

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[www.stmaryspncc.org](http://www.stmaryspncc.org)  
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on Facebook or subscribe to  
our YouTube channel

## "Why Do We Celebrate Christmas"

*Why do we celebrate Christmas, A "Mass" for Christ, each year? Why do we shop and give out gifts, Basking in Christmas cheer?*

*Our joy is based in the Gospel, The amazing "good news" of Christ; We're grateful for what He gave to us And all He sacrificed.*

*Priceless gifts He brought, Eternal life, and more, A perfect role model for all of us, He opened heaven's door.*

*At Christmas time let's be Reverent and devout, Celebrating a Christmas real and true: Jesus Christ is what it's about.*

*By Joanna Fuchs*



## Our Prayer List

Praying for St. Mary's Parishioners & Friends

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bill & Pat Glatzer       | Barbara Baranowski       |
| Bill Kastak              | Anna Dawidziuk           |
| George & Linda Makovicka | John Spilka              |
| Johanna Markiewicz       | Mary Ann Loschelder      |
| Ralph & June Zaun        | Julie L.                 |
| Marty Bengela            | Tom Putynski             |
| Polly Gajda              | Millie Dominik           |
| Kathleen Beres           | Joseph Bischoff          |
| David Micka              | Carol Hreha              |
| Chester & Ann Warzala    | Tom Petrie               |
| Amy Dreger               | Patti Dotson             |
| Elizabeth Starnawski     | Jack Spilka              |
| Elaine Repede            | David Vaden              |
| Wanda Clark              | Beth Chihill             |
| Michael Cosevin          | Helen Cummings           |
| Laina Dachtal            | Wendy Andrzejewski       |
| Jay Grabowsky            | Pam Chesar               |
| Cecelia Hall             | Caroline Kunes           |
| Linda Marks              | Thomas Lill              |
| John & Anne Nemetz       | Rhonda Smith             |
| Kenny Ploskonka          | Carol Boesch             |
| Joanie True              | Daniel Rinella           |
| Fr. Tom Sheha            | Tom Slomka               |
| Gerl S.                  | Ben Soltis               |
| Pam Tropiano             | Linda Vect               |
| Dennis and Sue Vect      | Marcus Vaughn, Jr.       |
| Bryson Dzuroff           | Fr. Sr. Joseph Soltysiak |
| Kelly B                  | Jane Hunter              |
| Dennis Thome             | The Finnie Family        |
| Carlene Fliss            | Jim Fliss Jr.            |
| John Wisniewski          | Cathy Pieciak            |
| Nan Cramer               | Bp. John Mack            |
| Mike Pescitelli          | Mike Paulus              |
| Mary Cawley              | Richard & Edna Samelson  |
| Jim Giles                | Tammy Teubl              |
| Wanda Heffner            | Loretta Baldwin          |
| Donna Kidd               | Paulette Lilli           |
| Azriel G.                | Joseph Zubel             |
| Marilyn Girard           | Courtney Austin          |
| Stephanie Milla          | Shannon Alberino         |
| Jayden Pieciak           | Sophie Mae               |
| Jeremy Steinbrick        | Katie Stallbaum          |
| Marcia Klein             | Kim Penney               |
| Barbara B.               | Patrick Kmitt            |
| Michael McGivern         | Daniel Morgan            |
| Barb & Jim Lukas         | Renee Lukas              |
| Mike Matis               | Jeff Lukas               |
| Al Piniecki              | Bob Kaczmarek            |
| Tami Knotek              |                          |

WE ALSO REMEMBER  
ALL ACTIVE & RETIRED CLERGY  
ALL SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN  
Bless them, O Lord.

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