

To Hold in Trust...the Mission! *Nelson Bonet, Chair of Forum's Board*



Nelson Bonet

What a pleasure for me to be communicating with all of you. My name is Nelson Bonet and it truly is an honor to have been elected as the new Chair of the Board by my peers. I promise to have the mis-

sion of Forum continue to move forward in good times and in bad. To be able to celebrate from the new life of the Resurrection, we need to pass through the suffering of the passion and death of our Lord.

The mission of Forum is the implementation in all parishes of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and its implications for reconciliation. This process is for all. As a Hispanic, I believe Forum continues to strive for this. We are all called to partake from the table. It is in receiving the Lord that we are able to have the

strength to continue the mission of the Kingdom of God.

A little something about myself. For those who know me, they have heard me say that I am the proud father of two and husband of one. Presently, I am the religion and social studies teacher for the middle school grades at St. Stephen Catholic School in Miramar, Florida. I am a member of the liturgical commission in the Archdiocese of Miami. I also belong to Amor en Accion, which is a missionary group from Miami.

Jesus Christ was and is the master catechist not for what he said necessarily but for who he was and what he did. Jesus led by example. It was his kindness, compassion, and openness to all that taught us how truly to be children of God. I promise to be of service to all.

Friends and colleagues, I ask for prayers for this wonderful process which is the catechumenate. May we all continue to work for the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us all strive for the new life.

“The mission of Forum is the implementation in all parishes of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and its implications for reconciliation. This process is for all. As a Hispanic, I believe Forum continues to strive for this.”

The Mission of The North American Forum on the Catechumenate is the full implementation in all parishes of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and its implications for reconciliation.

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Forum's Matching Gifts Campaign A Great Success!!!

Forum's first-ever major Matching Gifts Campaign was held at the end of last year. It continued to reap results into early 2004.

With a total of \$22,000 donated, the Campaign exceeded its goal of \$20,000!

Warm thanks are owed to all of the invited contributors who took part, especially the several large donors whose initial contributions provided the basis for the Campaign. They were:

Thomas Weis

Kathleen and Steve Hopkins

Rob Doerschner

Byron and Paula Ellis

Martin and Monica Stansfeld

On behalf of the leadership of Forum and all who benefit from Forum's ministry, we extend warmest thanks to these generous members of our grassroots network of pastoral ministers. The passionate commitment of these donors to the mission of initiation is deeply appreciated by all who know that in making Christians we are remaking the Church and transforming the world!

The North American Forum on the Catechumenate

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(202) 529-9493 fax (202) 529-9497 www.naforum.org info@naforum.org



Mission The North American Forum on the Catechumenate (Forum) is an international network of pastoral ministers, liturgists, catechists, and theologians united to share the vision and practice of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Mission Statement The mission of The North American Forum on the Catechumenate is the full implementation in all parishes of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and its implications for reconciliation.

Theological Foundation The Mission of Forum is grounded in a theology based on the experience of

- ❖ God's gracious initiative
- ❖ the paschal mystery of death and resurrection in Jesus Christ
- ❖ the prophetic power of word and sacrament
- ❖ the shared life and wisdom of the people of God, graced and sinful
- ❖ listening to the voice of the poor and oppressed
- ❖ conversion to the freedom of disciples
- ❖ working for justice and peace for the world

Formational Principles To remain faithful to the vision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Forum adheres to these principles:

- ❖ Initiation begins with evangelization leading to conversion.
- ❖ Catechesis, community, liturgy, and mission are formative.
- ❖ All cultural gifts are honored and celebrated.
- ❖ The methods of theological reflection are pastoral.
- ❖ The processes of adult learning are normative.

Organizational Traits Forum's operations, behaviors, attitudes, and actions exhibit these traits:

- ❖ Excellence: The highest level of competence, creativity, and professionalism are strived for at all times.
- ❖ Stewardship: Human, material, environmental, and financial resources are administered with responsibility and accountability.
- ❖ Respect: The precepts that all life is sacred, that each human being is unique, and that all deserve to be treated with dignity are affirmed in speech and action.
- ❖ Collaboration: Cooperation, consultation, communication, and networking are normative for all Forum projects.
- ❖ Inclusivity: Forum relies on the diversity of gifts among its members and proactively seeks a full range of diversity in all areas of its ministry.
- ❖ Integrity: Honesty, justice, and ethical behavior are hallmarks of Forum's work.

Founder

† Rev. James B. Dunning (1937-1995)

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Adapt, adapt, adapt... *Jim Schellman, Executive Director*



Jim Schellman

...to Each Newcomer's Journey into God's Life

Anyone who has participated in a Forum Institute has heard the recurring wisdom of the Forum Team captured in the maxim "Adapt, adapt, adapt." Implicit in this particular maxim is the wisdom of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 4 and 5:

The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful...The rite of initiation is suited to a spiritual journey that varies according to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place.

The Rite provides a broad ritual framework for a journey into the very life of God by inquirers, catechumens, elect, and neophytes. The timing of the periods of that journey and many of its elements cannot be predetermined. They depend on the discernment of the initiating community and its leaders. Nothing is preordained. God's Spirit is in charge, and the way in which the Rite unfolds will vary according to the particulars of the individual journey being taken, the flesh and blood community in which this journey is nurtured, and all the other factors implied by "circumstances of time and place" (culture, family, etc.).

Imagine how different much of our pastoral practice of initiation would be if we took these foundational principles and insights to heart. Gone would be a lock-step process in which so many on this journey to the Lord go all the way from inquiry to mystagogy in less than a year. Gone would be a catechumenate period lasting only a couple of months. No wonder the direction given by the bishops of the United States that the time from the beginning of the Period of the Catechumenate until the end of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment should extend for at least one full year (see U.S. National Statute no. 6).

This kind of time and attention is necessary for comprehensive formation in the entire Christian life (see RCIA 76) that the whole initiation process is intended to achieve. How else can we expect to provide the "conversion therapy" and "embodied doctrine" that are the unique gifts of the restored catechumenal process in the life of the Church. This vision is well captured in no. 78 of the Rite:

The instruction that the catechumens receive during this period should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ.

And let us never forget that this journey of the catechumens and all the wonderful variables, human and divine, that go into it are the means for renewing the whole community of faith. By nurturing these newcomers to the Christian way of life, the community itself is drawn more deeply into its paschal journey in the Lord. Together with the elect, the whole community is plunged anew into the mystery of the Lord's dying and rising and its vocation to be Christ's Body through faithful and sacrificial living in this world so beloved of God.

Adapt...to Forum's Mission—New Institutes

Like the whole Church, the leadership of Forum is continually learning from the wisdom of our ancestors in faith embodied in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Now in its 22nd year of ministry to the Church in North America, Forum sees the need constantly to "adapt, adapt, adapt" in order to remain faithful to its mission: *the implementation in all parishes of the Rite and its implications for reconciliation*. Over the last several years Forum has developed new formation institutes to address emerging pastoral needs. Among these are:

Institute on Concerning the Baptized—

Now in its fourth year, this institute helps pastoral ministers focus on the adaptation of the Rite for the already baptized (candi-

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continued from page 3

dates). Although numbers vary significantly from place to place, the average throughout North America is about one catechumen for every two candidates. Whenever candidates come forward, respect for their baptism and faithful adaptation of the process to their needs is necessary. Two will take place late this year:

- Diocese of San Diego, CA, November 4-6
- Archdiocese of Philadelphia, PA, November 11-13

Institute on Imaging the Initiation Process in Small Church Communities—This new institute is a joint undertaking of Forum and its three sister SCC organizations: North American Forum for Small Christian Communities, Buena Vista, and National Association of Parishes Restructuring into Communities. One will take place in October:

- Archdiocese of St. Louis, MO, October 29-31

The institute explores ways in which the initiation process can take flesh in the context of small church communities. A generous grant from the Fricano Foundation will

make possible an assessment of this institute in 2004.

Ambassadors of Christ: Building Reconciling Communities—Forum's newest institute on Reconciliation explores issues of reconciliation today and pastoral strategies for communities of faith to become agents of reconciliation in Church and world. Watch for it in 2005!

Other New Formation Events Coming

On the basis of information from a number of diocesan initiation leaders, Forum is now designing other formation events to supplement the existing institutes. These will build upon the Beginnings and Beyond experience in particular but will be shorter than the typical three- and five-day institutes offered at present.

Authentic adaptation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is achieved on the basis of a true understanding of the Rite's vision and principles. This ensures that adaptation is from the Rite rather than away from the Rite. In a similar way, these new and shorter formation events are spun out of the remarkable institute model of formation that Forum has developed over the years. These events will not be a substitute for the institutes, the Beginnings and Beyond in particular. Rather, they will presume ongoing experience of the institutes as the foundation for truly benefiting from these shorter experiences.

Watch for these new offerings beginning in 2005!



Register Online for Forum Institutes!

You can now register for Forum institutes online:

go to **www.naforum.org**

- click on Calendar, and then click on the particular institute you wish to attend
- you will then be instructed on how to register on line

...Time for Study, Reflection, Prayer *By Mary Stadnyk*

This excerpt is taken from an article that appeared in the July 29, 2004 issue of The Monitor, the official newspaper of the Diocese of Trenton. It is reprinted here with permission. It reflects on the "Beginnings Plus" Institute cosponsored in July by the Diocese of Trenton and Forum.

Janet Zimmerly was pleased when she was invited to be a catechist on her parish Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) team, yet she realized she needed to know more about the process.

"I'm a beginner" when it comes to the RCIA, she said, but the knowledge she gained at a national conference hosted by the North American Forum on the Catechumenate at Georgian Court College July 15-18 surely gave a boost to her confidence.

"It's important to provide proper instruction and witnessing to people who want to enter the Church and the North American Forum gave insight on how to do that," said Zimmerly, a parishioner of Our Lady of Sorrows, Mercerville. She came away with "a better understanding of what the RCIA process is and what will be expected of me in the parish."

Zimmerly was one of more than 120 men and women representing 14 U.S. dioceses who participated in the North American Forum's **Beginnings Plus** that offered four days of intense study, discussion, personal reflection and prayer experiences centered on the RCIA process.

... "It's a coming together of Church," to see people from all over the country, even as far away



Bishop Smith greeted participants and facilitators of an RCIA Forum, including, back row, left, Donival Brown, Music director at Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Mercerville; Father Tim Piasecki from the Diocese of Rockford, Ill.; Sister Miriam Malone, author of **Enter the Rose: Unfolding the Mysteries of Faith**, and Father Sam Sirianni. In front row are Mercy Sister Eleanor McCann and Kathy Kuczka from Alpharetta, Ga., and Nelson Bonet.

Monitor photo by Kate Guilfoyle

"It's important to provide proper instruction and witnessing to people who want to enter the Church and the North American Forum gave insight on how to do that."

as San Diego, gathered at Georgian Court, said Nelson Bonet, who is director of religious education in St. John Neumann Parish in the Archdiocese of Miami and a member of the missionary group Amor en Accion and one of the presenters at the Forum.

... As a Forum team leader, Bonet said it is a privilege to travel to different dioceses and "meet different Church leaders, both lay and ordained with this thirst for wanting to do what they are doing better to serve the Lord and their community."

"We're coming together to better enhance what we're doing in ministry. The Forum is also not just about the team teaching the participants, but the participants learning from each other," Bonet said. "In turn, the Forum leaders get their energy from the participants that make what we do exciting. It makes it worthwhile..."

RESOURCE REVIEWS

The Triduum and Easter Sunday



Louise English

By John J. Pilch

Published by
The Liturgical Press
Paper, \$4.95 (U.S.), 50 pages

Reviewed by Louise English

Vatican Council II's
Constitution on Divine
Revelation *Dei Verbum* expressed

the biblical task thus,

In order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, (the interpreter of sacred Scripture) should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writer really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words

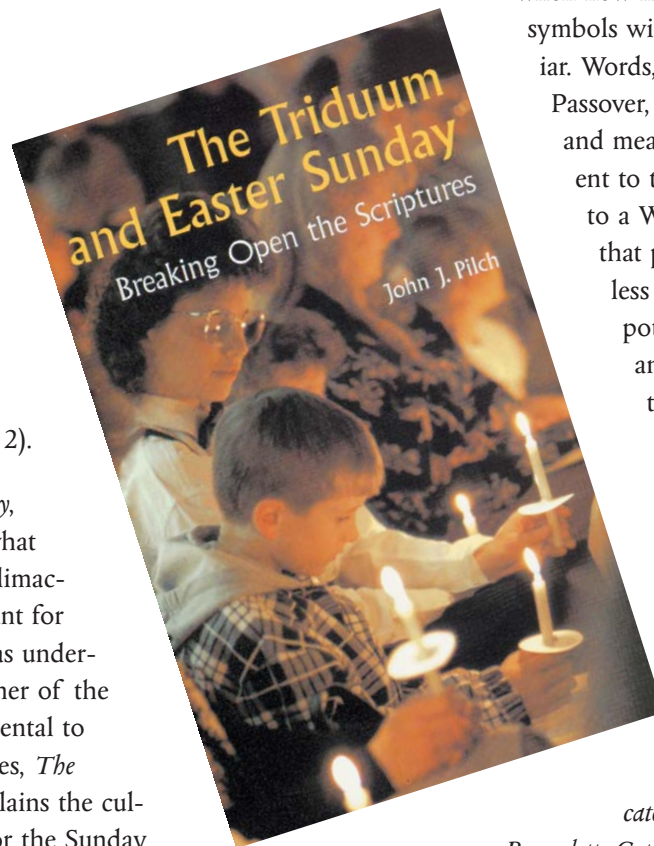
(Dei Verbum, para. 12).

In *The Triduum and Easter Sunday*, Dr. John Pilch seeks to uncover what each scriptural reading of these climactic days of the liturgical year meant for the original author and how it was understood by the Middle Eastern listener of the day. This slim volume is supplemental to Pilch's previous three-volume series, *The Cultural World of Jesus*, which explains the cultural and historical background for the Sunday readings of the three liturgical cycles (Years A, B, and C).

Along with highly important cultural and historical background information for each reading, including the

three cycles of the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday, this booklet includes a three-step method for cross-cultural communication and interpretation. Further, it provides suggestions for the homilist and historical-liturgical reflection questions for those who assist in "Breaking Open the Word."

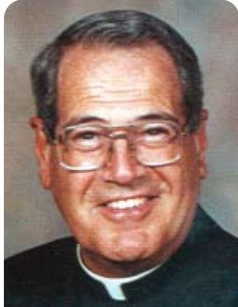
Once again Dr. Pilch has provided us with a valuable resource – one specifically for the holiest days of the Christian year. He has recognized that we in the Western world have difficulty understanding the Scriptures. *The Triduum and Easter Sunday* is an effort to deal with that issue. He claims that it is possible to discover a whole new meaning in the texts when new light is shed on words and symbols with which we are so familiar. Words, such as humility, cross, Passover, meal, and suffering, meant and mean something very different to the Middle Easterner than to a Western person. Without that perspective the reader is less able to glean the rich potential for understanding and reflection that these texts can bring. Homilists, catechists, and all who "Break Open the Word" for themselves or others will deeply appreciate this scholarly work.



Forum Team member Louise English retired several years ago from directing catechetical ministry at Saint Bernadette Catholic Parish in Scottsdale, Arizona. Louise serves on the Phoenix Diocesan Initiation Team and assists with diocesan formation weekends and training days for parish initiation teams.

RESOURCE REVIEWS

Catholic Evangelization: The Heart of Ministry



Tom Ivory

By *Robert J. Hater*

Published by
Harcourt Religion Publishers
Paper, \$12.30 (U.S.), 194 pages

Reviewed by *Tom Ivory*

We are privileged once again to benefit from the wisdom and clarity of the writings

of Father Bob Hater. In years past he wrote some insightful booklets for the National Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education (NCDD), now evolved into the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL). He has not lost his touch and continues to serve pastoral leadership with his ability to present theological and ecclesiological issues with both simplicity and a challenge to any sign of complacency.

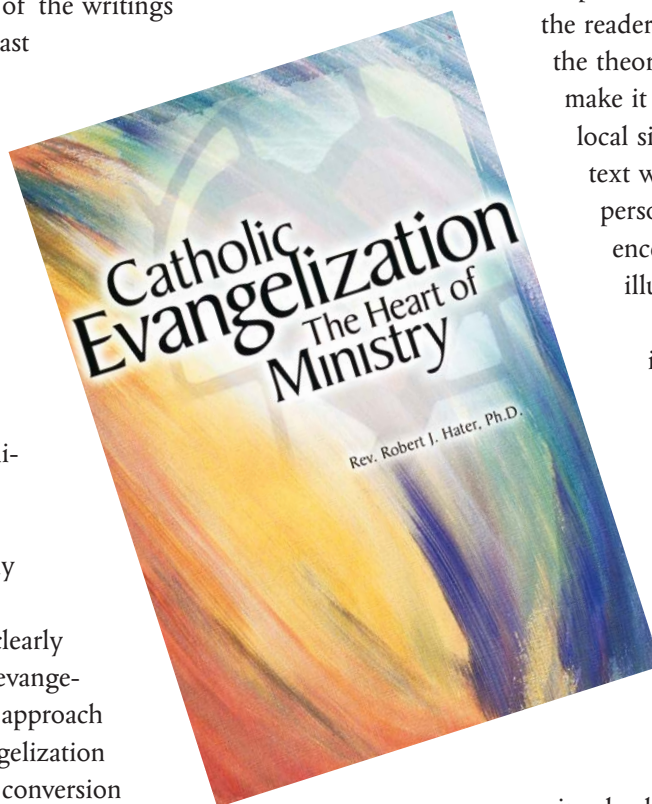
Early on, Bob distinguishes clearly between the Catholic sense of evangelization and the fundamentalist approach of evangelism. He defines evangelization as “a process fostering ongoing conversion within the Christian community that seeks to initiate people ever more deeply into the mystery of God’s love (the kingdom), as it is manifested most fully in the dying and rising of Jesus.” Chapter nine is particularly helpful in presenting twelve of the characteristics of Catholic evangelization.

Evangelization is “the energizing spirit of all Christian ministries and the Christian’s life in the family and world.” He suggests a holistic approach to evangelization, wherein the various ministries converge into a totality. Word, worship, and service are three chief aspects of the evangelization process. Although not mentioned in this book, the great Jesuit catechist, Johannes Hoffinger, coined the phrase “evangelizing catechesis” which helped lay the groundwork for this all-encompassing vision.

Each of the ten chapters approaches evangelization from a different perspective, and each concludes with suggestions for personal and pastoral reflection. These enable the reader or pastoral team to digest the theoretical presentation and make it practical for action in the local situation. Bob permeates the text with stories gleaned from his personal and pastoral experience; and they contribute in illustrating his point.

There is no naiveté when it comes to identifying some pitfalls in the ministry of evangelization, whether they be in parish ministry or personal ministry. Bob maintains his holistic perspective and guides us around the pitfalls.

This is a valuable resource for those involved in the catechumenal ministry, challenging the entire parish to recognize its role as the environment in which the catechumens and candidates hear the Good News and begin to experience the example and support of the local faith community. The author’s connection of evangelization



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with prayer, learning, and discernment offers good motivation and provides for the development of Small Christian Communities.

There are numerous references to Church documents throughout the text, but unfortunately there is no bibliography provided for the reader. An index would also have been helpful. Nevertheless, here is a book that will assist many parish staffs to refocus their energies around the unifying and basic theme of evangelization. Many thanks to Father Bob Hater for sharing his gifts once again. We look forward to hearing more from him in the future.

Tom Ivory is pastor of the Church of the Presentation in Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, and a longtime member of the Forum Team.

“This is a valuable resource for those involved in the catechumenal ministry, challenging the entire parish to recognize its role as the environment in which the catechumens and candidates hear the Good News and begin to experience the example and support of the local faith community.”

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2004 - 2005 CALENDAR

■ THE INITIATION EXPERIENCE INSTITUTES

present the compelling vision and pastoral skills to implement the initiation process and emphasize the relationship of good liturgy to good catechesis.

BEGINNINGS & BEYOND INSTITUTE

June 19-24, 2005, Diocese of Nelson, British Columbia -
with a dialogue group on Rural Issues and Clergy
July 10-15, 2005, Diocese of Evansville (IN)
October 16-21, 2005, Charleston (SC) - Spanish

BEGINNINGS "PLUS" INSTITUTE

November 11-14, 2004, Diocese of Greensburg (PA)
April 13-16, 2005, Diocese of Syracuse (NY)
June 2-5, 2005, Diocese of Brownsville (TX)
August 4-7, 2005, Archdiocese of Seattle (WA)
October 4-7, 2005, Archdiocese of Winnipeg, Manitoba

BEGINNINGS INSTITUTE

August 11-13, 2005, Diocese of Portland (ME)
August 19-21, 2005, Diocese of San Diego (CA) - in Spanish

■ INITIATION IN RURAL AND SMALL PARISHES

Archdiocese of Seattle (WA)
November 20, 2004, Period of Evangelization
and Precatechumenate
February 5, 2005, Period of the Catechumenate
May 21, 2005, Period of Purification & Enlightenment
November 9, 2005, Period of Mystagogy

■ **THE FOCUS ON INITIATION INSTITUTES** concentrate on specific aspects of initiation using presentations, celebrations of the rites, and small group discussions. It is preferable that they follow the Initiation Experience Institutes.

PRECATECHUMENATE

CATECHUMENATE

October 15-17, 2004, Archdiocese of New Orleans (LA)
June 23-25, 2005, Diocese of Saginaw (MI)

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

MYSTAGOGY

June 2-4, 2005, Diocese of Spokane (WA)

CHILDREN AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION

June 9-11, 2005, Diocese of Phoenix (AZ)
August 5-7, 2005, Diocese of Orlando (FL)

CONCERNING THE BAPTIZED

November 4-6, 2004, Diocese of San Diego (CA)
November 11-13, 2004, Archdiocese of Philadelphia (PA)
June 2-4, 2005, Diocese of San Angelo (TX)
June 19-21, 2005, Diocese of Green Bay (MI)
August 25-27, 2005, Diocese of Victoria, British Columbia

■ THE INITIATING COMMUNITY INSTITUTES

explore advanced issues of implementation for experienced ministers as they broaden the initiation experience to include the entire community. Small groups discuss, share, and critique models.

DEVELOPING THE MINISTRIES

June 10-12, 2005, Diocese of Dallas (TX)

FURTHERING THE INITIATION EXPERIENCE

September 30– October 2, 2005, Diocese of Orange (CA) -
in Spanish

PRAYING THE RITES

ECHOING GOD'S WORD

IMAGING THE INITIATION PROCESS IN SMALL CHURCH COMMUNITIES

October 29-31, 2004, Archdiocese of St. Louis (MO)

■ **AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST: BUILDING RECONCILING COMMUNITIES**

explores the faces of alienation and methods of reaching out to the alienated. Examines theological, pastoral, and psychological implications of reconciliation. Celebrate liturgical rites.

■ **INSTITUTES TO BE ANNOUNCED**

June 2005, Diocese of Baton Rouge (LA)
Summer 2005, Archdiocese of Miami (FL)
Summer 2005, Archdiocese of San Antonio (TX)



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