

Magnificat

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News from
HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE
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As You had shown forth from on high, O Lord,
the splendor of the firmament,
so have You shown here below
the beauty of the dwelling place of Your holy glory.
Make it stand firm through all ages
and, through the one who gave you birth,
accept the supplications
we unceasingly offer there to You,
O Life and Resurrection of all.

Troparion: Dedication of the Church of the Resurrection

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparchy of Chicago, and belonging to the Ukrainian Metropolis in the United States of America, which is in union with the Pope of Rome, supreme pastor of the universal Church. We embrace Evangelical poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability of life, according to the Rule of Saint Benedict and the traditions of the Christian East. In our skete at Jacob's Falls, on the shore of Lake Superior in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, we devote ourselves to a common life of prayer and work for the praise, love, and service of God and for the upbuilding of His Kingdom through the arts.

Dedication

On September 13, the Forefeast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, Christians of the Byzantine tradition commemorate the Dedication of the great Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulcher) in Jerusalem. Solemn remembrance of an event that occurred in the Fourth Century is typical of the Byzantine liturgical perspective and offers yet another occasion to contemplate our profound communion with the faithful of all ages. Even at a distance of nearly seventeen hundred years we can share their joy.

Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor, firmly believed that he had achieved lordship over the whole of his world through the power of the Cross. In thanksgiving for the preservation doctrinal unity achieved at the Council of Nicea in 325, he wished to erect a monumental church in the place where the Faith had been established through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. To that end, in 326 he sent his mother, the seventy-nine year old Empress Helena, on pilgrimage to Jerusalem to secure the sacred site. Despite the unlimited access to the Imperial treasury he had granted her, this proved no easy matter.

In the course of putting down Jewish rebellions, Roman legions had destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD and again in AD 135. In an attempt to supplant the Holy City, the Emperor Hadrian had built a purely Roman town over the ruins and named it Aelia Capitolina. Jews were not even permitted to enter this new city, where a temple of Jupiter stood on the site successively occupied by Solomon's Temple, the Second Temple, and the Temple built by King Herod the Great. Similarly, the area of Golgotha and the nearby Tomb, which had been outside the city walls in the time of Christ, were incorporated into the new town,

encompassed by a retaining wall, and buried in rubble. Atop the resulting terrace Hadrian had erected a shrine to Venus, hoping, it is said, to blot out all memory of what lay below.

He had, rather, provided a landmark for focusing Christian remembrance. The tradition remained alive within the community, and, though they had lain hidden for one hundred eighty years, St. Helena quickly learned the location of Golgotha and the Life-giving Tomb. She immediately ordered the pagan shrine demolished, and set workmen to removing the rubble to restore the area to its original topogra-

**You have shown the Church
to be a resplendent heaven
which enlightens all the faithful;
standing in the midst
of this holy dwelling place,
we cry aloud to You:
Make firm this house, O Lord!**

Kontakion of the Feast

phy. During the course of these excavations the hill of Golgotha was uncovered, the rock surrounding the nearby Tomb cut away, and – under miraculous circumstances – the Cross, itself, discovered in a cave. The site having been laid bare and the foundations established, the aged Empress died in 327; the great church was

completed some eight years later.

A rotunda sixty-five feet in diameter now enclosed the Tomb. This communicated eastward, by means of a courtyard colonnaded on its north, south and east sides, with what remained of the rock of Golgotha – which was still open to the sky – and with the apse of a five aisled basilica some one hundred fifty feet in length. Accessed from the east by an atrium preceded by a monumental entryway, the Martyrium (or place of Testimony), as it was called, had been built over the cave where the Cross had been found and allowed access to it from its nave. It was not the largest of Constantine's religious buildings – the church he had erected over the tomb of St. Peter in Rome was more than twice as long – but, as befitted its importance, it certainly was one of the most splendid. Stretching some

four hundred fifty feet from its entry gate to the rotunda of the Anastasis (or Resurrection), the entire complex gleamed with colored marble, mosaics, and decorations of silver and gold.

The Emperor had invited bishops from all over the East to assist at the inauguration of the great shrine. On September 13, 335, in the thirtieth year of Constantine's reign, assembled with a vast crowd of people from many parts of the Empire, they solemnly dedicated the holy edifice which enshrined the True Cross and encompassed within its precincts the sites of both the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ. The hierarchs subsequently decreed there be an annual commemoration of the event. Recovery of these holiest of places from the ignominy to which they had been condemned by a hostile pagan world and the splendor with which they had recently been surrounded at state expense boldly proclaimed the triumph of the Cross; through it Christ was, indeed, overcoming the world.

The vicissitudes suffered by the Church of the Resurrection through the ages in many ways reflect the trials of the Eastern Church, herself. Badly damaged by fire during an invasion by Persians in 614, it was restored – though less sumptuously – by 626. After the Muslims entered Jerusalem in 637, various treaties between Caliph and Emperor guaranteed Christian control of the site. Even so, it was partially burned by Muslim mobs in 936 and again in 966; modest repairs kept it in use until it was completely destroyed by fire

during open hostilities in 1009. A peace treaty again allowed the construction of several smaller churches on the site between 1024 and 1048. After the establishment of their Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Crusaders roofed over the courtyard of the Anastasis to create a new Romanesque style church. Replacing or incorporating the various smaller churches that had been built over the holy sites, it covered only a small part of the area once occupied by Constantine's monumental basilica. The eclectic and cobbled-together Crusader Church of the Holy Sepulcher remains to this day, despite centuries of fires, earthquakes, shoddy restorations, and the interminable

wrangling of the rival sects that maintain the buildings. First conceived in thanksgiving for a doctrinal unity that proved all too elusive, Christianity's holiest shrine has become one of its most glaring examples of disunity.

**Celebrating the dedication, O Lord,
of the Church of Your holy Resurrection,
we send up glory to You,
Who have sanctified and perfected it
with Your all-renewing grace.
Adored therein by Your faithful people
who celebrate Your holy Mysteries,
accept the all-pure, unbloody sacrifice
from the hands of Your servants,
and bestow great mercy and cleansing of sin
upon those who rightly make you offering.**

From the Vespers of the Feast

Yet, after nearly seventeen centuries, it remains the major site of Christian pilgrimage, and Eastern Christians still recall liturgically the joy and wonder of its inauguration. Celebrating the dedication of the Church of the Resurrection, we glorify God who blessed it and brought it to completion by His grace. There His people adore Him with psalms and hymns of praise; there He is worshiped through celebration of the Eucharist and, receiving the Sacrifice of His own body and blood, abundantly pours out His grace.

Such actions and purposes, of course, are not confined to a particular time and place, but



pertain universally to the Christian tradition of liturgical worship. Indeed, the great Church of the Resurrection is seen as an exemplar of every Christian house of worship, and the Services commemorating its dedication are also celebrated for the dedication of any church. Thus, we in this monastery each year share that ancient joy twice within the space of three weeks, on the feast, itself, and also on August 24th, the anniversary of the dedication of our own little temple of God's holy glory, the monastic Church of St. John the Theologian.

God is not confined to a building, of course, as King Solomon reminds us in the first reading at Vespers (I Kgs. 8:22-23; 27-30). He Who made the heavens cannot be contained by them; how much less so by a poor temple made by sinful human hands! Yet, to Solomon's question: *Can it be that God dwells on earth among men?* we must answer with a resounding **Yes!** For as St. John (Jn. 1:14) tells us: *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.* And He remains with us until the end of time (cf. Mt. 28:20) in the words of His Gospel, in His Eucharistic Body and Blood which we offer upon and receive from the altars of our churches throughout the world, and in His faithful ones

of every time and place, His mystical body the Church, through which He continues to live and act in our world.

Indeed, the feast pertains to the Church Universal as much as it does to Constantine's basilica or any particular church structure. This is the house built by Divine Wisdom of which our third reading at Vespers (Prov. 9:1-11) speaks. Here is the banquet prepared to advance us in the ways of understanding and bestow upon us eternal life. This is the Church founded by Christ upon the Rock of Peter's faith as noted in Gospel reading at Liturgy

(Mt. 16:13-18).

Recalling the Lord's promise that the gates of Hell would not prevail against it, we know our plea: *Make firm this house, O Lord!* has already been answered. Likewise, we echo Solomon's confidence that the Lord will look with favor upon this house, that He will heed the petitions we offer Him here. Hearing them in His eternal dwelling place on high, He will answer with His great and abundant mercy.

Thus, the feast is essentially one of thanksgiving to Christ for the great mercy He continues to show us in our churches and in the Church; as our Epistle reading (Heb. 3:1-4) reminds us: He who built the house is far more worthy of honor than the house itself. God grant that our celebration of these dedications will be for us a time of personal rededication to the life of holiness which Christ asks of us all, and to the many tasks small and large through which He leads us along the way. Through His all-renewing grace, may we be built up into worthy members of His body, the Church.

Together in Harmony

The Fathers and the Liturgy often use musical imagery to illustrate the co-operation and unity that must mark Christ's Church. Council Fathers, having reached theological consensus, are said to sing a hymn in unison. A vast choir, harmonious despite the many different voices of its singers, is a powerful and moving image of the unity of mind and heart Christians have prized from the beginning (cf. Acts 4:32).

Christian monasteries in particular seek to replicate the beautiful simplicity of these first Christians. Like them, monks live together and hold their goods in common, they devote themselves to apostolic teaching and to prayer and the Eucharist (cf. Acts 2:42-47). Above all, they strive for that unity of intent, purpose, and understanding so aptly summed up as "harmony." For our own small monastery, the word is particularly appropriate; we are, in fact, a choir.

Prayer is the essence of monastic life. It is the purpose of the monk's withdrawal from the world and his motivation for living together with other like minded souls. Away from the world's many distractions, he is free to devote himself to contemplation, conversation with God deep within the recesses of his heart. At fixed hours he also stands to pray in common with his brothers; in our monastery the common prayer is almost entirely sung.

This prayer is liturgical – that is, a public work, undertaken on behalf of the people. It concerns the well-being of the whole world. Persistent litanies of petition for the needs of the Church, our nation, and the world, punctuate the Psalms and hymns of our Services. Singing the Lord's praises and begging His mercy on this world of ours, we know that this prayer is heard

and that it is efficacious.

Again I tell you, if two of you join their voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by My Father in heaven.

(Mt. 18:19)

Liturgical prayer is the most important function of this little monastery. The four or five hours per day we normally spend in choir constitute our noblest endeavor, our greatest benefit to the world. They also represent our closest connection with one another and our intimacy with God.

Our music mostly consists of simple traditional melodies, quickly learned by rote and then wedded to a great variety of liturgical texts. The texts, themselves, are often profoundly theological, offering rare insights into God's truth. Singing them over the years helps us to internalize their content and make it strongly held belief rather than intellectual proposition. From right worship come theological understanding

and knowledge of God.

The monastic choir is the bond of our life. Whatever our individual tasks and responsibilities, we all sing the Services; for some hours each day we are all gathered together in the temple, totally united in this holy work. The choir demands attentiveness, sensitivity, and great effort; the Services sometimes leave us drained and exhausted. Yet they also lift us up and restore the wholeness often fractured by the day's cares. As our voices meld in the sacred chants, we are drawn out of our petty isolation and into a splendid oneness of mind and heart. In this unity we know we are not alone:

O You who have given us the grace to pray together in harmony and have promised to grant the requests of two or three who join their voices to call upon Your name: fulfill now the petitions of Your servants, in so far as is for good, granting us knowledge of Your truth in this life, and in the age to come – eternal life.

Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom,
Prayer of the Third Antiphon

A Pilgrim's View

The Roman basilica, exemplified by Constantine's Church of the Resurrection and by the many other monumental churches he had erected throughout the Roman world, remained the standard of church architecture in the West for more than a thousand years. Even as church elevations transformed themselves from Roman to Romanesque, to Gothic, to Renaissance, to Baroque, the floor plans remained essentially the same: a rectangular nave - divided into aisles, if large, by ordered rows of columns or piers - having its principal entry at one end of the space and its altar in an apse at the other. The arrangement is axial and focused; one is almost compelled - visually, at least - to progress down the length of the nave to the ultimate goal in the apse. Transepts, where they exist do not detract from the initial impression. The structure is an image of the worshiper's ongoing pilgrimage toward his final bliss in heaven.

By contrast, since the construction of the Emperor Justinian's great Church of Holy Wisdom at Constantinople in the Sixth Century, Byzantine churches have generally exhibited a more centralized floor plan. A round, square, octagonal, or compact cruciform nave is surmounted by an all-encompassing broad ceiling, often in the form of a dome. There is little sense of movement in the structure. The eye is drawn not forward, but upward toward the ceiling which traditionally boasts a large painting of Christ the Ruler of All. The impression is not one of an ongoing journey, but of having arrived.

Our own Monastic Church of St. John the Theologian attempts to be faithful to the Byzantine design exhibited by many wooden country churches of Western Ukraine. Given the constraints of our building site

and budget, however, some accommodations had to be made.

Constantine's Church of the Resurrection faced west, as did the other monumental churches he erected. Its main entry was on the east end of the structure, its apse at its western extremity. This arrangement may have been borrowed from Roman temples where it had been the custom to open the main doors at dawn to allow worshipers gathered outside a glimpse of the god illumined by the first rays of the sun. Christians, however, had no such cult images, and from earliest times they had faced east to worship, into the rising sun, a symbol of the salvation breaking over the world in Christ Jesus (cf. Lk. 1:76-79). The Constantinian model was soon abandoned; since the Eighth Century it has been the custom, even in the West, to build churches with their altar and apse to the east.

Such is the case with our church. Thus, since the highway lies on the east side of the site, the exterior of the apse first greets the pilgrim as he approaches the church from the road. Coming up the ramp, he passes in front of the Byzantine/





Slav cross on its eastern most wall, and, traversing the length of the porch on the south side of the building, he enters the narthex.

In Byzantine tradition this area is seen as a place of preparation for entering the actual worship space, the nave; as such it is often decorated with images drawn from the Old Testament, the preparation of the Gospel. The narthex of our new church does not yet have this decoration in place. Rather, we have placed there a recently donated painting of the Virgin, as, the *Life of St. Mary of Egypt* tells us, once hung in the narthex of Constantine's Church of the Resurrection.

From the narthex the pilgrim has access to the Chapel of the Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering on his left. Turning right he may pass through the great doors and enter the brightness of the nave. Facing north as he steps into the area reserved for congregation, he will note the cloister door opposite by which

the monks enter and leave the church. After venerating the icons and blessing cross on the small central table, or Tetrapod, he may stand and pray, perhaps affixing a taper - which will be lit during the coming Service - to the nearby candelabrum or lighting a votive candle in one of the stands on either side of the nave. Sitting on the bench along the west wall for a moment of quiet reflection before the Service, he may gather some general impressions of the holy place into which he has entered.

The space is tall and bright, flooded with sunlight pouring in through three great lancet windows on the west wall above and behind him and from three others high on the south wall of the central tower. The vaulted ceiling above our pilgrim opens eastward into the tower, and its own ceiling vaults open further into a light-filled octagonal dome. The Altar area projects east from the tower, the height and





configuration of its ceiling mirrors that over the congregational area, and its east wall opens into the apse the pilgrim passed on his way into the church.

Thus, although the church is rectangular in plan, it is centralized in organization. The tower and dome occupying its center and covering half its area provide a strong vertical axis around which the whole structure seems to revolve. The tripartite arrangement of its ceiling is reflected in the strong patterns of its tile floor and in the arrangement of its fixtures and furnishings, which, in turn is dictated by liturgical function.

The monastic choir occupies the central space under the tower. A broad border of patterned tile demarks it from the congregational area to the west and follows along its north and south

walls. Arranged in a u-shaped configuration atop the border, the monks' choir stalls face east and toward center, where a medallion marks the space under the dome. From here, in the "midst of the temple," the Scriptures - other than the Gospel - are proclaimed, and here the monks come together to chant certain hymns during Services. Facing across the medallion to the Ambon and the Royal Doors of the Iconostasis, the Hegumen's chair occupies the west center of the arrangement; an opening on either side separates it from the wings of stalls to north and south, and allows the congregation access to the front for Holy Communion, veneration of the Cross, anointings, etc. To accommodate processions, prostrations, and other liturgical actions the choir remains otherwise empty of

furnishings.

Before or after Services, a pilgrim may also enter the choir to pray before the icons arranged along its walls, to venerate the “Kissing Icons” on either side of the Ambon, or to place votive tapers in their candelabra. In no case may he step up onto the Soleas and Ambon that mark the outer edge of the Altar platform or pass through the doors of the Iconostasis. Such is permitted only to priests and deacons and to those who are serving some particular liturgical function.

Thus the deacon enters and leaves the Altar by the side doors to intone the litanies from the Ambon; the acolyte likewise passes through the side doors during processions or for lighting the lamps of the Iconostasis. Through the central Royal Doors the priest and deacon progress to the altar during the Great and Little Entrances of Divine Liturgy and during the Entrance of Great Vespers; they exit through them to the Ambon to proclaim the Gospel, to preach, to administer Holy Communion, or to impart a blessing; on all other occasions they must use the side doors. Similarly, only a priest or deacon may pass between the Holy Table and the Royal doors – and only when liturgical action requires it.

The holiest actions of our faith take place on the Altar. The reverent respect we show the area acknowledges and reinforces our belief in their awesome truth. So, too, does the Iconostasis which shields the area from view. The glimpses of the Holy Table and its furnishings seen through the open Royal Doors at certain points in the Liturgy are all the more significant because of their infrequency. The mysteries of faith must remain to some extent mysterious; what can be seen is no longer held by faith; an easy familiarity can breed contempt.

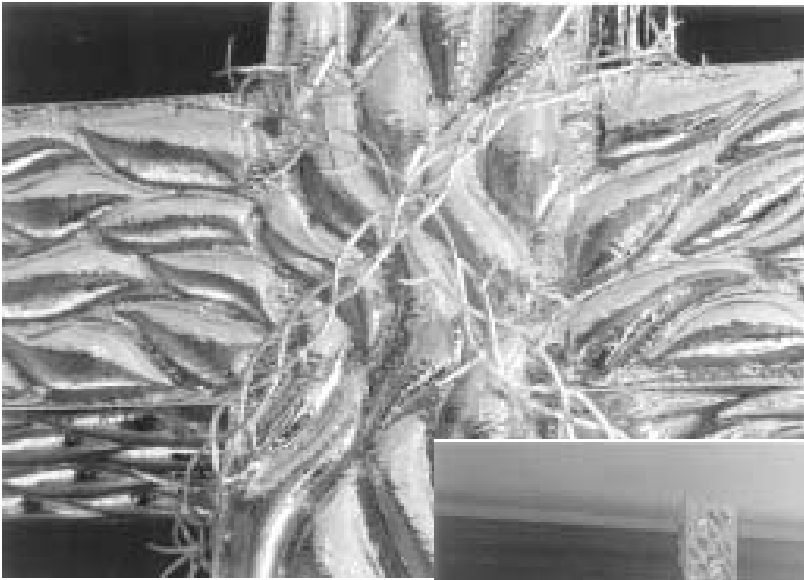
Standing in silent prayer in the midst of the holy temple, the pilgrim

will instinctively grasp this. He knows that beyond the Iconostasis lie the Holy Table, the Tabernacle, the Table of Preparation, the Seven-branched Lampstand and the Throne on High, as well as seating for the clergy and other liturgical appurtenances. He is not moved by idle curiosity, and he does not need to see them to appreciate their beauty and significance. He walks by faith.

May our almighty and loving Lord Jesus continue to shed an abundance of His grace and mercy upon this holy temple and upon all pilgrims who enter herein with faith, reverence, and fear of God.



New from Poorrock Abbey Publishing



Some place written petitions at the foot of the Cross. May our merciful and loving Lord grant them comfort and the fulfillment of their requests.

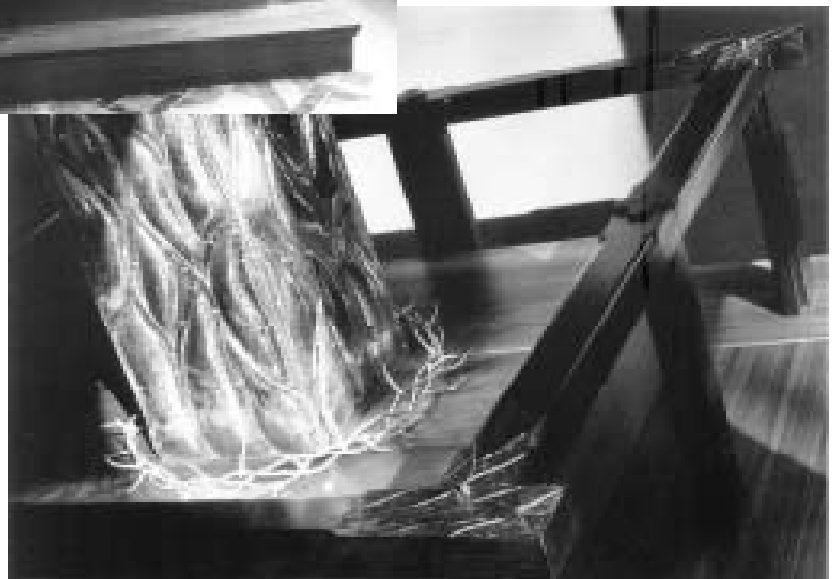
Photographer Kenneth Steiner visited the Chapel of the Holy Cross many times over the space of a year. Studying the Cross from varied angles and in many different lights, he captured many unique aspects of its special beauty. We are pleased to make available on large (5" x 7") note cards eight

outstanding examples of these photographic studies. Packaged as an assortment of one each, with envelopes for mailing, they will beautifully serve as a gift or for personal communication.

A packet of **HOLY CROSS NOTECARDS** offers eight different (5" x 7") photographic views by Kenneth Steiner of our Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering. Mailing envelopes are included. \$12.00 (2.00) Shipped via USPS. Michigan residents add 6% sales tax \$.72.

Our pilgrim, should he proceed to the left on entering the narthex of our monastic Church of St. John the Theologian, will come upon our own shrine to the Precious and Life-giving Cross. Conceived by a mystic in response to a personal revelation and made possible by the generosity of an anonymous donor, the Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering was executed in hammered silver by local artists Patricia Pawlicki and Martin Herrera. Rising ten feet above its pedestal of walnut and mahogany and surrounded by a railing of ebony, it bears two intertwined crowns of thorns at its crossing, signifying the sorrow shared by Christ and His most holy mother at the Crucifixion through which our salvation was won; the single crown at its foot represents the personal sufferings we may unite to those of Christ.

The Cross stands alone in its own meditation chapel. Pilgrims may enter there to pray privately before or after Services.



A Measure of Progress

Working the **Jampot** without employees this summer for the first time in fourteen years brought a sense of *déjà vu*. In many ways it seemed like old times. Yet celebrating the Liturgy or standing in choir at prayer in the new church loudly proclaimed that things were not the same. We had come a very long way since we last bore the entire weight of the shop ourselves.

Fourteen years ago our chapel and domestic kitchen shared the same room, and four additional modest rooms completed the entire monastery. **Jampot** had no parking lot, no warehouse, and its revenue was less than half what it is today. The jam kitchen and bakery had already been built, however. And that first, tentative expansion was the start of all the rest.

The steady growth of this little business over the years has fueled the physical growth of all the rest; even our contributors, for the most part, met us first at the **Jampot**. It has brought us much,

and much still depends on it. This monastery is still a work in progress. It has a very large debt to service and many of the projects undertaken remain incomplete. Moreover, additional needs present themselves at every turn. We trust they, too, will be met at the appropriate time.

The Lord continues to provide for the survival and growth of this monastery. Most often He provides us with work — more than seems possible to accomplish — and He raises up help and generosity to provide for our lack. In both ways He mysteriously moves this monastery forward toward what He plans it to become.

May He grant us the strength and courage to continue following His lead. May He prosper and bless you, our friends, patrons, and benefactors, who work with him to raise up this monastery.

HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE

Society of St. John

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