

THE EPISTLE

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts known and read of all men . . .
2 Cor. 3:2



REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH ✠ BAYSIDE, NEW YORK
VOLUME LVIII LENT AND EASTER NO. 1

NOTES FROM THE PASTOR

U: The Lord has redeemed His people.

R: O come, let us worship Him.



during the season of Lent, the Sunday morning Gospel readings include examples of Jesus defeating the devil and fallen angels. As the *Small Catechism* reiterates, Jesus Christ has redeemed you, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won you from the power of the devil! Although Satan is the enemy of God and His people, God's Word reveals to us how Jesus shows His power over the devil. One way that Jesus shows His power over the devil is by casting out demons.

Mark 9:14–27 records how an evil spirit made a boy mute, threw him into convulsions, and even cast him into fire as well as water in order to destroy him. When Jesus said that all things are possible for one who believes, the father of this sorely oppressed boy cried out: “I believe; help my unbelief!” In Matthew 15:21–28 a Canaanite woman, whose daughter was severely oppressed by a demon, was tested by Jesus. Yet she persisted: “Lord, help me.” Jesus told her: “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” From Luke 4:31–37 we hear the amazement of the people of Capernaum in Galilee. They said of Jesus: “What is this word? For with power and authority he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!”

In reading these sections of God's Word, we may find them to be very familiar. However, just as with the Sunday morning Gospel readings that we repeat annually in the Divine Service, it is good for us to hear them again and again. Satan continues to lash out against us; we need to receive God's Word and His Sacraments regularly.

People we know, even we ourselves, may be tempted to think, “I've heard the stories of the Bible many times in years past. I doubt there's anything I need to hear now that I didn't already hear then.” However, just as faith may grow stronger, it may also grow weaker. How then would you compare the temptation to doubt our need for God's Word, as stated above, with the words of the father



(Continued on page 3)

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ANNO DOMINI MMXXII

EASTER

No. 1

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH

Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

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SUNDAY SERVICE SCHEDULE

Divine Service . . . 10:30 A.M.

Bible Class & Prayer . . . 9:30 A.M.

Choir Rehearsal . . . 9:15 A.M.



IN OUR PRAYERS

Nick Braglio, Jane Wolf, Melissa Ramos, Bill Hundt, Marcia McHugh, Dennis Salmone, Michael Elliott, Patricia Redden, John W. Hamlin, Richard Branch, Laura Shinn, Isabella Ward, Evangelina Gasas, Joseph Carbone, Robert Firmery, Carol Lai, Geoff Stewart, Ellie Kehoe, Elizabeth Buchholz, Pastor Stohlmann, Frank DiCarlo, Paul Stohlmann, Danielle Lash, Joshua & Karie Pranschke, Rick Gaillardetz, and Irene Heim.
Shut-in: Jane Bauer.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR BIBLE STUDY

Redeemer's monthly in-person Bible study continues with the Book of Acts, meeting in the nave on the last Wednesday of each month at 2 P.M. Materials are provided in the narthex at least one Sunday before the session. The next will be April 27. Sunday in-person Bible study meets in the nave on the first, third, and fifth Sundays of the month at 9:30 A.M. On the second and fourth Sundays, Pastor leads Morning Prayer by telephone conference call. Contact Pastor if you wish to participate.

NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO BIBLE STUDY CLASS ON EASTER SUNDAY (APRIL 17).

NOTES FROM THE PASTOR *(continued from page 1)*

in Mark 9:24 (“I believe; help my unbelief”)? As you think about what you would say, consider also the humility of that father of whom St. Mark tells us. Share your thoughts the next time we talk.

Meanwhile, let us remain steadfast in God’s Word and prayer. I’d be happy to join you as you pray the following and seek again our heavenly Father’s blessing.

Almighty God, heavenly Father, of Your tender love toward us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we may have everlasting life. By Your Spirit comfort us in all our troubles and protect us from all doubts so that we may remain steadfast in the faith and come at last to life eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

May the almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us the new birth of water and of the Spirit and has forgiven us all our sins strengthen us with His grace to life + everlasting. Amen.

THE POWER AND BENEFIT OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

An excerpt from a sermon by Martin Luther for the Feast of the Resurrection.

The present festival directs our attention to that consolatory and joyful article of our Creed, in which we confess that Christ on the third day arose again from the dead. ... This glorious victory we celebrate today. Above all we must firmly believe that in Christ there was a contest between God and the devil, between righteousness and sin, between life and death, between that which is good and that which is evil, between purity and all manner of corruption, and that the triumph was on the side of God. This scene we ought to cherish fondly and earnestly, and often to contemplate.

In the former scene of suffering and death we witnessed our sin, our sentence of condemnation and death resting heavily upon Christ, making Him a distressed, pitiable Man; now, on Easter, we have the other scene unalloyed with sin; no curse, no frown, no death is visible; it is all life, mercy, happiness and righteousness in Christ. This picture can and should cheer our hearts. We should regard it with no other feeling but that today God brings us also to life with Christ. We should firmly believe that as we see no sin, no death, no condemnation in Christ, so God will also, for Christ's sake, consider us free from these if we faithfully rely upon His Son and depend upon His resurrection. Such a blessing we derive from faith. The day will come, however, when faith shall be lost in sight and full fruition.



Nevertheless, while we are here on earth sin, death, disgrace and reproach, and all kinds of wants and infirmities remain with us, and we must patiently bear them. These all relate, however, only to the flesh; for in our faith we are already happy. As Christ arose from the dead, and has a life eternal, free from sin and death, so have we these treasures in faith. And as surely as the devil could not prevail against Christ, but had to flee, so surely will he also flee from the Christian who believes. In the end our body will also be perfected, so that neither sin nor death can have power over it. For the present we are as weak and sinful as other people, only that we strive to shun open and gross sins. It is true, Christians may also, now and then, be guilty of these, but they remain not in them; they flee them again through earnest repentance, and obtain through faith forgiveness of all their sins. ...

These two facts then belong together: through faith in Christ we are pure and holy; on account of the old Adam within us we are impure and sinners. This impurity we remember when we pray: “Forgive us our trespasses,” and are comforted in the faith that God, for Christ's sake and in the power of His resurrection, hears us and pardons us, and gives us eternal life. Thus we are holy in Christ through faith, even if we are sinners; for it matters not

THE POWER AND BENEFIT OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST *(continued from page 3)*

how much is yet lacking in us: Christ our Lord and Head arose from the dead; He has conquered sin and death, and we, through faith in Him, are also freed from their power. Whoever does not believe in this and has not Christ, will lie and remain under the dominion of sin, in spite of all his good works and religious observances.

Let us therefore earnestly view and study this joyful, lovely, and blessed Easter scene. It is a picture without sin and death. If sin troubles us, if our conscience accuses us of evil deeds and faithlessness, let us remember and exclaim: It is true, we are sinners, nor can we deny the weakness of our faith; but we console ourselves with the knowledge that Jesus Christ has taken upon Himself and borne our iniquities; and by His resurrection on this glorious Easter festival, sin and punishment threaten us no more. Say, devil, sin and death, why did you accuse this Man before Pilate and nail Him to the cross? Did you do right in this? And sin, and death, and the devil will then confess that a mistake was made—that they wrongfully abused Him. Then we can say to sin, death and the Devil: Get you gone, molest us not!

MUSIC NOTES

The Reproaches

The Tenebrae service that we celebrate on Good Friday includes the recitation of the “Reproaches” (in Latin, *Improperia*). It is an ancient text, possibly the work of Proclus, the Archbishop of Constantinople, who introduced it into the Greek liturgy in A.D. 438. In Roman Catholic practice, it is found in the afternoon service of Good Friday, where it forms part of the “Adoration of the Holy Cross.” It has also been adopted into the Good Friday observances of the Anglican and other Protestant churches.

As the word “reproaches” suggests, this prayer focuses on the betrayal of Christ by sinners. It takes the form of questions or statements posed by Jesus that are answered in short responses by the congregation. Jesus utters words of accusation against “my people,” recalling the many benefits he had bestowed upon the people of Israel. He contrasts these gifts with the ignominies suffered in his Passion and terrible death on the cross. The Reproaches



memorialize the Lord’s merciful acts towards his people, sometimes taking exact wordings from the Old Testament. For example, the first reproach quotes two such verses: one from the prophet Micah (6:3): “O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me”; the other from Exodus (20:2; also Numbers 15:41 and Psalm 81:10): “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt.” In the third reproach, we hear the words of Isaiah (5:4): “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” and also of Jeremiah (2:21): “Yet I had planted thee a noble vine.” One finds the origin of the fourth reproach in Exodus 12:29: “And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt.” The remaining reproaches relate to other biblical passages.

The English-language version of the Reproaches that we use takes the form of six sections. At the end of each reproach, Jesus reminds us of the cross. In the course of the six sections, a greater and greater proportion of the text is devoted to the brutal details of his suffering and death. For example, both the first and second reproaches recount various ways by which God cared

for the people of Israel and conclude with just one short reference to the Crucifixion: “Because I, the Lord thy God, led thee through the desert forty years, and fed thee with manna, and brought thee into a land exceedingly good: *thou hast prepared a cross for thy Savior*” (second reproach). On the contrary, the final reproach divides Old and New Testament history more evenly: “I did smite kings for thy sake: *and thou hast smitten my head with a reed*. I did give thee a royal scepter: *and thou hast set upon my head a crown of thorns*. I did raise thee on high with great power: *and thou hast hanged me upon the gibbet of the cross.*”

To the recriminations set forth in the first three reproaches, the congregation responds with the “Trisagion,” a doxology combined with a plea for mercy. In the Catholic plainchant version (*Improperia*) of the Reproaches, this response retains the original Greek and was sung partially in Greek (similar to the title “Kyrie eleison,” still found today in the Lutheran liturgy). The meaning in both ancient languages is exactly as found in the English translation: “Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, have mercy upon us.” It was intended to be sung responsorially by two choirs, alternating the Greek and Latin, as follows:

Choir I

Ἅγιος ὁ Θεός (Hagios Theós)

Ἅγιος ἰσχυρός (Hagios ischyros)

Ἅγιος ἀθάνατος, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς
(Hagios athánatos, eléison hémás)

Choir II

Sanctus Deus

Sanctus fortis

Sanctus immortalis, miserere nobis

For the last three reproaches, the congregation (speaking as “the people”) takes up the words of Jesus from the first reproach: “O my people, what have I done unto thee, or wherein have I wearied thee, saith the Lord. Testify against me.”

Because of the content of the text, the Reproaches is appropriate only for Good Friday (occasionally Holy Saturday), and therefore musical settings fit the theme of the day just once in the church year. Also, as the most solemn day of the liturgical calendar, Good Friday was often celebrated without elaborate music. In this case, the Reproaches (*Improperia*) would most likely have been performed in plainchant. And yet evidence suggests that, between ca. 1500 and 1750, every composer who worked for a Catholic church or court probably had occasion to write one or more polyphonic *Improperia* settings. A search of the history of music probably performed in the Vienna imperial chapel, for example, shows works with this title by at least eight composers, some of whom wrote more than one setting: Palestrina, Victoria, Giovanni Francesco Anerio, Leonardo Leo, Johann Eberlin, Georg Reutter, Giuseppe Barnabei, and Johannes Mayr. Best known today are the *Improperia* from the Renaissance period by Palestrina and Victoria—the pieces by the other composers named remain still unpublished. Research, however, continues to unearth “new” old settings housed in archival collections. Recently published, for example, is the *Improperia* by Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III (1608–1657), who reigned during the Thirty Years’ War. Like many of these pieces, his composition is entitled *Popule meus* (my people—the first words in the first reproach). Set for alto and tenor voices accompanied by organ and bass stringed instrument, it expressively paints the contrast between God’s benevolence and the people’s evil treatment of Christ.



In conclusion, when we recite the Reproaches in the Tenebrae service on Good Friday, the congregation of Redeemer Lutheran Church participates in a living tradition that goes back to the early history of the church. By speaking the words of this ancient text, hallowed by time, we affirm with the whole Christian Church our own role in the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ. Only by doing so may we properly celebrate the true meaning of Easter.

Jane Schatkin Hettrick
Director of Parish Music



MEMORIALS

A donation in memory of SANDI DUNN was made by Michael & Marlene Pappacena

A donation in memory of DOREEN CLARKE was made by Joan Firmery

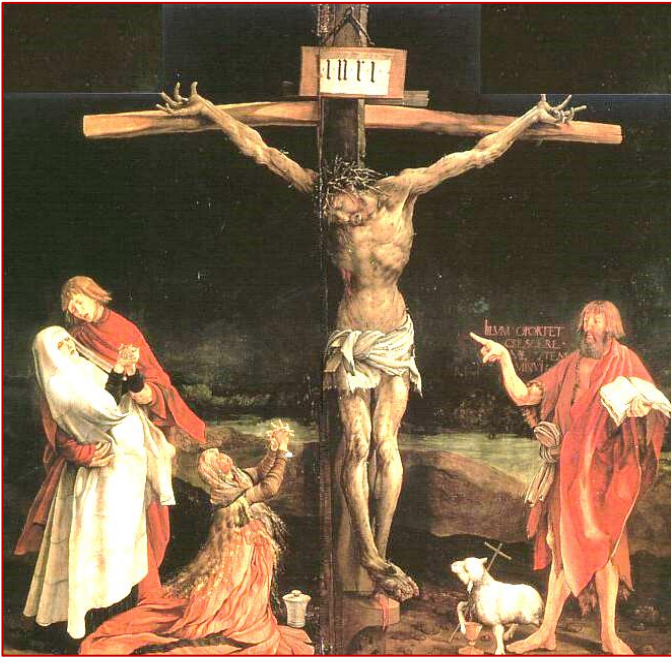


BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD

A Pair of Images for Good Friday and Easter

Thanks to the hard work of Frank Krupicka, Jr., who created the templates in the early 2000s, Redeemer's service bulletins are produced "in house," with all the texts and art based on the specific day of the historic Church Year and lectionary we use. I played a small part in helping him find illustrations related to each day's Gospel lesson. In addition, the theme of the day is echoed in excerpts from the day's introit and Gospel printed above and below the image. Bulletin covers for occasional festivals have been added over the years, most recently for St. Stephen (December 26), and some images have been replaced as better ones have been found and allowances made for the lack of a color printer. The result is a bulletin cover that visually supports its contents, emphasizing the unity of the proclamation of the Gospel in the spoken and sung word in every service.

I have several favorite images, and among these are the two we use for Good Friday and Easter. In 2020, when we were forced to close our doors and rely on videos and other home devotions, I realized how important they were to my observance of these important feast days. These two images, the *Crucifixion* and the *Resurrection*, are separate panels of a "polyptych" altarpiece constructed and painted in the early 16th century for the chapel of a hospital run by a healing order, the Brothers of St. Anthony (or "Antonites"), in Isenheim (now in Alsace).



A "diptych" is a two-panel work that opens like our bulletin, and a "triptych" has three panels and opens like a simple two-doored cabinet, while a polyptych has many panels or "wings" that can be opened so that the images or carvings can be displayed in various combinations, depending on the festival. In some ways they are the precursors of the modern bulletin cover! The "Isenheim Altarpiece," however, is an exceedingly complex mechanical creation of *twelve* painted panels and additional sections of carved and gilded wood depicting the life of our Lord, the Virgin Mary, and St. Anthony.

St. Anthony the Great (d. A.D. 356) was one of the founders of Christian monasticism, and in the centuries *after* his death was credited with a number of miraculous healings. The order founded in his name maintained monasteries with hospitals throughout Europe. The Antonites specialized in skin diseases and were particularly famous for treating people afflicted with

"ergotism," a mysterious condition we now know is caused by eating fungus-contaminated grain. The fungus, *Claviceps purpurea*, infects rye and other cereal grains, but rye tended to be the most common carrier, perhaps because the darker grains of rye make it harder to spot. The fungus also thrives in cool, damp climates, which makes northern Europe, where rye breads are popular, the perfect incubator. Ergot poisoning attacks the central nervous system, causing spasms, convulsions, mania, or psychosis, and, to make matters worse, skin eruptions and intense burning pain in the extremities. In the worst cases this leads to "dry gangrene," resulting in the loss of the affected limbs and, often, death.

During the Middle Ages, the Antonites' close connection with ergotism led to its popular name: "St. Anthony's fire." Their "cure" included high-quality food and a drink of herbs and wine in which the relics of St. Anthony had been soaked. Patients were also made comfortable on beds in the hospital infirmaries, and anti-inflammatory salves were applied to their burning skin. Donations from grateful patients and their families poured into the order's coffers, and the Antonites became quite wealthy, opening additional hospitals (370!) as well as acquiring a rich collection of art. For the chapel of their Isenheim hospital—and the spiritual care of their patients—they

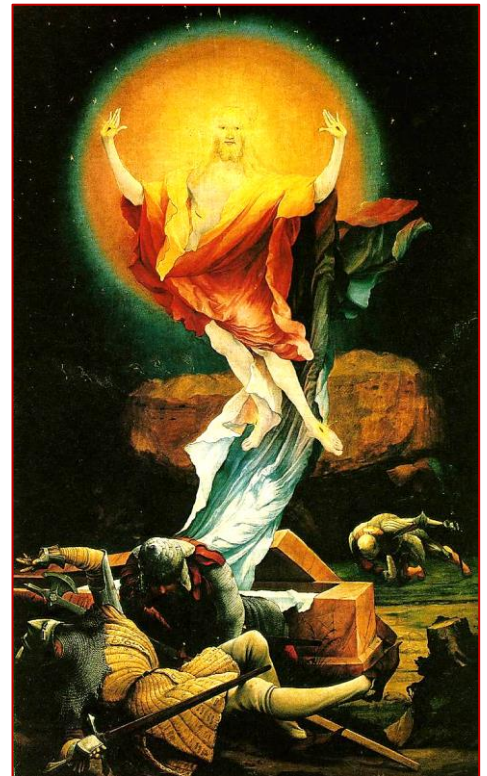
commissioned Matthias Grünewald to construct and embellish the great altarpiece, which he (and the woodcarvers) began in 1512 and completed by 1516.

Except for certain holy days, the wings of the Isenheim Altarpiece were generally closed, and the Crucifixion scene was displayed for the benefit all the patients, especially the bedridden. Grünewald's *Crucifixion* is considered one of the most moving representations of the subject in Western art due to the artist's masterful depiction of horrific agony, with a *life-sized* Christ writhing in pain from the nails driven through his hands and feet, his body covered in stripes and sores. This may have been terrifying at first glance, but it was also comforting to the patients, as Christ's suffering and death for their sins and the sins of the whole world was made clear. Jesus shared their pain, even down to the burning sores of St. Anthony's fire that ravaged their own bodies. And lest there be any doubt of this, at Christ's left, St. John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, points to the Messiah ("Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29), and at his feet is that very Lamb, from whom a stream of cleansing blood pours into a communion chalice.

On special feast days, when the first set of panels was opened, Grünewald's *Resurrection* would come into view, giving further hope to the afflicted patients. It is difficult to think of another "Resurrection" that even approaches this one in terms of otherworldly mystery and power. There, in the darkness of that first Easter morning, Christ hovers above his tomb, his body now unblemished and glowing with a halo of unearthly light. It has been suggested that Grünewald purposely included elements of our Lord's Transfiguration and Ascension in this image, for the artist has transformed the tortured countenance of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53) into the glorious face of God. Here we may recall Philippians 3:21: "[Christ] shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Although the physical ministrations of the Antonites were not a foolproof cure for their patients' afflictions, the believing patients could view the transformation of the risen Christ and look forward to a time when every pain and problem with their earthly bodies would be exchanged for a new and glorious body, one that would live forever with the Lord.

As it was for them, so it is for us. We also live at a time of many uncertainties and anxieties: war, inflation, crime, and, something unthinkable only three years ago, the menace of a pandemic. Although we are not threatened with the terrible suffering and disfigurement of St. Anthony's fire, we can still take comfort from these images of our Lord's death and resurrection. We should first be terror stricken to view the wrath with which God punishes His own Son as a ransom for sin and sinners, and our despair should deepen as we recognize that each thorn, each nail is our own work. Yet from the depths of our despair God points us to our only salvation—Christ's Passion and death—through which he physically demonstrates the depth of his love for us. With consciences free of sin's burden, we can move on to Easter and Christ's resurrection: Grünewald's depiction of the Resurrection makes it clear that, although our sins were laid upon Christ, he has triumphed over them, and his living, glorified body shows no sign of sin's depredations.

Finally, once our hearts are established in Christ, his sufferings provide an example for our whole lives. Should we be weighed down by sorrow or sickness, we should consider how trifling these things are when compared with the thorns and nails of Christ, through which we find the strength to persevere through our own afflictions and failings. As Martin Luther wrote in his sermon for Good Friday: "Behold, one can thus find in Christ strength and comfort against all vice and bad habits. That is the right observance of Christ's Passion, and that is the fruit of his suffering."



Richard Schaefer
Chairman, Board of Elders

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH

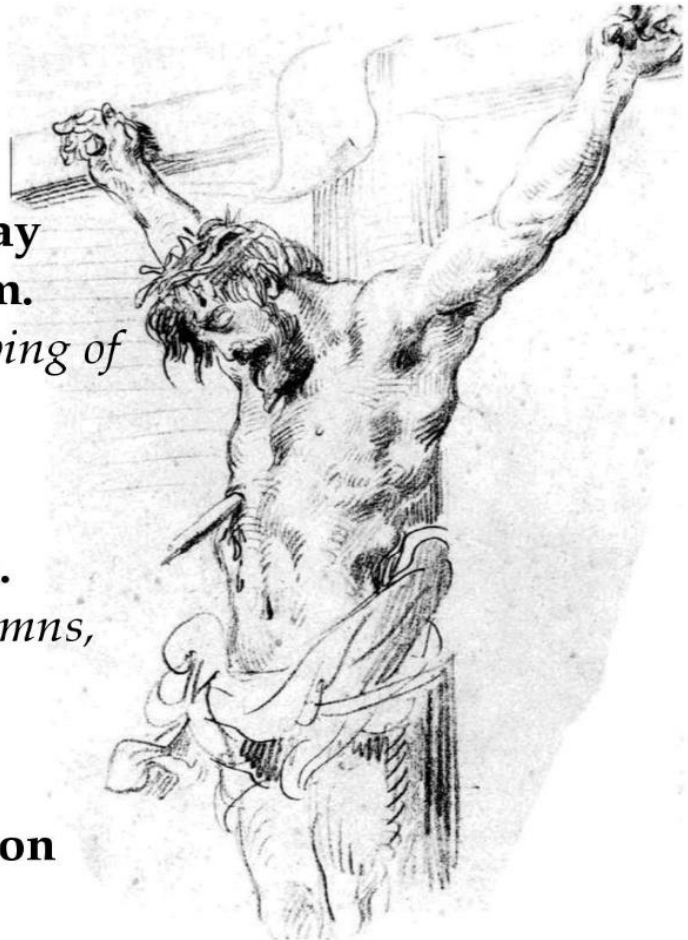
HOLY WEEK & EASTER

April 10 Palm Sunday
Divine Service 10:30 a.m.

April 14 Maundy Thursday
Holy Communion 7:30 p.m.
Divine service with the stripping of the altar.

April 15 Good Friday
Tenebrae Service 7:30 p.m.
A contemplative service of hymns, readings, and choral music.

April 17 Easter Sunday,
the Feast of the Resurrection
Divine Service 10:30 a.m.
He is risen indeed!



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