

## **Restoration of the Liturgical Practice of the**

### **KISS OF PEACE in the Divine Liturgy**

#### **Introduction and History**

The Kiss of Peace is an expression of reconciliation and unity between the faithful present at a liturgical assembly.

It originates with the widespread custom, in the ancient Western Mediterranean world, of people greeting each other with a kiss on the cheek. This was the custom in ancient Judea and was also practiced by Christians.

#### *Scriptural references*

It is clearly the custom referred to by Jesus when he defends the sinful woman at the house of Simon the Pharisee: “You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet (Luke 7: 45).

The Apostle Paul instructs the Churches on three separate occasions: “Greet one another with a holy kiss” (Romans 16: 16, 1 Corinthians 16: 20, 2 Corinthians 13: 12). Similarly, Saint Paul tells the Thessalonians, “Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss” (1 Thessalonians 5: 26). The chief apostle Peter likewise closes his first epistle with the instruction, “Greet one another with a kiss of love” (1 Peter 5: 14; see also Matthew 5:23-24).

#### *Early Church*

Two early reports concerning the Eucharistic celebration in the early Church confirm that the Kiss of Peace was an integral element of Christian liturgy. Justin Martyr (100-165) clearly echoes the Apostle’s instructions: “Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss.” Hippolytus of Rome (170-235) gives a more detailed treatment: “After the catechumens have finished praying, they do not give the kiss of peace, for their kiss is not yet pure. But the faithful shall greet one another with a kiss, men with men, and women with women. Men must not greet women with a kiss.”

The Kiss of Peace continued to be part of Christian worship, although its exact location in the service differed according to local custom. In the Roman Rite, this exchange takes place at a later point in the Mass because of the understanding that it is a preparation for the reception of Holy Communion. In the Byzantine tradition, the Kiss of Peace seems to have always been exchanged right before the Anaphora. Its position here relates it to the necessary reconciliation between Christians before bringing an offering to the altar, so that one may “first be reconciled to [one’s] brother or sister” in accordance with Mathew 5: 23-24.

Scholars who study the historical development of the Divine Liturgy make some important observations regarding the Kiss of Peace. For example, early sources clearly

show that it was originally exchanged not merely among bishops and priests, as it is today, but also among deacons and lay people.

Also, the Kiss of Peace was likely only exchanged between neighboring worshippers, rather than each member of the congregation exchanging with the kiss with every member of the faithful – such practice meaning that the rite could have been accomplished with a minimum of time and confusion.

### ***Byzantine practice***

After the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Kiss of Peace began to disappear among the faithful. The reasons are not clear though there is some suggestion that the practice was seen as irreverent and disruptive. The practice seems to have died out among the faithful in the West around the same time.

It is interesting to note that, while today in the Byzantine Rite the Kiss of Peace is usually given on the shoulders, no less a luminary than Saint John Chrysostom (late 4<sup>th</sup> century) mentions that it was at one time exchanged on the lips. By the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century it had become the practice during Great Lent to kiss only on the shoulders, not on the lips.

That the Kiss of Peace was an element of the liturgy also in the lands of Rus'-Ukraine is evidenced by various Slavic manuscripts of rubrics, and some of these even as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century include the rubric "і цілюються в уста" ("and they kiss on the lips") (although by this time it was a directive only for the clergy).

Even today this giving and receiving of the Kiss of Peace by everyone in the congregation (clergy and laity alike) remains in the rubrics of the ritual of forgiveness at the beginning of Great Lent during Forgiveness Vespers and at the exchange of the Paschal Kiss (also between clergy and laity alike) during Resurrection Matins.

In the Latin Rite, the "offering of peace to one another" (note the terminology) was restored in 1969 following the directives of the Second Vatican Council. This initiative specified that the exchange was to be carried out according to the customs and mentality of the people, as determined by local bishops' conferences.

### **General Directives**

1. In accordance with the Byzantine tradition, the liturgical rite is referred to as *the Kiss of Peace*.
2. In essence, the Kiss of Peace is not a mere salutation or greeting but rather a public profession of love for one another and a sign of mutual forgiveness. It precedes the Symbol of Faith (The Nicene Creed). Mutual love for one another and unity in the true faith are essential prerequisites for celebrating the Eucharist.
3. The Kiss of Peace shall be reintroduced in all parishes throughout the Eparchy of Edmonton as a regular Sunday and Feast Day practice beginning with Great Lent 2025.
4. The introduction of the Kiss of Peace is to be preceded with appropriate catechesis through Sunday homilies, announcements and bulletins.

5. The Eparchial Liturgical Commission, under the direction of the bishop, can serve as a resource for the parishes in the restoration and pastoral application of the Kiss of Peace.

### **Praxis**

6. In the Divine Liturgy, after the Great Entrance and the Litany for the Gifts, the priest faces the people and blesses them, saying: **Peace be with all**. The choir responds: **And with your spirit**. The priest remains standing at the Royal Doors, facing the people.
7. The deacon, standing at his usual place before the iconostasis, turns to the faithful (if no deacon, then the priest, facing the people) and continues: **Let us love one another so that we may be of one mind in confessing**. The choir responds: **The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, one in being and undivided**.
8. The priest or deacon may at this point take a few moments to say a few words about the Kiss of Peace, to facilitate its introduction. The following are a few examples:
  - a. In the Gospel of Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaims the following. He says: “When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5: 23-24). Our gift of bread and wine has been presented and placed upon the altar, but before we continue with that prayer of the Church which will transform them into the Body and Blood of Christ, our Lord is asking us to be reconciled with one another. Let us reverently exchange the Kiss of Peace as a sign of our willingness to forgive one another, to be forgiven if we have offended anyone, and to be at peace.
  - b. There are two important requirements for celebrating the Eucharist in a manner pleasing to God. The first requirement is that we love one another. At the Last Supper, Jesus gave us a new commandment. He said: “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you; abide in My love.” The second requirement is that we share the same Faith. With the Kiss of Peace, we profess that we take our Lord’s commandment seriously. We strive to love one another with the love of Christ. With the Symbol of Faith, which immediately follows, we profess that we share the same Faith in the one true God, and that we seek to worship the Trinity in spirit and truth.
  - c. Peter once came up to Jesus and said to Him, “Lord, if my brother (or sister) sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy times seven” (Matthew 18: 21-22). With the Kiss of Peace, we profess our willingness and desire to forgive, no matter how many times we have been offended or hurt by our brother or sister.

- d. What often prevents us from living an authentic Christian life and robs us of our Christian joy is the poison of unforgiveness, resentment and bitterness. Forgiveness is not a feeling but a conscious choice that we make. Let the Kiss of Peace today be a sign of our willful decision to forgive those who have hurt us, to let go of the debt that they may have incurred against us, and to let go of any bitter feelings of resentment, so that the Lord may restore our souls to freedom, peace and joy!
9. The priest should also explain and demonstrate to the faithful how the Kiss of Peace is exchanged.
10. The one who initiates the greeting says, “**Christ is among us,**” while the one who receives the greeting responds, “**He is and will be!**” At certain times of the year, this exchange is replaced by the appropriate festal greeting, such as “Christ is Risen!” or “Indeed, He is Risen!”
11. The Kiss of Peace among the laity may be offered in the following way:

Kissing the other person’s **right shoulder** or cheek (move to your left), then the other person’s **left shoulder** or cheek (move to the right), and then finally the **right shoulder** or cheek (move back to the left).
12. When exchanging the Kiss of Peace, one person says, “Christ is among us,” and the other person responds, “He is and will be.”
13. The pastor’s good instruction and his personal example will be of utmost importance in upholding the rite of the “Kiss of Peace” as a sacred liturgical act of love and reconciliation and not merely a casual or even frivolous expression of salutation.
14. May the restoration of the Kiss of Peace truly be a public profession of love for one another, a sign of mutual forgiveness, and a catalyst for the renewal of the Gospel message.

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