

## **Divine Liturgy commentary by Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan**

### **On the Kiss of Peace**

The Kiss of Peace, which is a sign of reconciliation, is the symbol of fellowship of the faithful in the Holy Spirit, and of the unity of the Church in the love of God. When the gifts are laid upon the altar, and thus the one Body of Christ, i.e., the Church with its members, is mystically laid upon the heavenly altar, God is thereby reconciled with His creatures.

When the faithful receive and give the greeting, they should endeavor to realize their inward reconciliation with God and with each one of their fellow Christians. They should try to purge themselves of pride, of hatred, of envy, of malice and such other vices as create discord and disturb the harmony in the Body of Christ, the Church.

The kissing of the cheeks was a form of salutation in the time of our Lord (Luke 7:45) as it still is in the Near East among close friends. The Apostle Paul bids the faithful "to salute one another with an holy kiss (Romans 16:16, I Cor. 16:20 and II Cor. 13:12). The kiss is the greeting of the Lord to His own (John 20:19). Personal disputes born of hatred or ecclesiastical schism would "defile your sacrifice" and thus the unity of the Body of Christ would be violated. (Matthew 5:23). That is why it has been the prime obligation of the believer to be reconciled with everybody in order to be worthy to receive communion, according to an early canon of the Church from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

The earliest custom as to have the Greeting or Kiss of Peace before the Offertory. In the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Greeting was transferred in Jerusalem to the place it is now found in the Armenian liturgy.

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By the Kiss of Peace is externally shown our inward love and concord with our neighbor. *Being made at peace with one another, one is made at peace with God.* The peace given to one another does away with mutual enmity, signifying that Jesus has made an end of the enmity between God and man, making peace and love reign among us. *The Kiss of Peace also fulfills the words of our Lord (Matthew, 5:23 and 24): "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."* It likewise recalls the words of St. Peter (I Peter, 5:14): "Greet one another with the kiss of love."

