

## Non-Sensual Kissing on the Lips

By Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi

There are two kinds of kisses, a sensual kiss, such as between a husband and his wife, and a non-sensual kiss, such as a sign of friendship or respect or as a greeting. Hence, not all kissing on the lips is sensual. Kissing on the lips was a sign of friendship and greeting among the early Christians and still is within certain cultures. Among Christians, at some point, it was replaced by a kiss on the cheek or forehead or a handshake. Because homosexuals are so prominent in society today, one should not kiss on the lips as a sign of friendship or as a greeting unless it is common practice in a culture, as it can all too easily be misinterpreted. It is similar to the word “gay.” Today the common meaning is homosexuality. Years ago it meant happy. Hence you should not say a man is gay if you mean he is happy because most will think he is a homosexual.

### The Kiss of Peace among early Christians

The Kiss of Peace mentioned in the Bible was originally a kiss on the lips:

“Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you.” (Rom. 16:16)

“All the brethren salute you. Salute one another with a holy kiss.” (1 Cor. 16:20)

*Wikipedia*, Kiss of Peace: “For the early Christians, the holy kiss was associated with the peace and unity given by the Holy Spirit to the congregation. The writings of the early church fathers speak of the holy kiss, which they call ‘a sign of peace’, which was already part of the Eucharistic liturgy, occurring after the Lord’s Prayer in the Roman Rite and the rites directly derived from it. St. Augustine, for example, speaks of it in one of his Easter Sermons:

‘[St. Augustine, Sermon 227] Then, after the consecration of the Holy Sacrifice of God, because He wished us also to be His sacrifice, a fact which was made clear when the Holy Sacrifice was first instituted, and because that Sacrifice is a sign of what we are, behold, when the Sacrifice is finished, we say the Lord’s Prayer which you have received and recited. After this, the ‘Peace be with you’ is said, and the Christians embrace one another with the holy kiss. This is a sign of peace; as the lips indicate, let peace be made in your conscience, that is, when your lips draw near to those of your brother, do not let your heart withdraw from his.’

“Augustine’s Sermon 227 is just one of several early Christian primary sources, both textual and iconographic (i.e., in works of art) providing clear evidence that the ‘kiss of peace’ as practiced in the Christian liturgy was customarily exchanged for the first several centuries, not mouth to cheek, but mouth to mouth (note that men were separated from women during the liturgy) for, as the primary sources also show, this is how early Christians believed Christ and his followers exchanged their own kiss. For example, in his *Paschale carmen* (c. 425–50), Latin priest-poet Sedulius condemns Judas and his betrayal of Christ with a kiss thus, ‘And leading that sacrilegious mob with its menacing swords and spikes, you press your mouth against his, and infuse your poison into his honey?’<sup>1</sup>”

*Miscellaneous*: “Within a few decades of [apostate] Justin’s *Apology*, two other patristic authors write about the kiss. [Apostate] Athenagoras refers to the kiss’s careful exchange as an example of Christian self-control. [Apostate] Clement of Alexandria warns that bold salutations among Christians are like spiders biting the lips; to avoid this ‘poison of licentiousness’ Christians must exchange the kiss with ‘a chaste and closed mouth.’ Both authors see the kiss as a salutation, implying a connection with the New Testament commands to greet each other with a kiss. Clement’s analogy of a spider injecting poison by touching the mouth and his warning against ‘unchaste’ kisses become the first of

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<sup>1</sup> Footnote 9: “For a documented discussion of the mouth-to-mouth early Christian kiss of peace, see Franco Mormando, ‘Just as your lips approach the lips of your brothers: Judas Iscariot and the Kiss of Betrayal,’ in *Saints and Sinners: Caravaggio and the Baroque Image*, ed. F. Mormando (Chestnut Hill, MA: McMullen Museum of Boston College, 1999), pp.179-19.”

many indications in early Christian sources that the ritual kiss was a kiss on the lips. Combined with Athenagoras's suggestion that an overly enthusiastic kiss could corrupt the bodies of those called brothers and sisters and Clement's reference to 'the shameless use of a kiss,' the passages attest to late second-century men and women kissing each other."

### **Kissing on the lips as a greeting or a sign of friendship or respect in certain cultures**

*Wikipedia*, Kissing Traditions: "Many societies have traditions which involve kissing. Kissing can indicate joy or be used as part of a greeting. Kissing involves the touching of one's lips to the lips or other body part, such as the cheek, head or hand of another person... Throughout all cultures people greet one another as a sign of recognition, affection, friendship and reverence. Depending on the occasion and the culture, a greeting may take the form of a handshake, hug, bow, nod, a kiss on the lips with the mouth closed or a kiss or kisses on the cheek. Cheek kissing is most common in Europe and Latin America and has become a standard greeting in Latin Europe."

*Wikipedia*, Kiss: "In *Cyropaedia* (370 BC), Xenophon wrote about the Persian custom of kissing in the lips upon departure while narrating the departure of Cyrus the Great (c. 600 BC) as a boy from his Median kinsmen. According to Herodotus (5th century BC), when two Persians meet, the greeting formula expresses their equal or unequal status. They do not speak; rather, equals kiss each other on the mouth, and in the case where one is a little inferior to the other, the kiss is given on the cheek. ...The Romans were passionate about kissing and talked about several types of kissing. Kissing the hand or cheek was called an *osculum*. Kissing on the lips with mouth closed was called a *basium*, which was used between relatives. A kiss of passion was called a *suavium*."

*The Tradition of Kissing in Russia*, Sign of welcome kiss: "In the Russian tradition, kissing when meeting a person has always been **способом отметить собеседника** (*a way to distinguish the interlocutor*), to indicate his importance or social status and prestige, and to show him respect. In the Slavic culture, the long-lasting tradition of two men exchanging a kiss on the lips when they met was a sign of respect and friendly intentions."

*Miscellaneous*: "Is it true that straight Russian men kiss each other on the lips? This I can answer with a resounding YES! My first wife's family was a Russian, German and Polish mix. The men, women, and children regularly kissed each other on the lips this was and is normal in their culture. The tradition of male lip-kissing was brought to us by the Balkan clergy. A 'holy kiss' was their standard Easter greeting. The habit caught on. Foreign travelers describing Muscovy in the 17th century were puzzled by the ubiquitous lip-kissing. The shock was partly relieved by a customary kiss on the lips of the guests in the house with the wife of the host. Among old-timers in some local Russian Orthodox communities there is still a tradition of laity kissing the priest on the lips at the Easter service. Czar Nicholas II often did this too on his troops when awarding medals."

*For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men*

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#### **Mary's Little Remnant**

302 East Joffre St.

Truth or Consequences, New Mexico 87901-2878, USA

Website: [www.JohnTheBaptist.us](http://www.JohnTheBaptist.us)