



Although the sign of the kiss of peace has raised some controversy when used in public worship, the spontaneous expression of love demonstrated by a kiss has no barriers within the family. (NC Photo)

## Kiss of Peace... Part II

By Fr. Joseph M. Champlin

The sign of the kiss of peace has always been a part of the Roman liturgy, but where it occurred and how it was executed varied greatly in the course of history.

In earliest Christian worship, the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist were kept separate. At the conclusion of the former, a service of readings and orations, the faithful exchanged these gestures of peace to stamp their seal, pledge, approval on the prayers just offered.

Later, when the liturgies of Word and Eucharist merged, the peace sign became aligned with the presentation of gifts at the start of the "Sacrifice-Mass." This transfer rested on an obvious and secure scriptural basis. Jesus said, in Matthew 5:23-24, "So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering."

No bread, no wine, no donations for the Church, clergy, poor should be brought to the table of sacrifice, the Lord insisted, until all members of the Christian community are reconciled and at peace with one another.

It is rather interesting to observe that the recently published and innovative eucharistic services for the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) and Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) insert this gesture of reconciliation after the homily and before the presentation of gifts.

Quite soon in the Church's worship, however, the sign of peace moved to a spot after the eucharistic prayer at which, in the words of Pope Innocent I (416), "the people ought by means of it to make known their assent, to all that had gone before." (Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*).

In such a context the rite still served as a seal on what had been said or done; very

quickly, nevertheless, emphasis shifted to its function as a symbol of peace, harmony, love and reconciliation, sentiments proper, even indispensable for persons about to receive Holy Communion.

Situated here as a preparation for Communion, the kiss of peace still looks backward, so to speak, at the Lord's Prayer which preceded it. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" sets a condition upon God's forgiveness. No mercy from the Lord unless we first pardon the neighbor who has offended or injured us. The person standing by our side at Mass represents all of those who have hurt us in the past and whom we now forgive lest we approach the altar unworthily.

By Sr. Mary Michael O'Shaughnessy

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Parents, teachers and school administrators within the last 10 years have become more conscious of the mental growth patterns of pre-school boys and girls. Montessori schools, "environments," and well organized nursery schools have mushroomed here in the United States within the last decade. Religious educators have not ignored this level of child growth and development.

What do religious educators hope to accomplish with the pre-school child? Psychological research indicates that these youngsters are open to absorbing basic attitudes toward life, people and nature in general. For the pre-schooler, is the world a forbidding place? Is the world a place of joy? Does he see himself as a loser in relation to his world? Or a winner? Are people a threat to him? Are they a delight?

Such basic responses to the world, to life and to people

The kiss of peace originally was, and for a long time remained, a true kiss on the lips. We may wonder at the propriety of all this but when we remember that men, women, and children in those days stood for worship in separate sectors of the church, the practice may seem less quizzical. Gradually more diversified and stylized patterns evolved — a bow, the clasping and kissing of a neighbor's hands, a light embrace, the use of an often richly ornamented plaque called a pax-board or pax-brede passed from clergy to the congregation.

Similarly, different verbal formulas accompanied the physical gesture, although eventually, "Peace be with you . . . And with your spirit" became the more standard greeting and response.

have begun to take root within the deeper recesses of the youngster's awarenesses. Already his interactions with himself, others, and the world of nature are shaping the patterns of his fundamental responses to himself, others, and the world around him.

So it is that religious educators address themselves to these basic attitudes while these responses are being formed, while the behavioral patterns are taking shape. A sound pre-school religion program would include emphasis within these areas of Christian living:

1) A Christian response to **INDIVIDUALITY**. The uniqueness of all creation demands recognition and a fitting response. No two persons are singularly different. The Christian lives a lifetime endeavoring to appreciate and to cherish the individuality of each person. Uniformity in our response to people is one of the easiest escapes Christians can use to "cop-out" on life. Animal life, plant life, and the mineral world also demonstrate this uniqueness in their own manner. Experiences in parks, in the backyard, and on the beach can reinforce this fact.

# KNOW YOUR FAITH

## Q. and A.

By FR. RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

**Q.** At its recent convention in Minnesota, the Lutheran Church of America registered its approval of the ordination of women. I suspect that there's probably something to be said for the ordination of women to the priesthood, even though I always thought that this was a matter of divine law and not just ecclesiastical custom. Just what is the present thinking on this matter?

**A.** Heresy could not be at issue here because the Church has never defined that ordination to the priesthood is open to men alone.

Too little has been written on the place of women in the Church. However, what has been produced tends to confirm the suspicion that women have not occupied a very significant place in the life and mission of the Church—reverential references to the Blessed Mother, the Little Flower, St. Catherine of Siena, and others not withstanding.

Some of the theological comments on marriage and the sexual relationship within marriage by the Fathers and the medieval writers are embarrassing in the extreme, by present cultural and theological standards.

The long-standing assumption that women are somehow inferior to men made their exclusion from the ordained ministry seem both logical and proper. For many reasons this trend has shifted, and it is about time.

There are a few Catholic theologians who would argue on behalf of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The burden of the proof, it seems to me, is on those who would say that doctrine or theology forbid such ordinations. I do not think such proof is available. It is a matter of time before women, will, indeed, be ordained for the Catholic priesthood. But I don't know how much time.

**Q.** Is it true that the Second Vatican Council sided with the Arabs against the Jews?

**A.** No. However, there is good reason for your question. The Arabs were, in fact, vitally concerned with the council's statement on the Jews because they felt such a statement would have profound political implications. Thus, any move on the part of the council to absolve the Jews from the death of Christ would be interpreted by the Arabs as a pro-Israel stand. The council Fathers insisted that politics was not at all a consideration, but the Arab governments were not easily placated.

The principal concern of this section of the council document was the promotion of mutual understanding, respect, and dialogue between Christians and Jews. The council specifically rejected several ideas that have been at the basis of the anti-Semitism among Christians (e.g., that the Jews have been repudiated by God; that all Jews, past and present, are responsible for the passion and death of Jesus, etc.).

(Readers are encouraged to send questions to Fr. McBrien to be answered in this column. Fr. McBrien attempts to present a contemporary theologian's view of the post-Vatican II Church as she views everyday problems that arise. Send your questions to Fr. Richard P. McBrien, 558 South Avenue, Weston, Mass. 02193.)

## Pre-School Religious Education

The truth of uniqueness is one thing; the response to this truth is something else. The youngster needs to be stimulated on the response level. Does he react with joy? Curiosity? Delight? Boredom? Fear? Wonder?

2) A Christian response to **BELONGINGNESS**. Unique as all creation is, nevertheless, there is yet another deeper dimension within the Christian life—the awareness that people need other people. Stated another way, people are a part of each other. No person can sever (though he may wish to and even try to) the deeply rooted ties that bind him to others. His basic human desires—to love and to be loved; to know and to be known; to control and to be controlled; to give meaning to life and to receive meaning from life—all are common to each man.

These desires are an essential part of the human condition even though their manifestation may be different. The behavioral sciences have told us much about man, but only the personal realization that individuals do belong to one another can bring about the understanding of each other

that heals, supports, and reinforces the solidarity existing (sometimes dormant) among all people.

The pre-schooler needs exposure and stimulation in his response to his awareness of belongingness. Does he shy away from it? Does he welcome the challenge placed upon him to be and to act responsibly? The Lord Jesus can be his model. Hopefully He is the model for the important adults in the youngster's life. These adults can reinforce his Christian response to his belongingness.

3) A Christian response of **AVAILABILITY**. Merely to realize that a person belongs to and is part of others is insufficient. Direct action, which communicates belongingness among people, brings both self and others to a deeper participation in the life of the family of man. Service freely entered into and active availability are by-products of the genuine awareness of the oneness of all men. Man works and spends himself serving others in order to communicate (among many things) to others their belongingness to him and to each other.