

Seventeenth Week of Ordinary Time (English)
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Latin)
July 26, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi” (Ancient Latin Maxim)

As we proceed to read and reflect upon The First Apology of Saint Justin Martyr, I would like us to keep in our minds the ancient Latin maxim which translates into: ***Lex orandi*** (how we worship), ***Lex credendi*** (what we believe), ***Lex vivendi*** (how we live). In essence, the way we pray and worship shapes what we believe which in turn determines how we choose to conduct our lives. It is my intention, in the following reflections, to repeat this first paragraph so we may have a visible reminder each time we read. Likewise, I will present key statements from Saint Justin, using our Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass) as a benchmark.

“Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss”
(Saint Justin, First Apology).

When Saint Justin included this line concerning the offering of the “kiss of peace,” he would have been well aware of its Biblical roots found in the New Testament. Saint Paul, in his letters to the various Christian communities, often encouraged the greeting of the brethren with a kiss of peace. Examples found in his letters include: 1 Thessalonians 5:26, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Corinthians 16:20 and Romans 16:16.

These early Christians did not associate the “kiss of peace” with sensuality or anything of this nature. They understood the “kiss” or “greeting” of peace to be exactly what Jesus intended. In Saint Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus spoke these words of peace to His followers: *“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”* (Matthew 5:23-24). You may notice in this passage, Jesus did not state: “After you offer your gift.” His emphasis upon a specific time is important. As much as God delights in the gifts we offer for His Worship, He wants us to understand that being reconciled with our fellows IS the sacrifice He desires. The “kiss/greeting of peace” is offering peace and reconciliation to others.

To further stress the importance of reconciling with those around us, Jesus, through His apostle Saint John, gave all Christians a standard by which they could measure their love of God. *“If any one says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also”* (1 John 4:20-21).

The placing of the “kiss/greeting of peace” within Christian worship continues to our day. It is still an opportunity for Christians to exchange mutual forgiveness by being reconciled to each other. The Apostles and their direct successors who laid the foundation of worship knew we would always need fraternal reconciliation. This moment, this reconciliation, is one of humility. We are humbling ourselves before God asking others for their forgiveness. It is also a moment steeped in reverence owing to this necessary humility. It was never intended to be a time to delight in ruckus behavior.

I will conclude today’s reflection on the “kiss/greeting of peace” with the words of Saint Jerome in his Commentary on Matthew: *“He did not say, ‘If you have anything against your brother’ but ‘If your brother has anything against you,’ so that a greater need for reconciliation is imposed on you. As long as we are unable to make peace with our brother, I do not know whether we may offer our gifts to God.”* Please, prayerfully consider those words throughout this week.

** At some of the Masses offered last weekend, I mentioned a story in the life of Moses intending to stress how some passages in the Bible can seem confusing and require us to search out assistance from others. Allow me to include the passage from the Book of Exodus from which I was speaking: *“At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him (Moses) and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin, and touched Moses’ feet with it, and said, ‘Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!’ So he (God) let him (Moses) alone. Then it was that she said, ‘You are a bridegroom of blood,’ because of the circumcision”* (Exodus 4:24-26).