



'THIRD KISS OF PEACE' is exchanged by Pope Paul and Patriarch Athenagoras at their meeting in the Vatican. (UPI)

Pope and Patriarch in Kiss of Peace

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VATICAN CITY—A further step in bridging the 900-year-old breach between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches was taken here Thursday as Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I participated side by side in a religious celebration in St. Peter's Basilica and reaffirmed their joint determination to repair fully the breach.

The ceremony was attended by the 200 Roman Catholic prelates here for the meeting of the Synod of Bishops.

It was the third meeting between Pope Paul and the 81-year-old patriarch. They first exchanged the traditional "kiss of peace" in Jerusalem in January, 1964, and met again in Istanbul last July.

In July, the Pope had referred officially for the first time to the Roman Catholics and to the Eastern Orthodox Christians as members of "sister churches." Thursday, Athenagoras responded favorably to the Papal approach by under-

lining the development of a new mentality, that of "kinship" in the relations between Catholics and Orthodox Christians.

The patriarch also paid tribute to the Roman Catholic Church as "the first by honor and rank within the organism of the Christian churches throughout the world." This tribute was read by well-informed observers here as an indication that Athenagoras and probably other Orthodox leaders are ready to recognize to the Roman pontiff a position of "primus inter pares," somewhat similar to that enjoyed by the patriarch within the Orthodox hierarchy.

According to the sources, the stand taken by Athenagoras on the subject appears the more significant since he has just visited Sofia, Bucharest and Belgrade where he met with the patriarchs of the Bulgarian, Rumanian and Serbian Orthodox churches.