

JUST FOR THE RECORD

— Part Five —

By Metropolitan Ephraim

Some years ago, a student from a nearby new calendar seminary came to our monastery. He wanted to know why we would not give him Holy Communion. "I am Orthodox," he said, "so what's the problem?"

The father who was speaking to him said, "You yourself may be Orthodox, but you belong to and receive communion in a church that is officially in communion with several non-Orthodox denominations. So that is why we cannot give you communion."

"That's not true," replied the student. "My priest told me that we Orthodox do not give communion to the non-Orthodox."

"If I showed you photocopies of official statements by your bishops, stating clearly that they **do** give communion to the non-Orthodox, what would you say to that?" said the monk.

"I have never heard of such official statements. Do you have them?" asked the student.

"Sure." Just give me a few moments, and I'll fetch them," said the father.

In a short time, the monk returned with photocopies of the documents that we presented in the first three installments of this series of articles.

The student looked them over, and after a few moments, said somberly, "This is serious."

"That's why I showed them to you," replied the monastic.

"Can I take these copies?" asked the student?

"Of course."

"I want to show them to the dean of the seminary, and see what he has to say about this," affirmed the student.

"Please do so. And if you don't mind, I'd like to know what he has to say about this, if it's okay with you," said the monk.

"I'll tell you what his response is," said the student.

A week or so went by, and finally the student showed up at the monastery again. "How did it go?" asked the monk who had spoken to him earlier.

"Not very well, I'm afraid," answered the student.

"What happened?"

"Well after I asked to see him in his office, we made an appointment. When I went to see him, I told him what you had told me — that is, that our Church is officially in communion with the non-Orthodox. He laughed and said that that was not true. So, I told him that I had been given some documents that affirmed that it *was* true. He said that he had never heard of such documents, so I pulled them out of the folder I had, and gave him the photocopies. He looked at them carefully, and finally told me, 'Well, I have never seen or heard of these documents before, and even if they do exist, nobody pays any attention to them.'

"Whereupon," continued the student, "I told him: 'So, what are you telling me, Father, is that I should disregard these official statements made by our bishops, and ignore them, and listen to you instead?'"

At this point, the student said that the seminary dean just stared at him blankly. So, the student repeated himself.

"You are telling me, Father, to ignore our bishops and listen to you. Can you tell me on what or whose authority you are telling me this?"

No answer. The dean moved some papers on his desk.

"Well, thank you anyway, Father," continued the student, "I didn't want to take up too much of your time with this, because I know how busy you are."

As the student recalled, the dean seemed genuinely relieved when the young man left the office.

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