

JUST FOR THE RECORD

— Part Three —

by Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

In this installment, we present copies of the *A Pastoral Guide to the Holy Mysteries*, published by the British Antiochian Orthodox Deanery in 2001.

The Orthodox Christian Patriarchate of Antioch
and All the East

A Pastoral Guide to the Holy Mysteries



AQUILA

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*The cover ikon is of the Holy Fathers of the Council of Nicaea.
They hold the opening sentences of the Creed, in Greek*

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The Patriarchal Decree

Ignatius the Fourth, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, by the grace of God, to our children in God, both the reverend clergy and our rightly believing Orthodox people.

The rites in general and the Holy Mysteries in particular are a highway for the grace of God, a purifying and sanctifying way that leads man to the Great Mystery and grants us strength upon strength and grace upon grace to be renewed and to be seen as an 'image' of our Creator. We each become a 'child', not from flesh and blood but from God.

Faithful preservation of the full purity of the rites is a duty laid upon all faithful believers, clergy and laity. This purity effects something in the depths of the soul of mankind: it transforms it and implants in it the grace by which it is accompanied, acting upon it perpetually and attracting to it every blessing and enlightenment and sanctification.

Since our children confront difficulties in their ritual life and are asking about many matters relating to their Baptism, Marriage, Repentance, their participation in the Holy Communion, and various other aspects of their sacramental life, we have seen fit to publish this *Pastoral Guide to the Holy Mysteries*, hoping that it may meet the need of faithful believers and will clarify what is written, to the salvation of their souls.

Our beloved children, our confidence is that this *Guide*, with the teachings and rulings contained therein, will be acted upon and will confer the benefit you seek in your daily lives. It will empower you in bearing witness to the truth, in your behaviour towards one another and towards the whole world. It will make clear to you our solicitude for you and it will unify the Churches on a true foundation that is acceptable to the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus, at that time which He Himself blesses.

Therefore we call upon the help of God and we respond to the wishes of our rightly believing and God-loving faithful, putting this *Pastoral Guide to the Holy Mysteries* into your generous hands.

On this glorious day of Pascha, 14 April, 1996

Ignatius the Fourth

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

From page 40 of the *Pastoral Guide*:

55 Participation in One Cup Rooted in One Faith

55.1 The divine Holy Gifts in the Orthodox Church are for Orthodox people. For this reason, it is normal that the Orthodox go to their own church in order to participate in Communion and the other Holy Mysteries. But where the situation is exceptional, for example, when there is no Orthodox church or there is no Orthodox priest, an easement is permitted whereby Orthodox persons may take holy communion in one of the Apostolic Churches, if it is with the knowledge of their spiritual father and the approval of their bishop. But this should not be taken to excuse the Orthodox from always seeking to attend an Orthodox church, where they can take part in the divine Mysteries *in their fullness* [emphasis ours].

Our note: Since the Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, what are these non-Orthodox "Apostolic Churches" that this document is talking about? And we know that these so-called "Apostolic Churches" are not Orthodox because this document tells us that one may partake of communion in these "Churches" "when there is no Orthodox church or there is no Orthodox priest."

55.2 Until that unity of the Churches which we seek is accomplished, it is forbidden for monks, nuns, and clergy to receive Holy Communion outside their own churches.

Our note: So, the faithful — but not "monks, nuns and clergy" — may receive communion in "Apostolic Churches" in which the Mysteries are not "in their fullness"? Is this because the laity are lower class Christians?

One cannot be "partially" in communion, just as one cannot be "partially" pregnant. One is either pregnant or not pregnant.

Who made up these bizarre rules, anyway?

[To be continued]