

*Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny was born in Syria in 1860; he transferred from the jurisdiction of Antioch to the Church of Russia around 1892 and in 1895 he went to New York to become the priest for the Arab Orthodox community. In 1903, The Holy Synod of Russia elected Archimandrite Raphael to be the Bishop of Brooklyn and in 1904 he became the first Orthodox bishop to be consecrated on American soil. Bishop Raphael fell asleep in 1915. The following is a letter he wrote to the Orthodox faithful explaining why they should not receive any mysteries (sacraments) in the Episcopalian (Anglican) Church and Orthodox clergy should not allow any Episcopalians to receive any mysteries in the Orthodox Church. How unfortunate that the new calendar 'Orthodox' bishops do not keep that which they have received; instead, they teach the opposite of what Bishop Raphael taught. Orthodox faithful, wake up and read the lives of the Saints, the liturgical texts, keep the fasts, say your prayers, and ask your clergy, both priests and bishops, to show you where the Fathers of the Church, saints John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Photius or Gregory Palamas, just to name a few, ever taught any of the doctrines they preach with bare heads. Brethren, beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ (Colossians 2:8). Take this letter and show it to your parish priest and send a copy to your bishop: ask them, "Why do you not teach the same faith as did St. Raphael?" (He is commemorated on February 27.)*

## PASTORAL LETTER OF BISHOP RAPHAEL

*To My Beloved Clergy and Laity of the Syrian Greek-Orthodox  
Catholic Church in North America:*

*Greetings in Christ Jesus, Our Incarnate Lord and God.*

My Beloved Brethren:

Two years ago, while I was Vice-President and member of the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches Union, being moved with compassion for my children in the Holy Orthodox Faith *once delivered to the saints* (Jude 1:3), scattered throughout the whole of North America and deprived of the ministrations of the Church; and especially in places far removed from Orthodox centers; and being equally moved with a feeling that the Episcopalian (Anglican) Church possessed largely the Orthodox Faith, as many of the prominent clergy professed the same to me before I studied deeply their doctrinal authorities and their liturgy—the *Book of Common Prayer*—I wrote a letter as Bishop and Head of the Syrian-Orthodox Mission in North America, giving permission, in which I said that in extreme cases, where no Orthodox priest could be called upon at short notice, the ministrations of the Episcopal (Anglican) clergy might be kindly requested. However, I was most explicit in defining when and how the ministrations should be accepted, and also what exceptions should be made. In writing that letter I hoped, on the one hand, to help my people spiritually and, on the other hand, to open the way toward bringing the Anglicans into the communion of the Holy Orthodox Faith.

On hearing and in reading that my letter, perhaps unintentionally, was misconstrued by some of the Episcopalian (Anglican) clergy, I wrote a second letter in which I pointed out that my instructions and exceptions had been either overlooked or ignored by many, to wit:

a) They (the Episcopalians) informed the Orthodox people that I recognized the Anglican Communion (Episcopal Church) as being united with the Holy Orthodox Church and their ministry that is holy orders, as valid.

b) The Episcopal (Anglican) clergy offered their ministrations even when my Orthodox clergy were residing in the same towns and parishes, as pastors.

c) Episcopal clergy said that there was no need of the Orthodox people seeking the ministrations of their own Orthodox priests, for their (the Anglican) ministrations were all that were necessary.

I, therefore, felt bound by all the circumstances to make a thorough study of the Anglican Church's faith and orders, as well as of her discipline and ritual. After serious consideration I realized that it was my honest duty, as a member of the College of the Holy Orthodox Greek Apostolic Church, and head of the Syrian Mission in North America, to resign from the vice-presidency of and membership in the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches Union. At the same time, I set forth, in my letter of resignation, my reason for so doing.

I am convinced that the doctrinal teaching and practices, as well as the discipline, of the whole Anglican Church are unacceptable to the Holy Orthodox Church. I make this apology for the Anglicans whom as Christian gentlemen I greatly revere, that the loose teaching of a great many of the prominent Anglican theologians are so hazy in their definitions of truths, and so inclined toward pet heresies that it is hard to tell what they believe. The Anglican Church as a whole has not spoken authoritatively on her doctrine. Her Catholic-minded members can call out her doctrines from many views, but so nebulous is her pathway in the doctrinal world that those who would extend a hand of both Christian and ecclesiastical fellowship dare not, without distrust, grasp the hand of her theologians, for while many are orthodox on some points, they are quite heterodox on others. I speak, of course, from the Holy Orthodox Eastern Catholic point of view. The Holy Orthodox Church has never perceptibly changed from Apostolic times, and, therefore, no one can go astray in finding out what She teaches. Like Her Lord and Master, though at times surrounded with human malaria—which He in His mercy pardons—She is *the same yesterday, and today, and forever* (Heb. 13:8) the mother and safe deposit of the truth as it is in Jesus (cf. Eph. 4:21).

The Orthodox Church differs absolutely with the Anglican Communion in reference to the number of Sacraments and in reference to the doctrinal explanation of the same. The Anglicans say in their Catechism concerning the Sacraments that there are "two only as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord." I am well aware that, in their two books of homilies (which are not of a binding authority, for

the books were prepared only in the reign of Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth for priests who were not permitted to preach their own sermons in England during times both politically and ecclesiastically perilous), it says that there are "five others commonly called Sacraments" (see homily in each book on the Sacraments), but long since they have repudiated in different portions of their Communion this very teaching and absolutely disavow such definitions in their "Articles of Religion" which are bound up in their *Book of Common Prayer* or Liturgy as one of their authorities.

The Orthodox Church has ever taught that there are seven Sacraments. She plainly points out the fact that each of the seven has an outward and visible sign and an inward and spiritual Grace, and that they are of gospel and apostolic origin.

Again, the Orthodox Church has certain rites and practices associated and necessary in the administration of the Sacraments which neither time nor circumstances must set aside where churches are organized. Yet the Anglicans entirely neglect these, though they once taught and practiced the same in more catholic days.

In the case of the administration of Holy Baptism it is the absolute **rule of the Orthodox Church that the candidate must be immersed three times** (once in the name of each Person of the Holy Trinity). Immersion is only permissory in the Anglican Communion, and pouring or sprinkling is the general custom. The Anglicans do not use holy oil in the administration, etc., and even in doctrinal teaching in reference to this Sacrament they differ.

As to the doctrine concerning Holy Communion the Anglican Communion has no settled view. The Orthodox Church teaches the doctrine of transubstantiation without going into any scientific or Roman Catholic explanation. The technical word which She uses for the sublime act of the priest by Christ's authority to consecrate is "transmuting" (Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom). She, as I have said, offers no explanation, but She believes and confesses that Christ, the Son of the living God Who came into the world to save sinners, is of a truth in His "all-pure Body" and "precious Blood" (Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom) objectively present, and to be worshiped in that Sacrament as He was on earth and is now in risen and glorified majesty in Heaven; and that "the precious and holy and life-giving Body and Blood of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ are imparted" (to each soul that comes to that blessed Sacrament) "Unto the remission of sins, and unto life everlasting" (Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom).

Confirmation or the laying on of hands, which the Orthodox Church calls a Sacrament—"Chrismation"—in the Anglican Church is merely the laying on of hands of the Bishop accompanied by a set form of prayers, without the use of Holy Chrism, which has come down from Apostolic days as necessary.

Holy Matrimony is regarded by the Anglican Communion as only a sacred rite which, even if performed by a Justice of the Peace, is regarded as sufficient in the sight of God and man.

Penance is practiced but rarely in the Anglican Communion, and Confession before the reception of Holy Communion is not compulsory. They have altogether set aside the Sacrament of Holy Unction, that is anointing the sick as commanded by Saint James (see James 5:14). In their priesthood they do not teach the true doctrine of the Grace of the Holy Orders. Indeed they have two forms of words for ordination, namely, one which gives the power of absolution to the priest, and the alternative form without the words of Our Lord, *whosoever sins ye remit*, etc. (John 20: 23). Thus they leave every bishop to choose intention or non-intention in the act of ordination as to the power and Grace of their priesthood ("Ordination of Priests," *Book of Common Prayer*).

But, besides all of this, the Anglican Communion ignores the Orthodox Church's dogmas and teachings, such as the invocation of saints, prayers for the dead, special honor to the blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of God, and reverence for sacred relics, holy pictures and icons. They say of such teaching that it is "a foul thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God" (Article of Religion, XXII).

There is a striking variance between their wording of the Nicene Creed and that of the Holy Orthodox Church; but sadder still, it contains the heresy of the "filioque."

I do not deem it necessary to mention all the striking differences between the Holy Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion in reference to the authority of holy tradition, the number of Ecumenical Councils, etc. Enough has already been said and pointed out to show that the Anglican Communion differs but little from all other Protestant bodies, and therefore, there cannot be any intercommunion until they return to the ancient Holy Orthodox Faith and practices, and reject Protestant omissions and commissions.

Therefore, as the official head of the Syrian Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church in North America and as one who must *give account* (Heb. 13:17) before the judgment seat of *the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls* (I Pet. 2:25), that I have fed the *flock of God* (I Pet. 5:2), as I have been commissioned by the Holy Orthodox Church, and inasmuch as the Anglican Communion (Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA) does not differ in things vital to the well-being of the Holy Orthodox Church from some of the most errant Protestant sects, I direct all Orthodox people residing in any community not to seek or to accept the ministrations of the Sacraments and rites from any clergy excepting those of the Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church, for the Apostolic command that the Orthodox should not commune in ecclesiastical matters with those who are not of *the same household of faith* (Gal. 6:10), is clear: "Any bishop, or presbyter or deacon who will pray with heretics, let him be anathematized; and if he allows them as clergymen to perform any service, let him be deposed." (Apostolic Canon 45) "Any bishop, or presbyter who accepts Baptism or the Holy Sacrifice from heretics, we order such to be deposed, for *what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*" (Apostolic Canon 46)

As to members of the Holy Orthodox Church living in areas beyond the reach of Orthodox clergy, I direct that the ancient custom of our Holy Church be observed, namely, in cases of extreme necessity, that is, danger of death, children may be baptized by some pious Orthodox layman, or even by the parent of the child, by immersion three times in the names of the (Persons of the) Holy Trinity, and in case of death such baptism is valid; but, if the child should live, he must be brought to an Orthodox priest for the Sacrament of Chrismation.

In the case of the death of an Orthodox person where no priest of the Holy Orthodox Church can be had, a pious layman may read over the corpse, for the comfort of the relatives and the instruction of the persons present, Psalm 90 and Psalm 118, and add thereto the Trisagion ("Holy God, Holy Mighty," etc.). But let it be noted that as soon as possible the relative must notify some Orthodox bishop or priest and request him to serve the Liturgy and Funeral for the repose of the soul of the departed in his cathedral or parish Church.

As to Holy Matrimony, if there be any parties united in wedlock outside the pale of the Holy Orthodox Church because of the remoteness of Orthodox centers from their home, I direct that as soon as possible they either invite an Orthodox priest or go to where he resides and receive from his hands the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony; otherwise they will be considered excommunicated until they submit to the Orthodox Church's rule.

I further direct that Orthodox Christians should not make it a practice to attend the services of other religious bodies, so that there be no confusion concerning the teaching or doctrines. Instead, I order that the head of each household, or a member, may read the special prayers which can be found in the Hours in the Holy Orthodox Service Book, and such other devotional books as have been set forth by the authority of the Holy Orthodox Church.

Commending our clergy and laity unto the safekeeping of Jesus Christ, and praying that the Holy Spirit may keep us all in the truth and extend the borders of the Holy Orthodox Faith, I remain.

Your affectionate Servant in Christ

+ **RAPHAEL,**

Bishop of Brooklyn,

Head of the Syrian Greek Orthodox Catholic Mission in North America

Accuracy of translation and fact of the above prescriptive direction and pastoral instruction being still in force and authority, unabated and unmodified, now and for all future time in this jurisdiction, certified April 27, 1927, by:

+**AFTIMIOS,**

Archbishop of Brooklyn,

First Vicar of the Russian American Jurisdiction,

Head of the Syrian Greek Orthodox Catholic Mission in North America

*Taken from "The Most Useful Knowledge for the Orthodox Russian-American Young People," compiled by V. Rev. Peter G. Kohanik, 1932-34. This was reprinted in Orthodox Life, Vol. 43, No. 6, 1993.*