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BOOK REVIEWS

John M. Huels, *The Pastoral Companion. A Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry* (Fourth updated Edition), Bangalore: Theological Publications of India, 2009. Pages: xvi + 476, ISBN: 978-81-88821-81-5

Professor John M. Huels's work, *The Pastoral Companion. A Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry* runs up to 476 pages. The author who is an authority in general norms and liturgical laws of the Catholic Church is known for the clarity and precision of his thought and expression. The fact that this is the fourth updated version of the book, clearly speaks of the merit of the work for students as well as teachers of canon law and pastors of the faithful. Revision and updating of the text were motivated by the publication of the new juridical texts and documents from the Holy See since the last edition of the book in 2002.

In the words of the author himself, "the longstanding purpose of *The Pastoral Companion* is to give ministers and students a handy reference of Church laws and brief canonical commentary on topics pertinent to Catholic Ministers, especially parish and liturgical ministers" (p. xviii). The theme or subject wise presentation of the material facilitates the reader to easily refer to all the rules and regulations and the latest Vatican documents related to the particular matter under discussion.

The content of the work under discussion is presented in 16 chapters. In order to facilitate the reader the author has included three useful appendices: i) The Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity; ii) Consultative and Legislative Offices and Bodies of the Roman Catholic Churches and iii) Principal Dicasteries of the Roman Curia. In addition to these, the book also encompasses three indices: an index of Canons of the 1983 Code and an index of the Canons of the Code of Eastern Churches and a general index of Words or Concepts in the alphabetical order and a very useful Glossary of Canonical Terms.

The first chapter functions as an introductory one. Here the author is dealing with the “Fundamental Laws and General Norms” regarding the faithful, physical persons, power of governance and dispensations (1-31). This enables the readers to comprehend better and, if need be, to make easy reference to the general norms immediately. While dealing with the Churches *sui iuris*, the author touches upon the concept of ‘rite’ and asserts how “with the promulgation of the Eastern code in 1990, the use of “rite” in the sense of Churches *sui iuris* in the 1983 Code has become obsolete. In connection with it he also enlists the 22 Eastern Churches and indicates which rite each of these Churches *sui iuris* follows (p. 3).

The author dedicates one chapter each to the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick and holy orders (chapters 2 to 7). One challenge that the modern world, within and outside the Church, faces is the instability of marriage bonds or break down of marriages. The author, hence, allocates comparatively a lion’s share of the book, five chapters to the sacrament of marriage. It covers all the important aspects of marriage such as preparation for marriage,

impediments, matrimonial consent, celebration of marriage, dissolution and declaration of invalidity and convalidation of marriage (pp. 203-328).

Chapter 13 covers the other acts of divine worship such as sacramentals, the liturgy of the hours and funeral rites etc. (pp. 333-345). Chapter 14 is dedicated to present the sacred places and sacred times. The penultimate chapter discusses the sacraments, especially baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance and anointing of the sick, marriage and other non sacramental acts of divine cult from the perspective of ecumenism and liturgy (pp. 377-391). The final chapter (Ch.16) is concerned with the parish administration and various other ministries related to pastors including the financial management.

The clarity of expression that is characteristic of the author could be pointed out from the following commentary he gives to the concept of major and minor: “In canon law, one completes a year of life at midnight at the end of one’s birthday. This is the way all canonical age requirements are reckoned (c. 203). Thus, one becomes an adult at midnight at the end of one’s eighteenth birthday. At midnight at the end of one’s seventh birthday, a child is presumed to have the use of reason and begins to be bound by canon law” (p. 11).

The author points to a practical difficulty or confusion that might result from the negligence of the pastors in properly and exactly recording the details of baptism etc., and makes the following remark: “In the Eastern Churches, both Catholic and Non-Catholic, sacrament of confirmation is always conferred immediately after baptism, even of infants. It is enough to establish the fact of baptism to prove that confirmation was

also conferred. It often happens that no mention is made of confirmation in the canonical testimony of baptism. This does not give grounds for doubting that this sacrament was also conferred [DE, 145]” (p. 68).

Although the book is based on CIC, there are ample references to the Eastern Code, especially when there is a difference between the two: “The Eastern code has several differences from the Latin code in respect to clerical obligations, but the similarities between the two are greater [CCEO, cc. 367393]” (p. 198).

The third appendix entitled “Principal Dicasteries of the Roman Curia” helps the reader to get an idea about the various organs such as the secretary of state, congregations, tribunals and the pontifical councils which assist the Holy Father in the exercise of his papal office (pp. 433-438). Thus this book is a very useful work for the students, teachers and practitioners of canon law and hence it merits the name ‘The Pastoral Companion.’ At the same time if we call it a ‘Students’ companion’ or ‘Teachers’ companion’ it will not be an exaggeration. I appreciate and congratulate the author for this commendable contribution to the canonical literature.

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