

BOOK REVIEW

Faris, John D. and Jobe Abbass, eds. *A Practical Commentary to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. 2 vols. Collection Gratianus. Montréal: Librairie Wilson & Lafleur, 2019. Pages: vol. I: i-clxii, 1-1674; vol. II: i-viii, 1675-3209. ISBN 978-2-924974-03-2.

It was on 18th October 1990, that the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) was promulgated by Pope John Paul II. The event was truly significant and historically important as it was for the first time in the history of the Church, that a complete and common Code for all the Eastern Catholic Churches came into existence. Time flies and thirty years have gone by. However, an elaborate and extensive commentary on the CCEO, that provided detailed explanation of each canon was never realised, despite the rousing demand and necessity perceived among the canonists and aficionados. It was a singular craving from all corners, canonists, ecclesiastics, laymen; in fact, of the entire Catholic Church. This three decade long yearning came to fruition when this commentary saw light.

‘A Practical Commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches,’ in two volumes is a voluminous effort towards rendering Canon Law accessible to enthusiasts of Canon Law for in-depth study and research. This labour of love assembles a plethora of canonists and experts from Eastern and Latin Churches who have not left a stone unturned to realise this monumental work. The editors are two well-known canonists, John D. Faris and Jobe Abbass, OFM Conv.

The commentary ushers in a lot of excitement as sixteen long years have passed since the publication of the first commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Obviously with the twists and turns of events that have taken place in the Church and the world at large, several changes and reforms have found its way into the corpus of the both the Codes, Eastern and Western. A special mention has to be made about the commentary on the canons of the *motu proprio*, *Mitis et*

Misericors Iesus (Clement and Merciful Jesus), which reformed the canons of CCEO as regards cases the nullity of marriage. Hence, the publication of such a commentary was overdue, as enthusiasts would always love to delve into the intricacies of the Code, mindful of the amendments and additions.

The commentary brings together 32 eminent canonists from across the globe and being masters in their fields, they have contributed from their fields of expertise. As the editors themselves declare, it “is truly an expression of *communio* and would not have been possible without the collaboration of scholars—hierarchs, clerics, religious, and lay persons—of the Eastern Catholic and Latin Churches from all over the world” [Editors’ Preface]. The editors have to be commended for their splendid job for roping in such great expertise, and organizing the material in a totally scientific and comprehensive manner. Moreover, the methodology employed is identical in spite of the variety they bring to the table. This augurs well for the researcher and the scholar in their quest for a deeper understanding of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. The work is easy to the eye, as comprehensive elucidations and copious references are presented for every single canon, with the English text flanking the Latin.

The first volume of about 1800 pages, contains the commentary from the preliminary canons to the canons on “vow and oath” (CCEO cc 889-895). Prior to the corpus of the commentary on each canon, brief but scholarly notes are presented about the Eastern Catholic Churches, about the codification of the Eastern Canon Law, and about the possibilities and limitations of the Particular Law. This section throws insight into the unique role of the Eastern Churches and their canonical discipline in the universal Church. Indeed, this elaborate introduction and the chronicle of the origin of the Latin and Eastern Codes transforms the volumes into a compelling research material. The second volume (pages 1675-3209) provides meticulous commentaries on the canons under the titles XVII to XXX (CCEO cc. 896-1546). The exhaustive analytical index of the CCEO, the table of corresponding canons, and the list of sources for CCEO, provided towards the latter part of the second volume, adds value to the commentary and makes it user friendly as well.

The commentary on each canon is supplemented with their *iter* and practical explanation with references to *Nuntia*. Moreover, each canon is substantiated with the citation to their counterpart in the Latin Code

(CIC/1983). The bibliographies given at the end of each section also enrich the commentary and inspires the readers for further reading.

These two volumes of commentary are all set to excite any student of Canon Law and make his/her research and pastoral life easy. The comprehensive commentary of each canon will make these volumes indispensable in his/her journey to master each canon. Therefore, it becomes imperative that every student and every library of major seminaries, institutes of theology and Canon Law, faculties of theology and Canon Law, be of CCEO or CIC, should covet copies of this great commentary. Considering the increased awareness and application of Canon Law in the Church, the need for an authentic reference for the interpretation of the law demands a rightful place for these two volumes in the private and public reference collection of every student, enthusiast and library. These two volumes will definitely adorn the collection of eparchial curias and marriage tribunals as well.

The commentary without exaggeration, does not leave any room for negative remarks. However, for practical purposes, a three-volume commentary would have better than a two-volume commentary.

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