

BOOK REVIEW

Rev. Dr. Merlin Rengith Ambrose, *Aggiornamento in Canon Law: Theory and Praxis*, Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, Bengaluru, 2024. ISBN: 978-81-19664-32-0; Pages: 280

The book “*Aggiornamento in Canon Law: Theory and Praxis*,” ably edited by Rev. Dr. Merlin Rengith Ambrose (Executive Secretary of the Commission for Canon Law in the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, Professor of Canon Law at St Peter’s Pontifical Institute, Bangalore and Executive Committee member of Canon Law Society of India), brings to light the ongoing process of updating Canon Law, reflecting the changing times and circumstances within the Church. The term *Aggiornamento*, meaning “updating,” captures the essence of this volume, which highlights the updating of the Canon Law and the need for continual revision and adaptation of canonical legislation in response to evolving realities.

The book was released during the 95th executive committee meeting of the CCBI and the first copies of the book were received by His Eminence Oswald Cardinal Gracias and His Eminence Antony Cardinal Poola, Most Rev. George Antonysamy, the vice-president, Most Rev. Anil Couto, the Secretary-General, Rev. Dr Stephen Alathara, the Deputy Secretary General, and Archbishops from across India. Published by the CCBI and distributed by ATC Publications, the book is 252 pages long. The Commission for Canon Law and Other Legislative Texts is to be commended for this timely contribution to the field of Canon Law.

Most Rev. Dr. Juan Ignacio Arrieta, the Secretary of the Dicastery for Legislative Texts in the Vatican, comments, “Rev. Prof. Merlin Rengith Ambrose has contributed an invaluable and timely resource to the Canonists, offering updated norms and praxis of the current canonical issues.” This book is indeed a treasure to the Canonists and all those who want to know more about the Church Law. A timely treasure for anyone interested in Church law.

This comprehensive work stems from the wealth of knowledge presented during a National Conference organised by the CCBI (Conference of Catholic Bishops of India) in Bengaluru from 6-8

February 2024, where Vatican officials, renowned canonists and professors from across the globe shared their canonical expertise. The range of topics covered in this volume addresses critical issues facing the Church today.

Key discussions include the role of the Dicastery for Legislative Texts in the Season of Reform, a foundational aspect of canonical interpretation and guidance. Equally significant is the exploration of preliminary investigations outlined in canons 1717-1719, as well as the praxis concerning the abuse of minors, which underscore the Church's commitment to justice and pastoral care.

Other pertinent topics include the handling of financial delicts, giving a reflection on financial malfeasance within ecclesiastical institutions, which is a serious delict in the church and is viewed with great concern today. The papers presented on the Church's synodal mission in light of emerging canonical revisions, and the evolving rapport between Bishops and religious, along with the model letters and decrees, give greater insights for the administration and proper rapport and administration in the Church. The volume also features a detailed analysis by Prof. Merlin Ambrose himself on the recent amendments in canon law, offering an analytical overview and insight into the juridical implications of these changes.

In a remarkable achievement, 500 copies of the book were sold out within just two months of its publication. The second edition of the book followed immediately, with the addition of one more insightful article by the editor, Rev. Dr. Merlin Rengith Ambrose. The newly added article titled "The Salient Features of the Final Document of the Synod and Synodality: The Canonical Perspective" offers a thorough examination of the Final Document from a canonical viewpoint. It thoughtfully addresses pertinent concerns that aim to enhance the synodal character of the Church, thereby enriching the dialogue surrounding this vital aspect of its mission.

While reading this volume, one needs to read it in the background of two of the Church's age-old principles, which are, in fact, the Church's primary mission: the salvation of souls (*salus animarum*), which remains the supreme law. This, coupled with the emphasis on the use of canonical equity (*aequitas canonica*), ensures that justice is tempered with mercy, especially in penal matters. Any interpretation of canon law, however stringent and demanding they are due to the nature of the matter, cannot overlook these principles. These principles should cover the good of both the delinquent and the victim.

With its wealth of up-to-date information, “*Aggiornamento* in Canon Law: Theory and Praxis” is an indispensable guide for those grappling with current canonical challenges. This volume is a must-have for canonists, clergy, and anyone engaged in the governance and pastoral care of the Church. Prof. Merlin Ambrose’s editorial work ensures that this book will serve as a crucial reference in the ongoing conversations about the Church’s legal and pastoral frameworks.

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