

REVIEWS

Canon law guide helpful for church ministers

A Concise Guide to Canon Law: A Practical Handbook for Pastoral Ministers, by Father Kevin E. McKenna. Ave Maria Press (Notre Dame, Ind., 2000). 126 pp., \$10.95.

Reviewed by Father Thomas Faucher
Catholic News Service

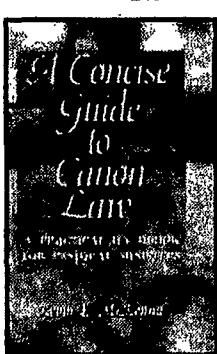
The author of *A Concise Guide to Canon Law*, Father Kevin E. McKenna, chancellor and director of legal services for the Rochester Diocese, is a well-known, experienced canon lawyer. He has a reputation for bringing a pastoral sense and practicality to his understanding of church law, and he has done this well in his new book.

He took on the difficult task of starting with the history of the Code of Canon Law, going on through the meaning and interpretation of the code, and finally putting the text of the canons themselves into simple, understandable parts.

His structure is easy to follow, with each section explaining some aspect of church law and life, answering some "frequently asked questions."

After a quick history lesson, he starts with sacraments, first in general and then each one specifically. He also looks at parish life, diocesan life, the diocesan tribunal, temporal goods and finally the rights of people in the church. He ends with an excellent glossary and good bibliography.

What is good about this book is its very existence. It joins other works by authors such as Father James Coriden and Father John Huels in explaining the Code of Canon Law in a way regular people can understand. Father McKenna's explana-



tions make sense and his middle-of-the-road approach to controversial topics is appropriate.

The weakness of the book is harder to describe. It is a book about lots of canons, but does not deal adequately with the entire concept of canon law. It is all trees and no forest. Specifically missing is an explanation of the enormous differences between Roman-style law and American or English-style law. To get a grasp on the whole concept by which canon law operates, understanding that difference is essential.

Also missing are explanations of the code as the applied theology of Vatican II and the great differences between both the letter and spirit of the 1983 code and the 1917 code.

In one sense the author anticipates the criticisms by telling us in the introduction that "this small book does not claim to be an exhaustive exposition of canon law today. Its scope is much more modest." Had it been a little less modest, it might have been a much better book. Working with this book will help people know what the law is, but not why that is what the law is.

Father McKenna has written a valuable book for all those working in the church today. Those with some canon law education, such as is received in seminaries, will find it a handy reference work. Those with no canon law training will find it at least very helpful.

Father McKenna has done a very fine job and deserves praise for it. The book can be strongly recommended. But I view the 1983 Code of Canon Law as the owners' manual for the operation of the church. I am still waiting for the simple book that explains the code from this perspective.

The book rates a strong five on my

scale of seven.

Father Faucher, a theologian and canonist, is a priest of the Diocese of Boise, Idaho, on assignment in the Diocese of Baker, Ore.

From A Concise Guide to Canon Law, "Rights in the Church"

"A dramatic development in the church since the Second Vatican Council has been the recognition of an array of rights for the Christian faithful. These flow from an appreciation of the true equality of the Christian faithful, with all cooperating to build up the body of Christ in accord with each person's own condition and function. All rights are of course inseparable from obligations."

"Obligations and Rights of All the Christian Faithful" include:

— To maintain communion with the church. (c. 209)

— To live a holy life and to promote the growth of the church. (c. 210)

— To spread the gospel message. (c. 211)

— To follow the sacred pastors of the church, as teachers of the faith. (c. 212)

— To make known their needs and desires to the pastors. (c. 212)

— To manifest their opinion on matters that pertain to the good of the church to their pastors and other Christian faithful, with due regard to the integrity of the faith and morals, with reverence to their pastors and consideration for the common good and respect for persons. (c. 212)

— To receive assistance from pastors, especially the word of God and the sacraments. (c. 213)

Icons portray everyday lives

The Bride: Images of the Church, by Daniel Berrigan, Icons by William Hart McNichols. Foreword by Megan McKenna. Orbis Books, 142 pp., \$22 (paperback)

Reviewed by Sister Estelle Martin, RSM
Guest contributor

Throughout Scripture the wedding banquet has been the setting for the kingdom, the household of God, the gathering of God's chosen ones and, within that context, the image of the bride has become identified with the whole church, the Body of Christ. Daniel Berrigan, SJ, and William Hart McNichols, SJ, combine their talents of artistic expression to speak out for the silent ones whose lives have been rooted in being church, believers at that wedding feast. Twenty-seven times the authors open the doorway to holy ground, inviting readers to journey with those who have walked the way before.



One does not skim lightly through the pages of this unique book, but lingers in quiet meditation awed by the word and art images on every page. The thoughtful person participates in the printed page, responding to the poems and stories, conversing with the icons. It becomes a kind of litany, larger than life, which invites prayer and reflection and even contemplation. The first time I opened this treasure I slowly paged through it pausing at each image to repeat its title and to repeat in litany form ... pray for us. These are holy people, many unfamiliar, whose lives have reached out to bring hope and courage, peace and healing in the midst of a broken world.

The words of Daniel Berrigan spill across the uncluttered pages challenging indifferent ones to find greatness in the ordinary tasks of everyday living. His words reveal the heart of the person, the struggles and the spirit that brought each one to stand on holy ground. In simple language Berrigan empowers reality to speak for itself. He creates a kind of iconography of words that entice the reader to enter into the holiness revealed within. He has chosen theologians and innocent ones, victims of injustice and martyrs, fiery prophets and gentle youths to

give flesh and blood to his poems and stories.

Some names are familiar, many are not; but when the book is read and reread and pondered, all are recognized as the face of church, including: Nuestra Señora de las Sandias, Mother of God of Magadan, St. Joseph, Nuestro Salvador de las Sandias, Jesus Christ, Holy Prophet Elijah, St. John the Evangelist, St. Francis, Mechthild of Magdeburg, St. Joan of Arc with St. Michael the Archangel, St. Ignatius, St. Aloysius, and Holy Martyrs St. Peter the Aleut and St. Andrew Bobola, SJ. St. Benedict Joseph Labre, St. Maria Goretti, Benjamin Joseph Salmon, Adrienne von Speyr, Egride Van Broeck, Peter the Aleut and St. Andrew Bobola.

William Hart McNichols enhances Berrigan's text with painted icon images. He combines traditional iconographic style with a hint of the contemporary expression. The images emerge from contemplation and

reveal the presence of the holy in our midst. Although through the centuries the meaning of icon has enlarged and diversified, McNichols clearly maintains its original connotation of "holy image," one that reaches into our space and draws the viewer into sacred space.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the icon is the prominent eyes of the individual represented. Steadfastly they gaze at the viewer revealing the holy and the divine. The power of the icon to evoke emotion and awe and wonder is often found in the intensity of its gaze. Icons are meant to be honored, to be gazed upon, to be prayed with and these rich images are no exception. They beckon the reader to return again and again to be enriched by the story they tell. The artist does not trivialize the images by "explaining" them, but he does assist the viewer to plumb the depths of each image by setting a context for the icon in a few brief sentences.

The Bride: Images of the Church places the People of God in the context of social justice and peacemakers. Imaging the lives of holy ones from Elijah to Nestor Savchuk (d. 1993), it sharpens the focus of what it means to be Christ to others in our contemporary culture.

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