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LA VITA CONSACRATA NEL CODICE DEI CANONI DELLE CHIESE ORIENTALI (CCEO) by Dimitrios Salachas. Bologna: Centro Editorial Dehoniano, 2006.

Conciliar teaching encourages Catholics to delve into the spiritual riches of the Eastern tradition (*UR* 15); however, one can appreciate the treasures of this wellspring only if led by scholars like Salachas. With an instructor truly competent in the development of Eastern monasticism, one can appreciate Title XII of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO), “Monks and Other Religious As Well As Members of Other Institutes of Consecrated Life”. The sacred canons (*sacri canones*) of the first six universal councils, norms from the early synods, the Basilian Rule, Athanasius’ *Life of Anthony*, and the writings of the early Eastern church fathers serve as the *fontes* for many of the canons in Title XII of the CCEO. Failure to know these sources leaves one floundering in understanding Title XII of the CCEO.

The text begins with an excellent preface by Cardinal Tomáš Špidlik on the value of openness to the Spirit and theological development for an understanding of the Church’s jurisprudence. Salachas’ introductory remarks for understanding Title XII follow. The text contains eight chapters, and this reviewer found the author’s first two chapters, 1) “The monastic life in the ancient canons and 2) “A review of the sacred canons in the CCEO”, most helpful in setting the stage for the six subsequent chapters, a canon by canon commentary of Title XII. Four appendices follow the chapters: 1) “A general Outline to assist in the formulation of particular law regarding Title XII” 2) “The particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church regarding secular institutes,” 3) “The particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church regarding societies of apostolic life, and 4) “The Congregation of the Oriental Church and religious institutes.” A selected bibliography and an analytical index of significant words and phrases in Title XII bring the text to conclusion.

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Consecrated life in the East flows from a Christian vocation recognized as a gift of the Spirit introducing one into the life of the Trinity. The author introduces Eastern theology's respect for a more radical *sequela Christi* in the monastic life through unceasing praise of God in liturgy and contemplation. The early Eastern canons emphasize the importance of celibacy, conversion of heart, renunciation of temporal goods, and a quest for tranquility (*hesychia*) in monastic life. Contrary to most thinking, this form of Christian life is not a flight from the world, but its embrace with a pure heart and hope for its transfiguration. The author traces monasticism from its eremitical beginnings in the desert, its communal or cenobitic form, and its gradual evolution in a more structured monastery lifestyle with a dependence on ecclesiastical authority.

Salachas notes the importance of the second principle for ordering the CCEO in Title XII: that it should be thoroughly Eastern, in conformity with the postulates of the Second Vatican Council in preserving the proper discipline of the Eastern Churches "inasmuch as practices sanctioned by a noble antiquity harmonize better with the customs of the faithful and are seen as more likely to foster the good of souls." (OE 5). The author also calls one's attention to the principle of subsidiarity that guided the work of the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Law for the Oriental Churches (PCCICOR), particularly the *coetus* laboring on Title XII, in which only the most necessary norms appear in the common law so that each monastery and religious institute as well as other forms of consecrated life could describe their charisms in their particular law. Salachas notes the special attention accorded Eastern monasticism in the Ninth Ordinary Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life (*propositio* 5b) and reiterated by Pope John Paul II in the apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata* 6.

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While Cardinal Tomáš Špidlik notes that the text would be an immense help for those revising the typicon of their respective monasteries and statutes of orders and congregations, the book also serves as a foundational text for professors of canon law, particularly those engaged in the area of consecrated life. Not only does it provide a deeper appreciation of Title XII in the CCEO; but it serves as an excellent source from which to appreciate the beginnings of monastic life in the East and its gradual appearance in the West, as well as the other forms of religious and consecrated life in both traditions.

The book is a must for scholars interested in Eastern monasticism, canonists serving those called to live consecrated life, bishops and their vicars for consecrated life in their pastoral service to these members of the Christian faithful, formation personnel, and indeed any religious desiring a deeper understanding of his or her vocation.

ROSE McDERMOTT, S.S.J.

*School of Canon Law
The Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.*