

**Minutes of the 33rd Annual Meeting of the
Tamil Nadu Canonists' Association
TNBCLC Tindivanam, 23 & 24 January 2024**

The 33rd Annual Meeting of the Tamil Nadu Canonists' Association began on January 23, 2024, Tuesday, at 9:00 a.m. with the lighting of the lamp by Rev. Fr. S. Pascal Raj, Rev. Fr. Angel, Rev. Fr. Philomindas, Rev. Fr. Antony, and Rev. Sr. Felcy. This was followed by a hymn invoking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reading of the scripture, and prayer. Fr. S. Pascal Raj, the President of TNCA, welcomed all participants. Fr. Angel, the Vice-President paid homage to the deceased members of TNCA.

Rev. Fr. Stanislaus, Secretary of the Regional Bible Commission, Tamil Nadu TNBCLC, delivered the inaugural address on the prophetic role of Jesus and his teaching on laws.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read out by Fr. Anthony J, the secretary, and were approved by the participants. Thirty-nine canonists attended the annual meeting.

In the first and second sessions, Rev. Fr. Thomas MSFS presented the first paper on "Procedure to be followed for making Hierarchical Recourse to the Signatura against the Decisions issued/approved by DIVCSVA." He spoke at length on the theory, law, and praxis of the procedure. Sr. Martina moderated the sessions. Following the first session, there was a coffee break. The second session began at 11:20 a.m., and Fr. Thomas MSFS analyzed a few cases related to members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and the replies of the Apostolic Signatura.

In the third session, Fr. Thomas Kurma, a priest of the Archdiocese of Hyderabad and Professor at St. John's Seminary, Hyderabad, presented a paper on "Significance of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in the Code of Canon Law." Fr. George Vincent of Kottar Diocese moderated the session. The resource person enlightened the participants on the provisions in the Code to resort to Dispute Resolution in cases of disputes of interests.

In the post-lunch session, Rev. Fr. Philomindas presented insights on the reformulation of the prenuptial enquiry. He took note of the suggestions of the

participants to integrate them into the revised form of Prenuptial Enquiry. The session was moderated by Fr. Jagadish of Vellore Diocese.

The evening session was guided by Frs. Alagu Selvan, Jagadish, and Alex Gnanaraj, presenting the translated works of the amended canons of Book VI (Sanctions) and some Canons in Book VII and other recently amended canons in the Code. Volunteers to assist in the translation of the canons were formed into two groups:

Translation of Book VI: Fr. Alex Gnana Raj (Coordinator), Fr. John Diraviam, Fr. Arumainathan, and Fr. George Santhanam.

Book VII and other canons: Fr. Jagadish (Coordinator), Fr. David Kumar OMI, Fr. Vincent A, Fr. J. Anthony, and Sr. Martina Alphonse Mary FSPM.

The interactions and suggestions of the participants were deemed useful in planning the translation work. It was suggested to release the recent translation after fine-tuning and thorough study. The translating group members agreed to meet in April 2024 to restudy the translation and submit it to the editorial team by December 2024. When all goes as planned, the participants agreed to publish in January 2025, commemorating the Great Jubilee Year.

At 7:15 p.m., the Holy Eucharist was celebrated.

The second day (24 Jan 2024) began with morning prayer at 6:30 a.m., followed by the Holy Eucharist, presided over by Rev. Fr. Pascal Raj, President of TNCA. Rev. Fr. George Santhana Raj (Trichy Diocese) preached the homily. Rev. Fr. Vino Alphonse animated the choir and morning prayer. The mass was offered for the repose of the souls of deceased members of the Association.

After the Holy Mass, a group photo of the participants was taken. Rev. Fr. Louis Rayar was greeted on his sacerdotal silver jubilee, and Fr. Thomas MSFS was wished by the gathering on the St. Francis De Sales feast.

The second day's first session began at 9:00 a.m. with the book release "Thirumana urvukal membadu..." - Festschrift in honour of the deceased canonists. The editorial board was led by Fr. Angel and assisted by Fr. Pascal, Fr. Philomindas, Fr. Anthony, and Fr. Charles Kumar. We place on record our sincere appreciation to all the contributors:

Rev. Fr. Nobert Thomas – “Pre-Marital Sex and Living Together in Married Life: Canonical and Pastoral Perspective”

Rev. Fr. A. J. Jagadish – “Spiritual Life of the Newly Married Couples: A Practical Guide”

Rev. Fr. Alex Gnanaraj – “Responsible Parenthood”

Rev. Fr. Philomindoss – “Importance of Consent in Catholic Marriage”

Rev. Fr. Alaguselvam – “Mixed Marriages + Disparity of Cult”

Rev. Fr. John Diraviam – “Marriage Preparation and the Follow-up Programme”

Rev. Fr. Devasagayam Xavier – “Addictions and its Influence in Marital Life”

On the second day, we continued to deepen our knowledge on arbitration through an insightful presentation by Fr. Thomas Kurma on “Significance of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in the Code of Canon Law - (Part II)”.

Fr. Alagu Selvan dwelt on the recent changes in the Code and presented the canonical updates. The session was moderated by Fr. James Anthuvan. Following this, there was a session on the recent amendments in civil law, rulings, and judgments presented by Fr. Michael Anand OFM, which was very useful. The session was moderated by Sr. Felcy CTC.

Fr. Merlin Rengith Ambrose presented an update on various initiatives of the CCBI Commission for Canon Law and Legislative Texts.

Election

After the coffee break, there was an election for new office bearers. 26 members were present for the election, which was moderated by Fr. Philomindoss. Fr. Jacob and Sr. Felcy were designated as tellers of the election. It was noted that the president must obtain an absolute majority (more than half) of votes to be elected to the office.

Fr. Angel Raj received 14 votes and was elected as the president of the Tamil Nadu Canon Law Association. Fr. Anthuvan was elected as Vice-President, Fr. J. Anthony was re-elected as Secretary, and Fr. Philomindoss was re-elected as Treasurer.

The outgoing president, Fr. Pascal Raj, was honored and thanked for his dedicated and committed service for the past six years as president of TNCA. Fr. Pascal Raj cordially welcomed and greeted the newly elected office bearers: Fr. Angel (President), Fr. James Anthuvan (Vice-President), and reelected - Fr. J. Anthony (Secretary), and Fr. Philomindas (Treasurer).

The new members of TNCA introduced themselves and presented the title and a short summary of their doctoral/licentiate thesis.

During the business session, the dates of the next meeting were fixed as January 21 and 22, 2025, and the venue was set as Tindivanam TNBCLC. It was suggested that the theme of the next meeting could be “Synodal Church” as the Church is navigating through the synodal session.

Fr. John Diraviam (Madurai), Fr. Vincent (Vellore), Fr. Merlin Rengith (Jurisprudence), and Fr. Anthony agreed to present papers on the said theme.

As per custom, canonical and civil updates will be part of the TNCA meeting sessions. During the business session, it was suggested that a meeting be conducted for Judicial Vicars, Defender of the Bond, and a training program for Notaries. There was also a strong recommendation to have a representative from the Tamil Nadu Canon Law Association in the Tamil Nadu Bishops’ Council by creating a Regional Canon Law Commission and appointing a regional secretary for the said commission.

The two-day annual meet of TNCA concluded with a vote of thanks and a sumptuous lunch.