

Report of the Silver Jubilee symposium of the Tamilnadu Canonists' Association:

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17 & 18 June 2015

The Silver Jubilee Symposium of the Tamilnadu canonists began on 17 June 2015, Wednesday at 9.30 am with a song and a prayer invoking the gifts of the Holy Spirit by the seminarians of St. Paul's Seminary, Trichy. The secretary, Fr. Norbert Thomas, invited the chief guest Bishop Antony Devotta and the guest of honour Fr. S. Sebastian, the Rector of St. Paul's Seminary, Fr. A. Alagu Selvan, the president of Tamilnadu Canonists' Association, Fr. A. Rayappan, the president of All India Canonists' Association and Fr. Y. Irudayaraj to light the Kuthuvilakku. Fr. A. Alagu Selvan felicitated the guests with shawls in his welcome address. Fr. Sebastian, in his address mentioned that law is meant for the wellbeing of man not man for law. Bishop Devotta gave his welcome address inviting the canonists to think in line with Pope Francis, that is, 'Challenging Canon Law on Marriage according to the mind of Pope Francis.' He asked the canonists to be pastorally sensitive to the needs of the faithful, rather than simply interpreting and applying the law for its own sake. Msgr. Solomon, the Vice President, thanked the chief guest and guest of honour and invited the participants to take active participation in the proceedings. Then the canonists introduced themselves with one another giving their name and ministry in their respective dioceses. It was encouraging to note that 40 canonists took active participation on the proceedings of the two days annual meeting.

In the first session at 11.00 am, Fr. Philomindas of Kumbakonam diocese dealt on the theme: "**Marriage as an Institution**". It was moderated by Fr. John Diraviam and the members had active participation in the discussion. The second session began at 12.00 noon and Fr. Alagu Selvan of Salem diocese spoke on the theme: "**Challenges of Marriage Today**". The session was moderated by Fr. Charles, MMI. After a brief interaction the members dispersed for lunch and rest at 1.15 pm.

The afternoon session began at 3.00 pm. At the beginning of the session, Bishop F. Antonisamy, Bishop of Kumbakonam, released the revised edition of the book: "Ministers and Ministries" wrote by Fr. Karambai Sebastian. Afterwards the Bishop spoke on the theme: "**Service of Canonists towards the People of God**". The session was moderated by Fr. Pascal Raj. After a brief discussion on the deliberations, the participants left for tea at 4.00 pm.

At 6.00 pm the thanksgiving liturgy of Silver Jubilee celebration took place in St. Mary's Cathedral, Trichy with Most Rev. Dr. Antony Devotta, bishop of Trichy as the principal celebrant and Most Rev. F. Antonisamy, bishop of Kumbakonam preached the homily. The canonists concelebrated with the bishops and had a meaningful celebration. At the end of the mass, the canonists had a group photo in front of the altar with the bishops.

After the Eucharistic celebration, the members gathered at Fr. Louis Garnier Memorial Hall (basement of Cathedral) for the felicitation programme. Archbishop George Antonysamy of Madras-Mylapore diocese was the president of the function and

bishops Antony Devotta and F. Antonisamy were the chief guests. The former presidents of TNCA, Frs. Y. Irudayaraj, A. Rayappan, and Fr. A. Alagu Selvan, the present president, Fr. G. Felix, the founding member and also Prof. Devasahayam, the guest speaker were invited to the stage. Fr. Alagu Selvan, in his welcome address gave a brief profile of the distinguished guests and they were honoured with shawls and mementos. In addition to the guests of honour, the founding members: Frs. George Mathias of Vellore diocese, Vincent SDB, Swaminathan of Pondicherry diocese, Fr. Karambai Sebastian of Tanjore diocese were also honoured with Shawls and mementos. The Silver Jubilee souvenir was released by Archbishop George Antonysamy and the other two bishops received the copies. Fr. Alagu Selvan presented the chronicles of TNBC in power point presentation. Bishop F. Antonysamy launched the website of TNBC. It can be reached in the net on the following web address: tamilnaducanonists@org.

Bishop Antony Devotta felicitated the canonists for their yeoman service to the people of Tamilnadu. Mr. Devasahayam spoke on the need and necessity of law and also of its observance. In his presidential address archbishop spoke on the recent meeting with Cardinal Filoni, the prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, who spoke about the Silver Jubilee celebrations of Tamilnadu Canonists' Association. Fr. Norbert Thomas, the secretary, thanked the Bishops and the guests of honour and also all the fathers and people who played active roles for the successful completion of Silver jubilee. The hour- long felicitation events were enriched by the performance of dances by Kalaikaviri troupe. The felicitation events were moderated by Fr. Amalraj of Tuticorin diocese. At the end of felicitation the canonists and other invitees left for festive dinner hosted by Bishop Antony Devotta. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Fr. Eugene, the cathedral parish priest, for sponsoring expenditures connected with the felicitation events and Bishop Devotta for sponsoring the festive dinner.

On 18 June at 7.00 am the canonists had concelebrated mass which was presided over by Fr. S. Solomon and preached by Fr. A. Rayappan at the domestic chapel of St. Paul's Seminary. The first session of second day began at 9.00 am on the theme, "**The Importance of Marriage Preparation and Post-Marital Assistance**". As Fr. Jesu of Sivagangai diocese was indisposed due to health problems, Fr. Xavier Devasahayam of Palayamkottai diocese presented the paper on his behalf. The session was moderated by Fr. Angel. After brief discussion on the theme, the members dispersed for coffee break. The second session began at 10.30 am. The theme of the presentation was, "**The Role of Christian Parenthood in the Church and in the Society**". As the resource person, Fr. T. Arockia Baskar of Tanjore diocese was not able to attend the Jubilee Celebrations due urgent commitments, Fr. Sahayaraj of Tanjore diocese presented the paper on his behalf. After a brief discussion on the theme, the final session began at 11.45 am. Fr. Alagu Selvan chaired the **Panel Discussion** with Frs. A. Rayappan and Y. Irudayaraj. The Panel gave clarifications on matrimonial issues which were put forth to it.

At 12.30 noon we had the General Body meeting where Fr. Norbert Thomas, the secretary of TNCA, briefly read out the minutes of the previous annual meeting held on 22 & 23 January 2014. The report was passed without any modification. Then the secretary asked the members to fix the theme, date and venue for the next symposium. As there were some apprehensions regarding the venue due to increase in the number of students, in principle, it was decided to host the next meeting at St. Paul's Seminary itself. January 27 & 28 are the dates chosen for the two-day meeting. Then there was a discussion regarding

the choice of topics to be presented. It was decided to have the theme: “**The Ministry of Reconciliation: Pastoral and Juridical Approach**”, keeping in mind of the forthcoming ‘**Year of Mercy**’. It was decided to have only four talks totally for two days. The resource persons for the meeting are: Fr. John Diraviam on “The Juridical Approach of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation”; Fr. Angel on “**The Application of Mercy in diocesan Tribunal**”; Fr. Karambai Sebastian on “Grave Delicts and the sacrament of Reconciliation” Fr. Norbert Thomas on “**Bio-medical Ethics and Canon Law.**”

Then Fr. Philomindas read out the financial position of TNCA last year and presented an approximated expenditure and income of Silver Jubilee Celebrations. He thanked the donor-canonists for their generous contribution which has gone over Rs. 70,000/-. The members appreciated Fr. Philomindas for his efforts in getting advertisements to cover up the expenses.

At 1.15 pm, Fr. Norbert Thomas invited the members to elect new “Office Bearers” as the first term of Office was over for the president and Secretary. Fr. A. Alagu Selvan was elected to continue for another term of three years as the President and Fr. Xavier Devasahayam of Palayamkottai diocese was elected as the secretary and Vice-president Fr. Solomon and the Procurator Fr. Philomindas were retained to continue in the same offices. Fr. Norbert Thomas thanked the convenors and the members of the three committee members for the successful outcome of the Souvenir. Fr. Alagu Selvan thanked the outgoing secretary Fr. Norbert Thomas and welcomed the new Secretary, Fr. Xavier, and also the persons contributed for the successful celebration of Silver Jubilee. Then the mementos were distributed to the members and sent through them to their respective bishops and at 1.30 pm the members left for lunch and rest.

The post-lunch session began at 2.30 pm with the presentation of Fr. G. Felix of Kottar on “**The Expectation of Laity from their Parish Priests**”. Sixteen lay people participated in the seminar along with the canonists. After an hour-long presentation, a panel was formed consisting of Frs. Felix, Alagu Selvan and C.M. Joseph. The questions and clarifications sought by the laity are duly answered by the panel. Finally the two-day symposium came to an end at 4.00 pm with a prayer.

Fr. Norbert Thomas
Secretary-TNCA