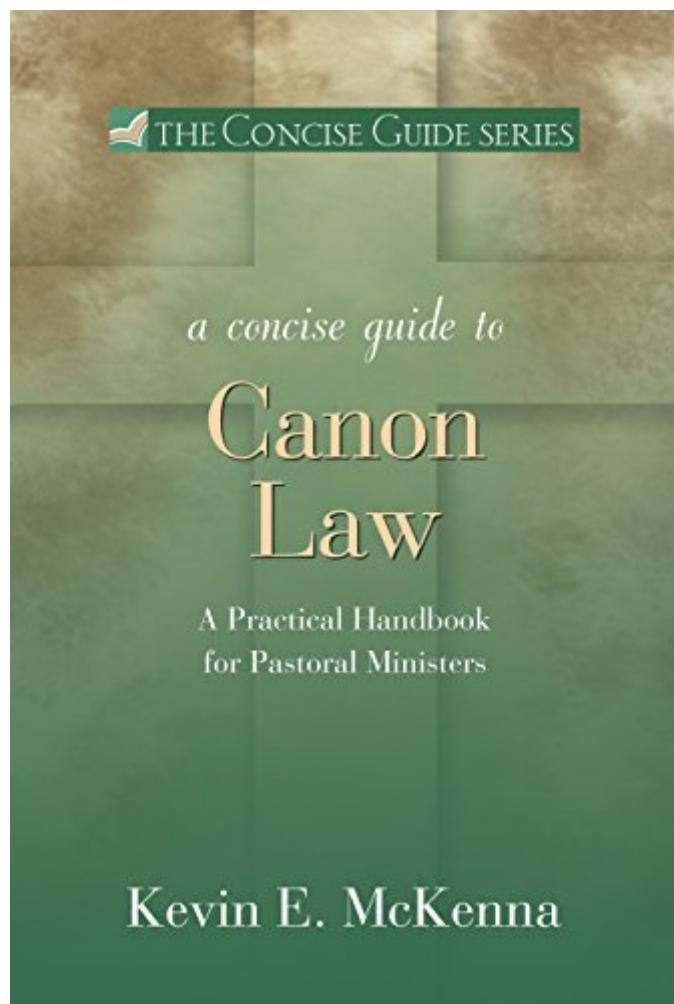


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# A Concise Guide To Canon Law; A Practical Handbook For Pastoral Ministers



## **Synopsis**

Pastoral ministers are faced with new questions and challenges every day, and answers aren't always easy to find. Canon law can provide the answers to some of the most complicated questions, but busy pastoral ministers don't always know where or how to find those answers. What's needed is a clear, concise, easy-to-use reference guide to church law, one that puts the answers right at your fingertips. *A Concise Guide to Canon Law* will do just that. This handy reference provides a compact overview of the most important canonical issues facing pastoral ministers today. Arranged by topic, it offers a thorough summary of church law--including such topics as the sacraments and church organization--and is complete with reference numbers to relevant canons in the Code of Canon Law. Helpful sections of "frequently asked questions and answers" at the end of the chapters make finding answers to the most often-asked questions even easier. With more and more lay people becoming involved with church administration, and with members of parishes and faith communities raising more complex and complicated questions, Understanding church law is vital and *A Concise Guide to Canon Law* makes it easy.

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## Customer Reviews

As the Parish Secretary in a Roman Catholic Church, I am surprised at how many people think that the nice lady answering the phone could answer questions about Canon Law. In my quest to serve the parishioners, my bosses (priests), deacons, seminarians, and the Sisters in our Convent, I decided to buy this book. It provides simple explanations for complex questions and situations so that I am able to at least direct people to the right place or help them formulate the questions they need to ask a priest or deacon. I think it's a great book for any of those religious listed above as well, for quick reference when dealing with the most common situations: marriage and annulment, baptisms, adult confirmation. And provides a way to teach these concepts to people going through RCIA. I let everyone use this copy, I might have to splurge on an extra copy.

Rev. Kevin McKenna is Chancellor and Director of Legal Services for the Diocese of Rochester, as well as a member of both the Canon Law Society of America and the Canadian Canon Law Society; he has also written books such as A Concise Guide to Catholic Social Teaching, Concise Guide to Your Rights in the Catholic Church, Church Finance Handbook, You Did It for Me: Care of Your Neighbor as a Spiritual Practice, etc. He wrote in the Preface to this 2000 book, "[This book] is an effort to present a compact, usable reference guide in some of the major areas of canon law that affect primarily the pastor, parochial vicar, deacon, and pastoral associate, as well as a variety of pastoral agents now working in the church... This book is an effort to distill into a practical format the myriad laws contained in the A Code of Canon Law A with an emphasis on the more practical areas such as the sacraments, declarations of nullity, and consultative bodies... It is intended as an easy-to-use reference guide for pastoral ministers, providing a quick summary in outline form of the major topical areas in canon law... and thereby answering some questions that often come up in the day-to-day life of the average pastoral minister." (Pg. 14) He states, "A person who is in a marriage which the church cannot recognize as VALID due to the presence of an IMPEDIMENT such as a prior bond is still eligible for admittance into the RCIA program. However, before receiving baptism, it would be necessary that the catechumen's marriage situation be resolved (e.g., obtaining a declaration of nullity) so that the person be properly disposed and able to celebrate the sacraments of initiation. It is therefore most important that parish staff interview potential catechumens before they proceed too far into the program so that the person with an invalid marriage is aware of this potential difficulty and so the staff may assist the catechumen in whatever canonical procedures

may be necessary before the person is initiated into the church." (Pg. 33-34) He notes, "sacred ministers cannot refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited from receiving them... However... those who are excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty or obstinately persist in grave sin are not to be admitted to the eucharist. The Code does not overly restrict access to the eucharist. When admission to the eucharist must be restricted, the law would insist that very serious reasons be present, since such exclusion would be denying a fundamental right." (Pg. 44) He observes, "Many pastoral ministers believe that living together as a couple before marriage makes a couple ineligible to be married in the church, since in such a situation the couple would not be properly disposed to receive the sacrament of marriage. The new catechism, in describing 'trial marriage,' says those who engage in premature sexual relations with the intention of getting married later enter a relationship that can 'scarcely ensure mutual sincerity and fidelity...' 'Human love does not tolerate "trial marriages." It demands a total and definitive gift of persons to one another.' It is only the ordinary who can legitimately prohibit the marriage of a couple within his jurisdiction, and only in a particular case---and only for a time, for a serious cause, and only as long as that cause exists." (Pg. 75) He states, "Contrary to prior legislation, it is now the Catholic party who, before entering into marriage with a member of another church or ecclesial community, must obtain the permission of the local ordinary by making certain declarations about his or her faith... The Catholic party must declare that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of falling away from the faith and make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power to have all children baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church. The other party must be informed of these promises made by the Catholic." (Pg. 78) This book does an excellent job of not only outlining the Code, but also focusing its attention on the most "crucial" sections, in the minds of most people.

Speaking as a Canon Lawyer, this is just the book parish priests who have not had much training in Canon Law while in Seminary. This book just might be better than the text books they give Seminarians as things are explained in such a way that they can understand those Canons they would have to deal with at the parish.

Canon law is a snap for Canon Lawyers. However, there are many people who work in a parish who are not conversant in this mysterious subject, but are surrounded by people, things, and circumstances which pose questions that can only be answered by Canon Law. Although each diocese provides guidelines for many things like requirements for baptism and confirmation, or who

can and who cannot be sponsors for these sacraments, sometimes things get a bit more complicated and when the pastor or priest is not around and the staff does not always know where to find those answers. There are the perennial issues like: when a dispensation or special permission must be obtained to perform a wedding. Going to the actual Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition, or using the New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law or the older versions: A Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary and A Code of Canon Law a Text and Commentary, Study Edition, is more frightening for the untrained staff than helpful. This is a great tool to keep close by in any parish office. It is written by a Canon Lawyer for everyday people. Its Table of Contents provides easy entry to the subject for which you are looking for answers. It offers information primarily on the seven Sacraments, but also on parishes, the diocese, annulments, property and things like the obligations and rights of all Catholics. As the product Description says, it "puts the answers right at your fingertips." Although this may prove indispensable for a parish staff, I would recommend it to anyone who wants to know more about Church Law. It makes a good textbook for a class. It is a welcome addition to anyone's library who just wants to know more about how the Church administrates itself. It also provides actual Code #'s, should one want to delve into the Code itself.

It is what it says. A good concise book on Cannon Law. Easy to read and understand.

We are in the process of revising many of our Parish manuals and directories. This Guide was a very useful reference tool to ensure we were within Canon Law in what we were revising and reviewing. It was a great "concise" guide indeed to an otherwise tedious and perhaps not exciting concept. We completed in short time what at the onset we thought would take forever and this guide was part of the reason why the timeline was shortened.

It was just right to spark my interest in Canon Law and assist me with one of my projects that is due before the end of the month.

text for class

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