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**MUSINGS ON THE EVANGELIZING
MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN A
PLURALISTIC WORLD: RAHNER,
VATICAN II, AND THE ROLE OF THE
LAITY**

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Abstract

In this short article, the author looks at the post-Vatican II evangelizing mission of the Church in light of its transition to a global Church. The need for dialogue and openness to the Spirit are raised as the Church continues to develop ways to speak of its mission to “go out to all the world and tell the Good News” and to enter into dialogue with other religions. The indispensable role of the laity is also considered, though not in depth.

Rahner’s contribution to this discussion though basically limited to volume 20 of *Theological Investigations* is significant. Rahner’s understanding of modern humanity and his ability to address the necessity of holding questions of ambiguity in tension give a way forward for evangelization and dialogue with other religions for the 21st century.

Keywords: Evangelization, Global Church, Pluralism, Dialogue, Laity

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Introduction

The Church, 'like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God,' announcing the cross and death of the Lord until he comes. But by the power of the risen Lord it is given strength to overcome, in patience and in love, its sorrows and its difficulties, both those that are from within and those that are without, so that it may reveal in the world, faithfully, although with shadows, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it shall be manifested in full light (LG, 80).

These words end the first chapter of the Vatican II Document, *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*. Within this quote, the mission of the Church which has not changed since its foundation is repeated. This mission is simply to "announce the cross and death of the Lord until he comes." This mission is the very same one with which the first disciples were entrusted. For almost two thousand years, the core of this mission, salvation in Jesus Christ has not changed. Throughout the centuries, what has changed, however, is "how" the Church carries out this mission. In this paper, I will explore some of Rahner's thoughts about "how" to evangelize, that is, proclaim this good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in light of the implications of the call from the Council Fathers to the Church to embrace its global nature and to enter into dialogue with other religions.

Rahner, loyal and faithful son of the Church, in many of his theological writings takes up this very critical question of how to proclaim the good news in such a way that the people of the twentieth century will be able to hear and accept it. As Paul Murray notes, "Rahner is correctly viewed as a profoundly pastoral theologian, concerned to put theology seriously in service of the Kingdom in the world."¹

Rahner's keen pastoral instinct is particularly visible in his writings about the implementation and significance of the documents of Vatican II. As Rahner himself states,

Theology as a reflection on Christian revelation... exists to serve the Church and its assignment of preaching, preaching which must as well as possible meet the understanding of people of today. Since the context of preaching today is different from earlier times, theology's role has both changed and remained the same... particularly in that the Church in the course of this century has become a world-Church.²

¹Paul D. Murray, "The Lasting Significance of Karl Rahner for Contemporary Catholic Theology," *Louvain Studies* 29, 1-2 (2004) 23.

²Thomas F. O'Meara, "Karl Rahner: Some Audiences and Sources for his Theology," *Communio* 18 (Sum 1991) 250.

In chapter twenty of *Theological Investigations*, Rahner writes about some of the changes that Vatican II brought to the Church and what they might mean for the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Vatican II: Transition to a world-Church

Rahner in his article entitled *Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council* notes almost immediately that “the Second Vatican Council is the beginning of a tentative approach by the Church to the discovery and official realization of itself as *world-Church*.”³ Although Rahner points out that the potential for the Church to be a world-Church was always there, it was not until Vatican II that this potentiality became an actuality. Because of the missionary efforts of the Catholic Church, there was always an impetus for the Church to be world-wide. However, the key question was the “how” of being world-wide. Did “world-wide” mean imposing the faith on different cultures in the world or did it mean offering the faith to the different cultures of the world and allowing it to be assimilated? Rahner believed that from the sixteenth century to pre-Vatican II days, the attitude of the Church was that of “exporting to the whole world a European religion along with the other elements of this supposedly superior culture and civilization, and not really attempting to change the commodity.”⁴ With Vatican II, however, this method began to change albeit slowly.

The first change that occurred was the participation of native bishops from these former missionary lands at the Second Vatican Council. No longer were North American or European bishops the mouthpiece for these other cultures. Now, their own representation was able to be present and exercise its influence on the Church. Although as Rahner correctly notes, “the actualization of the Church’s nature as world-Church was manifested at the Council only in a very rudimentary way and hesitatingly,”⁵ no one can deny that the critical first steps of movement in such a direction were there.

Rahner observes that the documents of Vatican II have nuances which can be seen as the Church is trying to take some steps toward embracing itself as a global Church. In *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)* the Council Fathers make provisions for the use of the vernacular in liturgical services. Heretofore, the

³Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” in *Theological Investigations XX*, New York: Crossroads, 1981, 78.

⁴Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” 78.

⁵Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” 79.

Church had used Latin, which as Rahner states, was “the common standard language of educated people, was the language for liturgy in the western world, but clearly could not be the language of a world-Church.”⁶ Rahner sees this seemingly small change in the liturgical practice of the Church as having monumental significance:

The victory of the vernacular languages in the Church’s liturgy is a clear and urgent signal of the coming-to-be of a world-Church, with its particular churches each existing autarchically in its own cultural group, rooted in that culture and no longer exported from Europe. It is of course also the signal of all the new problems of a world-Church whose non-European particular churches — despite their bonds with Rome — can no longer be governed by Europe and the European mentality.⁷

What the Council Fathers wrote in LG, 80 about the Church “pressing forward... in its sorrows and its difficulties in patience and in love,” Rahner echoes by acknowledging the problems as well as the opportunities that the use of the vernacular in the life and liturgy of the Church might bring to the Church both locally and universally.

One such “problem” or “opportunity” (depending upon one’s view) is that now the liturgy could be understood by all, not just the educated who had studied Latin. With the use of the vernacular, the laity were no longer passive listeners, but active participants. The laity began to understand that not just the ordained, but all the baptized had roles and responsibilities as members of the Church.

In the document the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, the Church (lay and ordained) “became expressly aware of its responsibility for the future history of mankind.” This “new” awareness made it impossible for the Church to continue to think of itself only in terms of being European if it is to be concerned about the future history of all of humanity. Rahner notes that the Church’s awareness of its responsibility for all of humanity results in the Constitution “revealing the presence of the Third World as part of the Church.”⁸ This acknowledgment of the Third World as part of the Church emphasizes that the Church is no longer able to view herself as merely a European Church. Further, the Church had to assume responsibility for assisting its brothers and sisters in these poverty stricken countries.

In addition to the changes that the Church needed to make within herself to reach out to Catholics worldwide, the Council Fathers also

⁶Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” 80-81.

⁷Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” 81.

⁸Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” 81.

called the Church to look at its relationships, or lack thereof, to people of other religious faiths. In both *Gaudium et Spes* as well as the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem)*, the Council Fathers speak of the “indispensable role of the laity in the mission of the Church” (AA, 1). Later in AA, 6, the Council Fathers state that the laity should look for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed to non-believers with a view of leading them to faith. The role of the laity is of paramount importance in developing the Church’s relationship with other religions.

In the article on the “Basic Theological Interpretation of Vatican II,” Rahner notes that in the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)* and *Declaration on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae)*, “at least in a rudimentary way, the Church in its teaching began to act as a world-Church.”⁹ These two declarations concerning the Church’s relationship with those who do not embrace the Catholic faith signal a change in the Church in its relation to the world:

1. The Church acknowledges that it is not the only faith operative in the world and 2. The Church, for the sake of the future of humanity, realizes she must interact and find ways to work with those who may not embrace the same beliefs that she does.

These “rudimentary” changes expressed in the Vatican II documents emphasize that there is a “transition from the western Church to the world-Church (occurring which is) similar in character to the transition which occurred for the first and only time when the Church ceased to be the Church of the Jews and became the Church of the Gentiles.”¹⁰

Although this transition to a “world-Church” is being called for in the documents of Vatican II, John Honner in his article, “Speaking in New Tongues: Karl Rahner’s Writings from the Grave,” notes that “the European church must change if it is to become a world-church. The key word is plurality. A world-wide unity of faith can never entail a uniformity of faith.”¹¹ Dealing with this plurality that has emerged since Vatican II has not been easy or readily accepted.

Rahner understood that only by embracing plurality would the Church be able to make this critical transition. Rahner knew that the

⁹Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” 82.

¹⁰Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” 85.

¹¹John Honner, “Speaking in New Tongues: Karl Rahner’s Writings from the Grave,” *Pacifica* 11 (February 1998) 69.

“world-wide unity of faith” had to be maintained all the while not insisting upon “uniformity of faith.” Richard Lennan sums up Rahner’s analysis of this tenuous situation in the following words:

In dealing with the Church’s existence in history, Rahner was guided by one general principle: ‘The Church cannot choose the situation in which it lives. The situation is given in which it lives.’ Fully reconcilable with this principle are the two convictions which were reflected in his analysis of the Church’s situation in the twentieth century: first, his refusal to be pessimistic about the change from the ‘Christian West’ to the diaspora; secondly, his commitment both to identifying the challenges which the modern era posed for the Church and to formulating creative responses to those challenges, responses which called for changes in the Church’s law, structures, and practices. What was needed was a new openness, a willingness to compromise, and a willingness to take risks in making changes, even when it could not be known with certainty whether such changes were fully reconcilable with tradition.¹²

The Council Fathers set the stage for such openness by calling the Church to embrace the world and by empowering the laity to assume their rightful role as evangelizers for the Church.

The Mission of the Local Church and Evangelization

Michael Amaladoss, SJ in an article written in 1986 entitled “Dialogue and Mission: Conflict or Convergence?” suggests that “we are actually living in a process that could be called a paradigm shift.”¹³ He goes on to define what is happening as follows:

In science, a paradigm is a framework of meaning that makes sense of a body of data perceived as a system. New data brought in by new discoveries tend to be interpreted and integrated into the existing framework. Then comes a stage when some incoming data cannot be so integrated. Under this challenge the framework itself undergoes a transformation. This is a paradigm shift.¹⁴

Amaladoss continues by explaining that such changes particularly that of viewing other religions from a positive vantage point are “making us look in a new way at Christ, at the church, at salvation and at mission.”

This “looking a new way at Christ” and this “paradigm shift” are a result of the deliberations of Vatican II. Recall what the first lines of

¹²Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002, 135.

¹³Michael Amaladoss, “Dialogue and Mission: Conflict or Convergence?” *International Review of Mission* 75 (1986) 223.

¹⁴Michael Amaladoss, “Dialogue and Mission: Conflict or Convergence?”

Gaudium et Spes say, "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ." The Council Fathers urged the Church to embrace the world, its cultures, and languages. But how? William Clark, SJ articulates a way forward:

the church's mission to the world in the new millennium will require a careful balance of global vision and local sensitivity. Karl Rahner's ecclesiology supplies useful tools for this balance, in that it moves toward an appreciation of the inherent authority and dignity of the local church community, understood as an interpersonal network within the broader church.¹⁵

Ironically, as the Church embraces a "global vision," the local community increases rather than decreases in importance as it is in the local community of faith that the life of the Church is lived out. The impact of the changes such as, the use of the vernacular in the liturgy and the appointment of native priests to the episcopacy, signalled an embrace of the cultures of the world and a "global vision" as well as an acknowledgment of the importance of the local church in the life of the faithful.

Since Rahner's "basic assumption of radical human openness to grace, understood as God's self-communication¹⁶ results in 'a theology characterized by its emphasis on identifying God as central to all human experience,'" ¹⁷ one can understand that the importance of the local church as it is where the life of faith begins with a response to this grace and is nurtured and nourished. It is the local church which mediates this grace via the sacraments and is "an incarnational sign of God's presence in the concrete world."¹⁸ Clark explains the significance of the local church:

The local community is where the authoritative voice of the church will be most audible to the great bulk of humanity. Here — where real person-to-person relationships exist, where bonds of personal love can be experienced first hand, where the concrete demands of justice in the world can be recognized and engaged — the church's own sacrament of

¹⁵William Clark, "The Authority of Local Church Communities: Perspectives from the Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner," *Philosophy and Theology* 13, 2 (2001) 399.

¹⁶William Clark, "The Authority of Local Church Communities," 401, citing Karl Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," *Theological Investigations* 1:312-313.

¹⁷Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1997, 7.

¹⁸William Clark, "The Authority of Local Church Communities," 403.

Christ's presence is celebrated, and both the possibility and the struggle of genuine community are 'realized' in the truest sense.¹⁹

The local church is critical for the mission of the church because it is where people live their faith and thereby, becomes a catalyst for evangelization.

As Clark states,

It is through the concrete realities of its local communities that the church catholic is real and unavoidable part of the world to which it witnesses. These communities... make possible the church's very mission. Through the communities and because of their multiplicity, the catholic church offers a stunning witness of continuity and unity amidst the change and diversity which the whole human world also experiences.²⁰

So, it is in and through the local communities that the Church is experienced as "the real, permanent, and ever valid presence of God in the world."²¹ For Rahner, the importance of the local Church cannot be overstated for both the individual's experience of God as well as for the propagating of the faith to those who have not yet heard the gospel, the good news. Again, the role of the laity in the local church particularly, in the area of evangelization cannot be overstated.

Invariably, the next question that arises is that of "the compatibility of two theological data: the necessity of the Church as a means of salvation, and the possibility of salvation for someone outside the Church."²² This question, though rift with tension, is critical to the discussion of missionary endeavours because on the one hand, is the stance that God desires the salvation for all and on the other, is the concern about the accommodation of beliefs. For Rahner, there is another way, namely, finding ways for the religions of the world to work together for something they all hold in common, the unity of mankind.

"Ecumenism for Rahner was always an aspect of the Church's obligation to proclaim Christ to the world."²³ Furthermore, Rahner believed that the documents of Vatican II called for such working together when the Council Fathers wrote in *Gaudium et Spes* of the

¹⁹William Clark, "The Authority of Local Church Communities," 408.

²⁰William Clark, "The Authority of Local Church Communities," 421.

²¹Leo J. O'Donovan, ed., "A Changing Ecclesiology in a Changing Church: A Symposium on Development in the Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner," *Theological Studies* 38 (December 1977) 742.

²²Leo J. O'Donovan, ed., "A Changing Ecclesiology in a Changing Church," 743.

²³Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 256.

Church's "responsibility for the future history of mankind" and when the Council Fathers acknowledged in the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* and *Declaration on Religious Freedom* that there were roles for all religions of the world to work together on this endeavour of uniting humanity. As Michael Amaladoss summarizes in his article on "Dialogue and Mission": "whatever may be their absolute faith positions, the different religions can and do find a common perspective in the area of human and religious values."²⁴

It is not a question of Rahner too readily "accepting the religious value of non-Catholic churches" for which he has been criticized. It is, however, as Lennan notes that Rahner "believed that the future well-being of that faith depended upon a united witness in a pluralist world." Lennan also observes that Rahner, thereby, was attempting to "offer a scheme for developing that tradition in light of contemporary conditions."²⁵ This "how" of adopting and adapting new ways of being about the mission of the Church whose faith is "ever ancient, ever new" requires a reliance on the Spirit of God. It is only in and through openness toward and reliance upon the Spirit that the problems, difficulties, and tensions inherent in working with other religions and in such pluralities will be able to be overcome.

The Role of the Spirit

The mission of the Church, that is, the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ, has remained constant since its beginnings over two thousand years ago. The presence of difficulties and tensions in proclaiming this message has also been constant. The gift of the Spirit, although at times ignored by the Church, has also been a constant. So, in many ways the content of the address that Rahner gave just prior to the opening of Vatican II is calling attention to a perennial problem. In "Do Not Stifle the Spirit," Rahner writes:

The Church knows as part of her conscious faith that the Spirit too actually belongs to her, that he is indispensable to her. She teaches explicitly that it is not only her official organization, institutions, traditions, the rules of life which are permanent and immutable – in short that which is planned, that which is foreseen that belong to her as the Church of God. The Church knows that the element of the unexpected and incalculable in her own history does not consist solely in the incomprehensibility of the circumstances to which she is subjected ab

²⁴Michael Amaladoss, "Dialogue and Mission," 237.

²⁵Michael Amaladoss, "Dialogue and Mission," 256-257.

externo, circumstances which she controls by applying her own internal and immutable principles to them. The Church knows that the Spirit of God has been projected into her innermost nature, the living Spirit still actively present and at work in the here and now. The activity of the Spirit, therefore, can never find adequate expression simply in the forms of what we call the Church's official life, her principles, her sacramental system and teaching. These can never be the sole or exclusive forms in which the Spirit has, so to say, made himself available to the Church.²⁶

In this address, Rahner tries to walk a tightrope between the Spirit at work in the institutional Church and the Spirit also at work in other places and people. Rahner desperately wants to underscore that the Spirit cannot be squelched, cannot be controlled.

The Spirit will blow where and how she will; simultaneously, not every movement that might claim to be of the Spirit can be authenticated as just that. It is critical to be able to discern the true Spirit from false ones.

This discernment of what is truly the Spirit of God is particularly important as the Church embraces the documents of Vatican II because "the twofold teaching about the universality of salvation and the necessity of the Church and baptism express a tension at the heart of the Church's understanding of itself and its mission."²⁷ If, on one hand, God desires salvation for all and on the other hand, the Church teaches the necessity of baptism for salvation, then the question remains, are those not baptized saved? In addition, if as Rahner writes, "genuine human transcendence in love is only possible because of the gracious self-communication of God in the Spirit,"²⁸ then as Rahner deduces, "all religious traditions potentially express truth about God's self-communication in the Spirit."²⁹ This deduction opens up many questions. Primarily, does this deduction mean that "all religious traditions express equally valid interpretations of divine self-revelation?"³⁰ According to Randy Sachs, Rahner answers such objections in the following manner:

This brings us to the question of criteria. How does one distinguish a correct interpretation from a false one? Rahner clearly argues for the

²⁶Karl Rahner, "Do not Stifle the Spirit," in *Theological Investigations* VII, New York: Herder and Herder, 1971, 74-75.

²⁷ John Randall Sachs, "'Do not Stifle the Spirit!': Karl Rahner, the Legacy of Vatican II, and the Urgency for Theology Today," in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 51 (1996) 19.

²⁸John Randall Sachs, "'Do not Stifle the Spirit!,'" 22.

²⁹John Randall Sachs, "'Do not Stifle the Spirit!,'" 23.

³⁰John Randall Sachs, "'Do not Stifle the Spirit!,'" 23.

normativity and absoluteness of Christianity but offers a new interpretation of how the Christ even is the 'cause' of the salvation of all the world in the Spirit. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ are seen as the historical event in which God's universal, gracious self-communication in the Spirit and its acceptance have become irreversibly and victoriously manifest in history. The 'world is drawn to its spiritual fulfillment by the Spirit of God, who directs the whole history of the world in all its length and breadth toward its proper goal.'³¹

Thus, the absoluteness of Christ and of Christianity have been reinterpreted in an inclusivistic way, precisely in view of the universal presence and action of the Spirit.³²

Rahner's "reinterpretation of the absoluteness of Christ and Christianity" allows an openness to dialogue with other Christian and non-Christian religions. Such openness does not mean mere accommodation to other religious beliefs, but it does mean a "humble recognition of the presence of the Spirit in the divided Churches."³³

This type of humble recognition is what the Council Fathers called for. Although many of Rahner's critics viewed such a "recognition of the presence of the Spirit" as denial of the belief that "this church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him" (LG, 8), this was not the case.

Rahner was not trying to "water down the faith" to accommodate other religions; rather, he was trying to implement what John XXIII called for when he convoked the Second Vatican Council, namely, to find ways for the faith to be alive and active in the current circumstances of our world. Rahner was trying to read the signs of the times and search for ways in which the faith could make a response to those signs, a response that would engage modern men and women. As Richard Lennan writes, "Rahner regarded Vatican II's openness to the modern world as the most important aspect of the Council." Lennan also notes that Rahner realized that, "that such an openness required that the Church not only be aware of the contours of that world, but also develop appropriate responses to it."³⁴

The Council Fathers in their deliberations called the Church to find ways to evangelize and to be in dialogue with other world religions.

³¹John Randall Sachs, "Do not Stifle the Spirit!," 24.

³²John Randall Sachs, "Do not Stifle the Spirit!," 25.

³³John Randall Sachs, "Do not Stifle the Spirit!," 27.

³⁴Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 210.

The ways in which the Church has responded to these two calls continues to necessitate reflection upon the Church's internal life of faith as well as her external life of faith. For Rahner, evangelization and ecumenism should never be viewed in opposition to each other or in competition with each other. Rather, both of these areas of the life of the Church needed and continue to need development in light of the pluralism in which the Church now finds herself.

As Lennan aptly summarizes:

While Rahner took seriously the obstacles to belief created by pluralism, he none the less resisted the urge to tailor the Church after a pattern which might have offered an easier route to popularity. Instead, he insisted that it was the Church's faithfulness to its own fundamentals that was the key to its future. At the same time, however, his desire to see the message of the Church clearly proclaimed meant that he gave short shrift to those in the Church who placed obstacles in the path of such clarity. Hence his emphasis on the need for dialogue between the magisterium and theologians, and his attacks on the lack of openness of those in authority. Indeed, it was openness which Rahner sought more than anything else.³⁵

Rahner sought and insisted that the Church be open to dialogue on many levels internally as well as externally, while never compromising the faith. The Council Fathers called the Church to the same in the documents of Vatican II. Neither Rahner nor the Council Fathers pretended that the plurality that the Church was grappling with on many levels, internally as well as externally, was easy. Being open to the Spirit is never easy. As Rahner observed "it was variety, not uniformity, which manifested the Church's nature as the sacrament of the unfathomable mystery of God. Similarly, it was variety, not uniformity, which affirmed that the Spirit's movement in the Church was also a mystery."³⁶

Although Rahner saw the need for the Church to have an openness to plurality, he was keenly aware that at times such plurality of interpretation of the Church and her mission might necessitate correction and/or re-evaluation. For Rahner, the key was openness. On the one hand, openness to new, creative ways for the Church to be about her mission in the world as a global Church and on the other hand, openness to the authority of the magisterium whose role is to preserve the faith from age to age.

³⁵Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 211.

³⁶Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, 216.

There is no doubt that although the Church continues to be about the same mission that was entrusted to her over two thousand years ago, namely, salvation in Jesus Christ, much has changed in the world in which she is about this mission. Since Vatican II as Rahner pointed out so clearly, the Church has become a global Church inherent with many problems as well as opportunities. Although there might not be many clear-cut answers to the questions that being a global Church poses and will pose, one thing is clear — that “the question concerning the nature and goal of the Church’s mission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ explicitly in the new context of the post Vatican II universalism remains one of the most critical issues facing theology today.”³⁷

Indeed, Karl Rahner would agree that in every age there has been nor ever will be more important work for the Church to be about than to find ways to preach the gospel so that the people in its midst can hear God’s gracious message of love and freely respond to it. The role of the laity in this important work of evangelization is not only a non-negotiable aspect of their baptismal call, but also indispensable in a global world wherein the Church’s message is so often muted amidst the competing interests and concerns that vie for immediate attention.

³⁷John Randall Sachs, “Do not Stifle the Spirit!,” 34.