**Welcome address for the Karl Rahner Society**

Karl Rahner remains one of the most outstanding theologians of the previous century – without underrating the works of the great French theologians such as Henri de Lubac SJ, Yves Congar OP et al or the Anglophone theologians such as Bernard Lonergan SJ.

One of our greatest tasks is to preserve this heritage. We are grateful – as fellow countrymen, friends and pupils of Karl Rahner – that the Karl Rahner Society, founded in 1991, has dedicated itself to this task in the United States.

The database, which meanwhile encompasses more than 4,800 titles of secondary literature on the works of Karl Rahner (dspace.ub.uni-freiburg.de/handle/25/2), demonstrates the intensity and diversity of research carried out on his work in the United States. In addition to the information found on the homepage of the Society (karlrahnersociety.com), the regular publications by the Karl Rahner Society in the journal Philosophy and Theology allow us to follow these texts and discussions in Germany as well.

In Germany we strive to provide and maintain the accessibility of the whole spectrum of Rahner’s works. From the Complete Works of Karl Rahner begun in 1995 by the Herder publishing house, 37 volumes have so far been published. Three further volumes, including a comprehensive register, are currently being prepared. The fifth volume of a French parallel edition by Éditions du Cerf will be published in the coming weeks.

Our mutual endeavours in various languages are not defunct, but concern the great tradition of our and all Christian churches, that Rahner dealt with and made fruitful in his works. They encompass the Holy Scriptures, the theology of the Church Fathers, the great medieval theologians, the lesser known Baroque works as well as the much vilified neo-scholastic theology. His great ecclesiastic commitment, culminating in the Second Vatican Council forms a major part of his work. His contributions to topical developments in the church remain unforgotten. Pope Francis has shifted our focus to Latin-American liberation theology and efforts by Latin Americans to create a Church for the poor, which Rahner supported in the later years of his life. A great deal more could be said about the topicality of this great theologian.

There is a good and concise summary of this on your homepage: “His role as a theological expert at the Second Vatican Council, his 1651 publications (4744 counting reprints and translations), his involvement in international theological debate, his impact on students who attended his classes, and his positive reception by Protestant as well as Catholic thinkers, all contributed to his influence on theology today.“

And so I would like to warmly welcome the Karl Rahner Society to their convention in the year 2016 and express my solidarity with its efforts. May it be fruitful for Catholic theology in the United States, for the theology of all Christian Churches, as well as for dialogue, that must transcend denominational and religious borders, to enable us to develop an appropriate Christian and human contribution for the future.

Karl Cardinal Lehmann

Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Mainz

Chairman of the Karl Rahner Society Curatorship