**Karl Rahner Consultation**

“Rahner and Ecumenism Today: Is Unity Still ‘An Actual Possibility’?”

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**Rahner and Ecumenism Today: Is Unity Still “An Actual Possibility”?**

Rahner’s achievements in theology were – and are! – so various and influential that his ecumenical passion is often forgotten or even overlooked altogether. Yet, at the end of his life, he was still arguing that Church leaders bore serious responsibilities here: Christianity divided was too weak to confront contemporary secularism effectively. He would have welcomed our 2014 convention’s theme, although he also would have added, “It’s about time!”

In 1985, *Unity of the Churches. An Actual Possibility*, co-authored with Fries, appeared in English. They maintain that visible Christian unity is realizable *today*. Each of their theses shows how a major obstacle to unity, such as the papacy and ordained ministry, need not be such, provided that it be understood in new but still faithful and orthodox ways.

*Unity* garnered attention,[[1]](#footnote-1) but Rahner’s death and Cardinal Ratzinger’s hostility[[2]](#footnote-2) pushed it off the ecumenical radar. Since then, new obstacles have arisen; e.g., disputes over moral issues. Also, ecumenism has been largely Eurocentric; today’s Christianity is not.

Yet we hypothesize that Rahner still has much to teach us about the ways and means to the visible unity of the Church. So each panelist will briefly (10-12 minutes) address the question, “what, if anything, does Rahner still have to contribute to the cause of Church unity?” Discussion will follow.

1. Rahner, Karl and Fries, Heinrich. *Einigung der Kirchen – reale Möglichkeit*. Mit einter Bilanz ‘Zustimmung und Kritik’ von Heinrich Fries. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1985. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Nilson, Jon. *Nothing Beyond the Necessary. Roman Catholicism and the Ecumenical Future*. New York: Paulist, 1995. 39-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)