**Response to Karl Rahner’s “The Relation between Theology and Popular Religion”**

1. **U.S. Latino/a Popular Catholicism: a particular expression of Popular Catholicism**
   * + - The Christianity brought to Latin America by religious missionaries and common Spanish folk was medieval, pre-Tridentine, and strongly influenced by the patristic notion of *traditio.*
       - Medieval Spanish *traditio*, very much still present in the faith expressions of Latinos today, not only involved a set of Christian beliefs and doctrines, but also liturgical and sacramental practices that evince an attraction toward saints, shrines, relics, miracles and religious story telling.
       - This popular form of Catholicism never underwent the systematic standardization brought about by the Council of Trent elsewhere in the Catholic world.
       - It often incorporated religious symbols from the sacred world of the conquered Amerindians and, later, the enslaved Africans.
       - Latino/a theologians define Popular Religiosity as: the “set of experiences, beliefs, and rituals which ecclesially and socially peripheral groups create and develop in their search for an access to God and salvation.” (O. Espín and S. García, “Lilies of the Field: A Hispanic Theology of Providence and Human Responsibility,” *Proceedings of CTSA* 44 (1989) 73)
2. **Nuances to Karl Rahner**

“People” vs. “marginalized people”

* + - For Rahner the sociological term “people” = people in general
    - For U.S. Latino/a theologians the term “popular” does not mean “widespread,” well-liked or just the “people,” but those who are marginalized, impoverished. The term has a dialectical connotation.

“In” the Church vs. at the “margins” of the Church

* + - Rahner speaks of popular religion as emerging from the practice of people *in* the Church
    - Latino/a theologians stress the marginal character of popular religion.
    - Since marginalized people had little access to the training and the doctrinal teaching of theologians and the clergy, they fashion alternative paths to adapt the official religion to their particular needs and circumstances.
    - Thus, popular religion is both parallel to the ‘official’ doctrinal and liturgical norm set up and controlled by the clergy, and somehow still connected to the normative version of the religion.

1. **In Convergence with Rahner:**

Christian Theology is informed by Christian praxis

* + - U.S. Latino theologian understand popular devotional practices as having a revelatory dimension. Thus, like Rahner, they have come to understand the praxis of popular religion as an essential *locus theologicus* for their theology.
    - “Every devotional practice in *religiosidad popular* has a certain amount of symbolism: significant event, gesture, object, place and the like… these symbols have a revelatory dimension.” (García “A Hispanic Approach to Trinitarian Theology,” 116).
    - Latino/a theologians advance a robust interpretation of praxis that incorporates: “affective/ aesthetic imagination, the rational intellect, and ethical-political commitments.” (Goizueta, 264).

` Popular religion and the *sensus fidelium*

* + - In so far as Popular Catholicism expresses the *living witness of the faith* of the Latino people, it offers a privileged locus for understanding Latino’s *sensus fidelium*.
    - Although Popular Catholicism is not always commensurable with the people’s *sensus fidelium*, it is the authentic bearer of this sense or intuition in the faith of the people.