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***Michael W. Higgins***

Sacred Heart University's Michael W. Higgins, vice president of Mission and Catholic Identity, has been elected as the next president of the International Thomas Merton Society (ITMS).

Higgins will lead the organization over the course of a two-year term. Founded in 1987, ITMS works to promote a greater awareness of the life and writings of Thomas Merton, who was a Trappist monk, social activist and student of comparative religion. He wrote over 50 books examining spirituality, social justice and pacifism, and his most famous volume, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, was listed in National Review's 100 best non-fiction books of the 20th century. Merton was also a supporter of interfaith understanding whose strong conviction led to dialogues with Asian spiritual leaders including Thai Buddhists, Vietnamese monks and even the Dalai Lama.

"Merton was a visionary who explored the world with his expansive intellect, spiritual imagination and limitless curiosity and who sought the wisdom of others in order to see the Catholic faith in a global context. Now, it is my duty to help the Thomas Merton Society continue its progress in his accomplished footsteps," Higgins says.

Judging by his own body of work, Higgins won't have trouble with his mission. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles on Merton as well as several books including the award-winning *Heretic Blood: The Spiritual Geography of Thomas Merton*, *Thomas Merton: Pilgrim in Process*, *Thomas Merton: Faithful Visionary* and *The Unquiet Monk: Thomas Merton's Questing Faith*. Some of these have been translated into French, Italian and German. He has also researched, written and narrated several radio and television broadcasts on Merton.

Before joining Sacred Heart University in 2010, he served as president and vice chancellor of several universities in Canada, including St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo, Ontario. He has also held numerous

appointments at other Canadian colleges and universities. A writer and journalist as well as an educator, Higgins is a regular contributor to *Commonweal* magazine. In addition, he was the chief advisor for the widely acclaimed TV series, *Sir Peter Ustinov's Inside the Vatican*. Higgins still publishes regularly, and his observations on the current state of the Catholic intellectual tradition can be found on his blog, Pontifex Minimus.

For more information on the International Thomas Merton Society, visit [www.merton.org](http://www.merton.org).