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Michael W. Higgins receives his Louie Award from Kathleen Deignan, CND, during the Merton Conference.

News Story: June 21, 2013

It was an embarrassment of riches recently for Sacred Heart University's Michael W. Higgins, vice president for Mission and Catholic Identity, when he received two prestigious honors in less than a week – the International Thomas Merton Society's Louie Award for International Contributions and the New York Festivals International Radio Competition's Gold Medal.

The Louie Award, one of three awarded biannually, honors the name that Thomas Merton took for religious purposes – that of Saint Louis de France (King Louis IX). The purpose of the Louie awards is to recognize those involved in research, scholarship and administration related to Thomas Merton, Higgins said. The awards are presented at the General Meeting of the Society.

Higgins was on his home turf when the award was announced as the Thirteenth General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society took place at Sacred Heart University June 12-16. The other two winners were Anne McCormick, a distinguished New York-based editor and publisher, for her publications and noted artist Donna Kristoff for her work with the Society.

Higgins said he was "surprised" to receive the award. He has published extensively on Merton, including writing the award-winning book, *Heretic Blood: The Spiritual Geography of Thomas Merton*, and co-editing *Thomas Merton: Pilgrim in Process*. He has also written dozens of articles and columns, produced documentaries and organized conferences.

"It was very gratifying, because you have a personal sense that people appreciate the work you have done, which is affirming. This year was the icing on the cake, because we were the host of the conference and celebrating Sacred Heart's 50th anniversary. I am happy to share the Louie with the dedicated Sacred Heart team that put the conference together," he said.

Higgins was also elected vice president of the Society and will be working on commemorating the 100th anniversary of Thomas Merton's birth, which will be celebrated at the Fourteenth General Meeting of the Society in Louisville, Ky., in two years.

Higgins was equally gratified to learn that his radio series, *Genius Born of Anguish: The Life and Legacy of Henri Nouwen*, was the Gold Medal winner for the World's Best Radio Programs in the

Documentary/Religious Program category. The series was produced by Bernie Lucht and Kevin Burns and written and presented by Higgins. It aired earlier this year on CBC Radio 1 and Sirius Satellite Channel 159. It can be heard at [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca).

“This is a wonderful validation of the documentary approach to religious faith that understands it as constitutive of human meaning,” Higgins said. “So often the efforts to explore the religious sensibility are reduced to creedal, institutional and authority-specific issues. *Genius Born of Anguish*, by contrast, portrays the personal and existential aching into holiness of a complex and compelling figure more attuned to the tortured genius of a van Gogh and Kierkegaard than a conventional believer. We are honored by this prestigious recognition.”