

## Michael W. Higgins

President and Vice-Chancellor  
St. Thomas University  
Fredericton, New Brunswick



Michael William Higgins was born in Toronto on October 24, 1948 where he received his primary school education at St. Thomas Aquinas School and his secondary school education at Vaughan Road Collegiate Institute. He then studied at St. Augustine's College of Philosophy, University of Ottawa and completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Philosophy (*magna cum laude*) at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia in 1970. He pursued graduate studies in English at York University, where he was mentored by the distinguished poet-scholar Eli Mandel, receiving his Masters degree in 1971 and his Doctoral degree in 1979. In addition, he did a Bachelor of Education degree (Theatre Arts specialization) at the University of Toronto in 1973 and graduate studies in Theology on Newman under Professor James M. Cameron at the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto.

From 1973 to 1982 Higgins taught English at St. Michael's College School in Toronto. During this period he also taught religious studies and theology courses at St. Paul's University in Ottawa, Erindale College in Mississauga, and St. Michael's College. Higgins arrived at St. Jerome's in 1982 and served the university in numerous capacities: Director of the St. Jerome's Centre for Catholic Experience; Director of the Institute for Studies in Theological Renewal; Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, St. Jerome's University; Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Waterloo; Associate Dean, Vice-President and Academic Dean, as President and Vice-Chancellor. He was a professor of English and religious studies and editor of SJU's *Grail: An Ecumenical Journal* for twelve of its fourteen years. During this period the journal garnered some sixty awards for design, content, and general excellence. On July 1, 2006, Dr. Higgins was appointed as the eleventh President and Vice-Chancellor of St. Thomas University where he is cross-listed as a faculty member in the Department of English and in the Department of Religious Studies.

Along with SJU colleague Douglas R. Letson, Higgins co-edited and co-authored numerous books: *Portraits of Canadian Catholicism*, *Women and the Church: a Sourcebook*, *My Father's Business: a Biography of Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter*, *The Jesuit Mystique*, and *Soundings: Conversations about Catholicism*, and *Power and Peril: The Catholic Church at the Crossroads*. Dr. Higgins has also co-written a work with Donald Grayston, as well as editing and co-editing other books. His work, *The Muted Voice: Religion and the Media*, based on his Seton Lectures delivered at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, is used as both as a textbook and resource in graduate and undergraduate courses across Canada. His recent award-winning biography and study, *Heretic Blood: The Spiritual Geography of Thomas Merton*, appeared in 1998 in Canada, with a US edition in 1999 and French and Italian editions in 2000. *Stalking the Holy: In Pursuit of Saint Making*, his most recent book, has been extensively and favourably reviewed in Canada, the United States and England. It was also a CBC *Ideas* series with Producer Kevin Burns and Executive Producer Bernie Lucht. Dr. Higgins has also published articles and reviews in several scholarly peer-reviewed publications, including *The American Benedictine Review*, *Cistercian Studies* *The Merton Annual*, and *Studies in Religion*.

Dr. Higgins has an extensive media record as a columnist, commentator, scriptwriter, narrator, researcher, and consultant dating back to 1978. He was a monthly columnist for *The Toronto Star* from 1986 to 2006. As a radio documentarian for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, he has prepared some fifty one-hour scripts for *Ideas*, *Celebration*, and *Testament* and has been a regular contributor to *Morningside*, *This Morning*, *Sunday Edition*, as well as to CTV's *Canada AM* and to TV Ontario's *Studio 2*. Several of his programmes have been nominated and short-listed for public-broadcasting awards. Dr. Higgins was the chief consultant for John McGreevy's six-hour television series, *Sir Peter Ustinov's Inside the Vatican*, and for John Bailey's film of Ron Hansen's novel, *Mariette in Ecstasy*. He has also served as a consultant for CBC's *Man Alive*.

Dr. Higgins and his wife Krystyna, a professional piano accompanist, liturgical musician and freelance editor, have four children, Rebecca, Andrew, Sarah, and Alexa.