

Media Release

April 16, 2015

Honourary Degrees to be Awarded to Novelist Mark Helprin and Community Leader Eleanor McCloskey

St. Thomas University is awarding honorary degrees to novelist Mark Helprin and community leader Sister Eleanor McCloskey at its spring convocation on May 12.

“We are pleased to celebrate these two distinguished individuals at our convocation. Sister McCloskey is a well-regarded teacher, pastoral caregiver and community activist and Mr. Helprin is a celebrated American novelist and political commentator,” said Dawn Russell, St. Thomas University president and vice-chancellor.

“We provide our students with the enduring benefits of a liberal arts education—critical thinking skills, specific subject knowledge and problem solving capabilities, all vital tools to engage and change society. From this perspective, both honorary degree recipients have personal stories that will be very inspiring to our graduates.”

Helprin has had a distinguished literary career and his books have been translated into more than twenty languages. He is the author of six novels including *Winter's Tale* and *A Soldier of the Great War*, three collections of short stories including *The Pacific and Other Stories*, and three children's books. His stories and essays have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The National Review*, among other publications.

He's been awarded the National Jewish Book Award, the Prix de Rome, the Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award and the Salvatori Prize in the American Founding. He's been called the “last epic novelist” and *Winter's Tale* was cited by *The New York Times Book Review* as among the best twenty-five works of fiction of the last quarter century.

A sister with the Congregation of Notre Dame, McCloskey has been motivated by belief in inclusiveness and equality—this belief inspired her to challenge the boundaries in every community that she has served, whether it's the Church, the university or society. She holds advanced degrees in education and pastoral ministry and was a teacher in the public school system before joining the Faculty of Education and Campus Ministry at St. Thomas University. Her work with the Third Age Centre reflects her goal to accompany seniors in contemporary spirituality, enjoyment of leisure, developing imaginative ideas and constant learning.

She co-wrote *Navigating New Waters*, a resource manual for nurturing and promoting compassionate care in healthcare settings and was a co-organizer of *Sundays at Seven*, a series of discussion groups on faith and societal issues. A breast cancer survivor, she helped establish support groups and organize retreats for other survivors throughout the province.

- 30 -

Media Contact – Jeffrey Carleton at 452-0522 or carleton@stu.ca.