



## **THE JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED THEOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENT**

The person the Catholic Theological Society of America honors this year with the John Courtney Murray Award has made distinctive, even unique, contributions to recent Catholic theology. His work is deeply traditional and creatively original. In honoring him, the Society shows its hope that growth in the depth of our understanding of both the Christian tradition and the reality of God remain possible in our day.

Our awardee was born in Brooklyn, grew up and attended Catholic grade school in Staten Island and Regis High School in Manhattan. He then entered religious life and pursued a B.A. in Philosophy at Fordham University. Following his studies in the Bronx he went half way around the world to teach at St. Xavier's High School in Kathmandu, Nepal, an experience that was the beginning of his deep interest in the encounter between his Christian faith and the religious traditions of south Asia. Returning from Kathmandu, he studied at Weston Jesuit School of Theology, was ordained to the priesthood, and went on to complete his Ph.D. in South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago.

Since then his work in the encounter between Christianity and South Asian religion has made one constructive contribution after another. At Boston College he led the Theology Department's creation of the field now called "comparative theology." It is no exaggeration to say our awardee founded modern comparative theology as a distinct branch of theology. He has mentored numerous students who continue to shape the field. Many universities have welcomed him as visiting professor, including Chicago, Harvard, John Carroll, and Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley. He has been the Academic Director of Oxford University's Centre for Hindu Studies. In Chennai, India, he has taught often at the Satyam Nilayam Center for Philosophical Studies. Harvard University appointed him Parkman Professor of Divinity and Comparative Theology in 2005 and Director of Center for the Study of World Religions in 2010. He has lectured widely in India and throughout the world, recently giving Cambridge University's Teape Lectures in the UK and India on the relationship between Christian and Hindu thought.

He is the author of fourteen books, edited four more, and written over two hundred scholarly articles. A few titles indicate the range of his scholarship. In 1997 the International Society for Hindu Christian Studies judged *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Srivaishnavas of South India* the Best Book of 1994-1996. *Divine Mother, Blessed Mother: Hindu Goddesses and the Virgin Mary* won the 2005 Alpha Sigma Nu Award for Excellence in Theology. *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* has been translated into German, Chinese and Korean. *His Hiding Place Is Darkness: An Exercise in Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics* eloquently sets forth our awardee's vision. Many of his works have been published not only in the U.S. and Europe, but in India as well.

Our awardee has served on the Board of our Society, as well as the Board of the American Academy of Religion. He helped found the comparative theology groups of both of these societies. He is a member of the American Theological Society and was the First President of International Society for Hindu-Christian Studies. He has received several honorary degrees.

Within our awardee's religious community, the Society of Jesus, he has been Coordinator for Interreligious Dialogue. He has written on the encounter of early Jesuits like Robert DeNobili with South Asian traditions and on the approach to interreligious learning of his fellow Jesuit who is now Pope Francis. Our awardee carries on the quest for interreligious understanding launched by early pioneers in this effort like Alessandro Valignano and Matteo Ricci. The person we honor has surely made major contributions both to interreligious understanding and to Christian theology.

The Catholic Theological Society of America is most pleased to confer the John Courtney Murray Award for Distinguished Theological Achievement upon Francis X. Clooney, S.J.

**Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 10, 2017**