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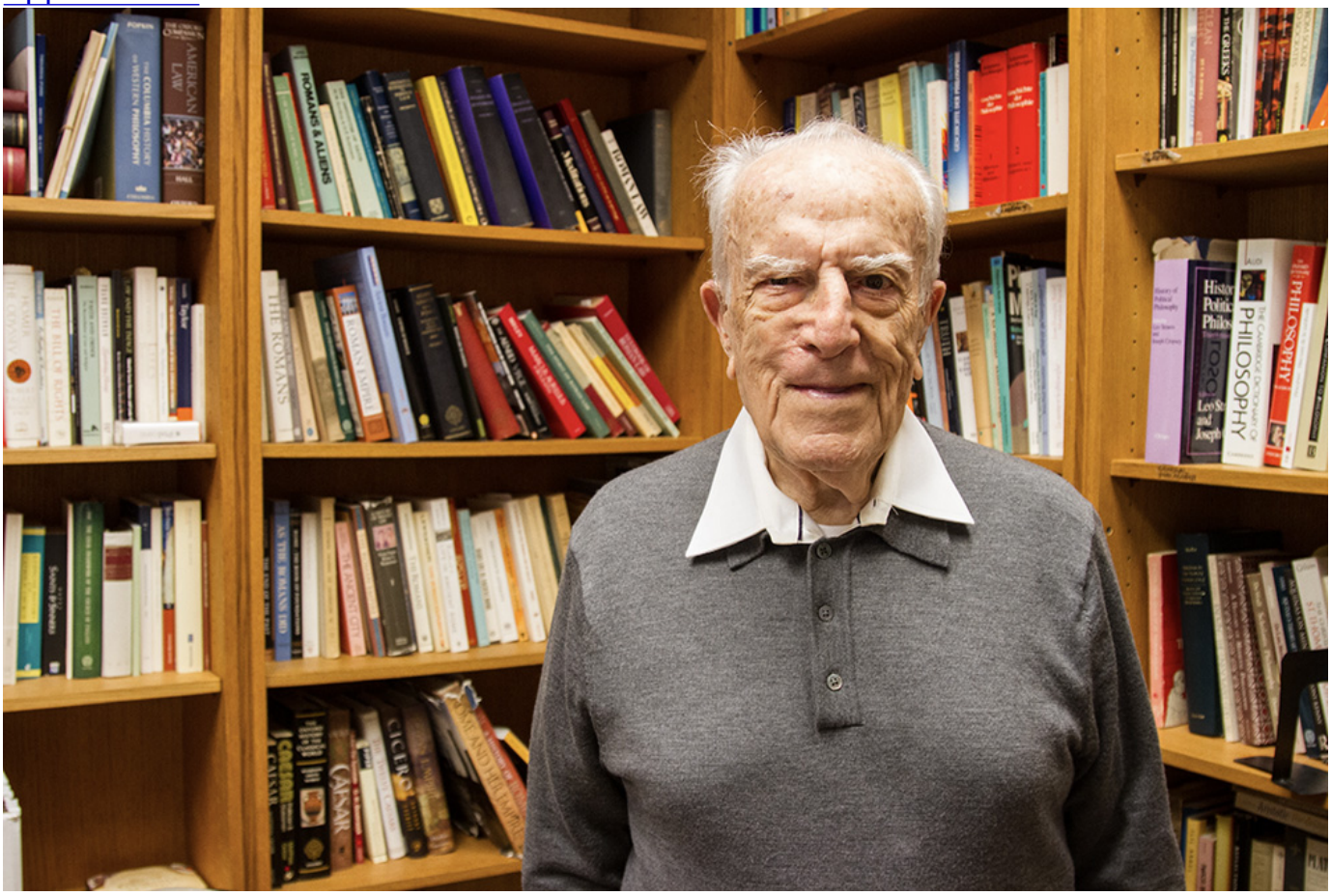

Jesuit Fr. Ladislas Orsy (Courtesy of Georgetown University Law Center)

by William M. Treanor

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The canon lawyer, author and longtime professor Jesuit Fr. Ladislas Orsy died April 3 at the age of 103. He is remembered in the following tribute written by William M. Treanor, dean of Georgetown University Law Center, addressed to the university's law community. It is reprinted with permission.

It is with great sadness that I share the news that our celebrated and beloved Jesuit scholar, canonical theologian, and longtime member of our faculty Fr. Ladislas "Les" Orsy passed away on April 3. He was 103 years old, and he taught here until the age of 99. He was, in every way, a giant, and a truly lovely person, and his legacy is a great one.

He led an extraordinary life. His more than 70-year career includes serving as a bishops' expert adviser at the Second Vatican Council and working on the preparation of the new Code of Canon Law, adopted in 1983.

Orsy, who grew up in Hungary, entered the Society of Jesus in 1943. He was ordained to the priesthood in Louvain, Belgium, in 1951 and came to the United States in 1966. In the meantime, he earned a master's degree in Law at Oxford University and a doctor of canon law at Gregorian University in Rome. He also earned degrees in philosophy and theology in Rome and Leuven, Belgium, allowing him to teach at Catholic universities worldwide.

A world-renowned scholar, he published more than 200 articles and nine books, including *Theology and Canon Law: New Horizons for Legislation and Interpretation* and *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates*. Orsy joined the Georgetown Law faculty in fall 1994 at the age of 73 after (supposedly) retiring from the Catholic University of America. He previously taught canon law at the Gregorian University in Rome, Fordham University, and the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

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At the Law Center, Orsy taught Roman law, great philosophers on the law, and canon law. In 2018, still going strong at the age of 96, Orsy taught two courses: one on Roman law and one on the role of the Vatican and the Holy See in international law, looking at their relationships to the United Nations.

That same year, Georgetown Law hosted "Vision, Law and Human Rights, A Celebration of the Work of Professor Ladislas Orsy, S.J," which examined Orsy's scholarship on Vatican II, canon law, and international human rights — as well as his life as a professor, lawyer and priest. After each panel, Orsy responded on the spot to every presentation, with his characteristic intelligence, wit and passion.

He loved teaching, and at every event where he spoke or gave the benediction, he reminded his colleagues what a blessing it is to have the opportunity to teach.

He also had a wonderful sense of humor. I will never forget sitting next to him at his 100th birthday party. He told me that he had recently visited his doctor's office. He said that his doctor, in order to test, as Orsy put it, his "mental acuity," asked him if he could count from 1 to 100 backwards. "Certainly," Orsy responded, and then he asked: " In what language?"

He will be greatly missed. Please keep his family and the whole Jesuit community in your thoughts.