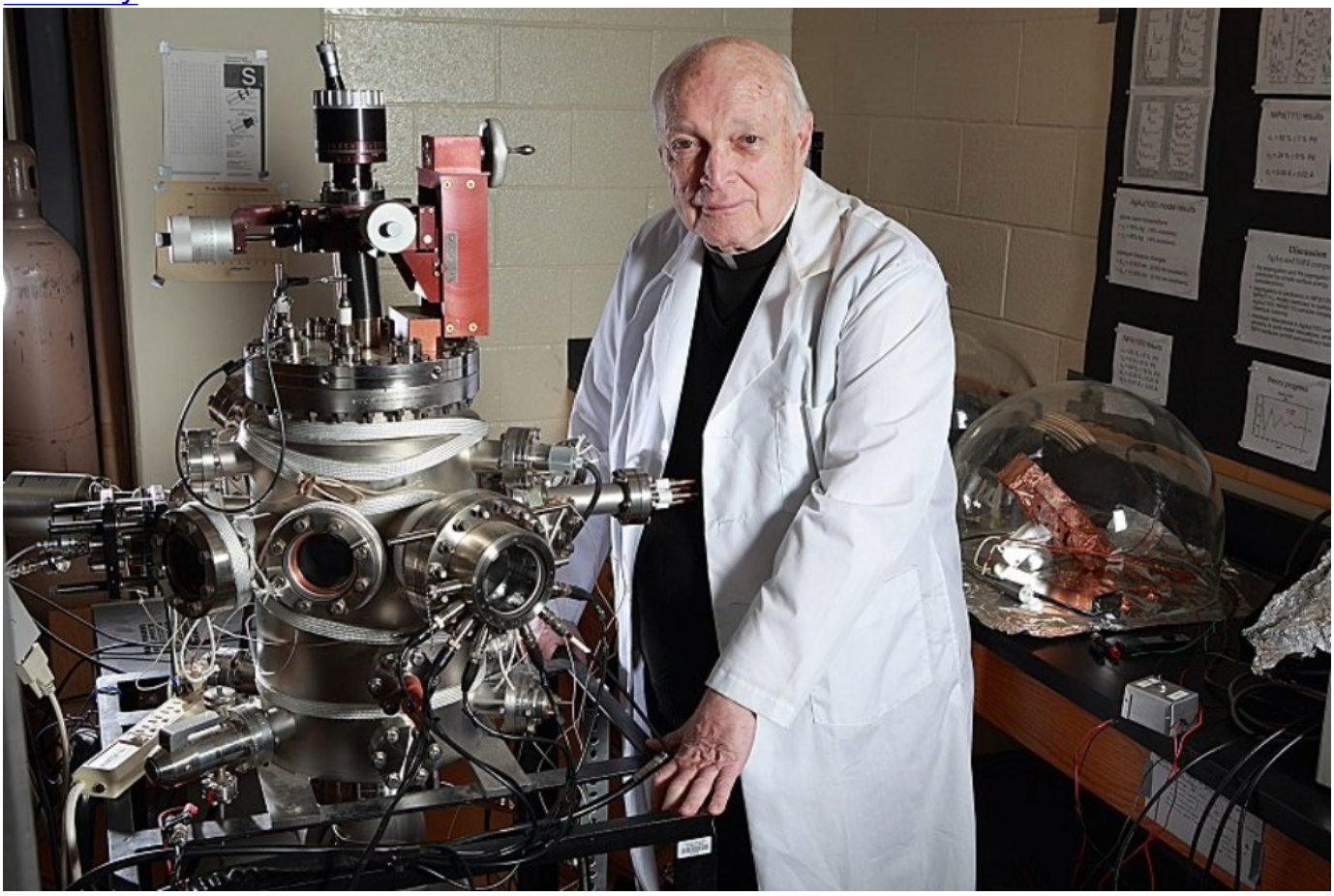
News
Obituary



Jesuit Father Frank R. Haig, a beloved professor of physics at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore and a former president of two Jesuit universities, died Feb. 28, 2024, at age 95. He is pictured in an undated photo. (OSV News/courtesy Loyola University Maryland)

George P. Matysek Jr.

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Baltimore — March 6, 2024
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Jesuit Father Frank R. Haig, a beloved professor of physics at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore and a former president of two Jesuit universities, died Feb. 28. He was 95 and had been living in the Manresa Jesuit Community in Philadelphia.

Haig, president of what was then Wheeling College in West Virginia from 1966 to 1969, taught physics at Loyola from 1972 to 1981 before leaving Baltimore's Jesuit university to serve as president of Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York. The Philadelphia native returned to teach at Loyola in 1987 and was named professor emeritus of physics in 2005. He continued teaching at the university for another 14 years.

In a video recorded in 2010, Haig recalled a story told to him by family members about how at age 5 he had already declared that he wanted to be a Jesuit astrophysicist when he grew up.

"It's been a human interest from as far back as we can go to look at the sky and to look at the stars," Haig said in the video. "To study physics is to look at a universe that is an explosive world of extravagant spontaneity, a reality bursting with variety and overwhelming originality, a fullness overflowing with a multiplicity of the unexpected and the astonishing."

Joseph Ganem, a physics professor at Loyola who knew Haig well, said the priest was a driving force behind Loyola's yearly conference, "Cosmos and Creation," launched in 1982.

"Frank followed the Jesuit view of the science of astronomy as a way to get closer to God — a way to better understand God's creation — which was also a principle that was espoused by astronomer Johannes Kepler in his work," Ganem said.

Haig was known for his sense of humor, playing Elton John's "Rocket Man" at the start of every astronomy class.

"When I was department chair, I had to turn down requests from students who wanted into his classes because they were so full," Ganem recalled.

He added that Haig performed the marriages of some of his students.

"He was a very engaging person," Ganem said.

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Haig entered the Society of Jesus at the Novitiate of St. Isaac Jogues in Wernersville, Pennsylvania, in 1946. After graduating from Woodstock College in Woodstock, Maryland, he received his licentiate in philosophy from Bellarmine College in Plattsburgh, New York and his doctorate in physics from The Catholic University of America in Washington. He also earned a bachelor of sacred theology and a licentiate in sacred theology from Woodstock College where he was ordained a priest June 19, 1960.

In 2016, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Washington Academy of Sciences. He also served on the Scientific and Educational Council of the Maryland Academy of Science.

During his presidency at Le Moyne, Haig was known for his outreach and sensitivity to Indigenous peoples. He was instrumental in establishing an annual lecture on the Iroquois, providing scholarship aid for Native American students, and promoting a 1985 Kateri Tekakwitha conference that brought 2,500 to campus, the university reported.

Haig was the younger brother of Alexander Haig, who served as President Richard Nixon's chief of staff, President Gerald Ford's chief of staff and President Ronald Reagan's secretary of state.

As a Jesuit who took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, Haig could not inherit anything from his older brother's estate when Alexander Haig died in 2010. He did, however, use funds from a $1 million gift to create the Alexander M. Haig Jr. Endowment for Science, Faith and Culture at Loyola.

Haig was a former weekend associate at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore. He also assisted at other

parishes and was involved in ministry to the Spanish-speaking community in the archdiocese.

In a written statement, Loyola President Terrence Sawyer said Haig found great joy in teaching, "and he had a love of learning that can be an inspiration to all of us."

"We are also fortunate to have benefited from the creative and strategic ways in which he and his family contributed to strengthening Loyola," Sawyer said.

Funeral arrangements have not been announced.