Formerly excommunicated theologian Balasuriya dies

by Dennis Coday

Oblates of Mary Immaculate Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, a noted theologian, economist and human rights activist, died Wednesday in Sri Lanka. He was 89.

He founded Centre for Society and Religion in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1971 with the aim of fostering interreligious and interracial action for justice and peace. He was also instrumental in founding the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians in the mid-1970s.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith began a doctrinal investigation of Balasuriya because of statements he made about Mary, original sin, Christ's redemptive role, revelation, and papal authority in his book *Mary and Human Liberation*, published in English in 1990. He was excommunicated in January 1997, accused of propagating ideas contrary to the Catholic faith.

A year later, Balasuriya signed a "Statement of Reconciliation" and the excommunication was lifted.

Balasuriya was a frequent contributor to *NCR* in the 1970s and 1980s. His last article in *NCR*, a critique of Pope Benedict XVI's third encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* ("Charity in Truth"), appeared in August 2009.

A blog maintained by Balasuriya's students lists his writings and gives background to his scholarship and thought.

Visitation was held at the Oblate headquarters, St. De Mazanod House in Mattakkuliya, Wednesday and Thursday at the Centre for Society and Religion. The Mass of Resurrection was scheduled for Thursday at Our Lady Of Fatima Church, Colombo, with burial to follow at Kanatte (Colombo) General Cemetery.

We will update NCRonline.org with more information on Balasuriya's life and death as the day goes on, so watch this space.

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