

FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic



Anto Vattakuzhy CMI, Dharmaram, Bengaluru

A Life of Mystical Integration

Fr. Francis Vineeth, an eminent academician, spiritual guide and a great acharya, with very firm foundation in the realizational wisdom rooted in Jesus Christ, completed his earthly pilgrimage at the age of 86 and left for his eternal abode on Sunday, 30 May, 2021 on the feast of the Most Holy Trinity. A person who always wanted and enjoyed the community life integrated himself as part of the archetype of community: the Most Holy Trinity.

Fr. Vineeth was a simple, humble, straight forward religious priest with a deep sense of contemplative spirit and prayer. He was a genius with double doctorate in theology and philosophy. He was a voracious reader and a prolific writer. He authored a number of books and articles. As a poet, he composed a number of Christian bhajans, hymns, and contributed many inspiring meditations. His beautiful blending of Indian-Christian thoughts made him a very popular seeker of Indian spirituality. As the founding director of Vidyavanam Ashram at Bannerghatta, Bengaluru, he became an Acharya making ripples in the thought-pat-



terns of the seekers of truth from India and abroad. He served as professor of philosophy at DVK for more than 35 years and headed it as its President, Dean of



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the Faculty of Philosophy, etc. He had also served Preshitha Province, Coimbatore, as its Vicar Provincial and Director of Vidyavanam Ashram. He was a well-known retreat preacher, an original thinker, and, above all, a person with a kind and compassionate heart with very loving nature. He was the only Asian representative selected to be a board member of Carmelite Spirituality in the Philippines.

Fr. Vineeth was true synonym for determination, truthfulness, and simplicity: a person who was very much down to earth. He was an exemplary religious priest who lived his religious consecration so faithfully and joyfully. He was simple in lifestyle, gentle in nature, and always positive in attitudes. Integration was the central thread of his creative thinking. His life was an integration of *sravanam-mananam-nidhidyasanam* and *bhakti-karma-jnana*. He did everything with *nishkama karma*. He was an original thinker, philosopher who kept on seeking the divine at the heart of being. He was a progressive theologian who found the Divine in his lived-world and genuine mystic in his basic vision. He knew the meaning of Vatican II's invitation for inculturation. His contributions to the formation of *Bharatiya Puja* as well as the Indian Rite ritual for profession in the CMI congregation were unique. His

real wealth was his knowledge, prayer experience, and simplicity, which he wanted to share with everyone. He was a very good teacher, appreciated and respected by his students.

As Vidyavanam Ashram celebrates 25 years of its existence, the sad demise of Fr. Vineeth has resulted in an irreplaceable loss. As a true spiritual person, he used to sit in meditation for hours together. Indeed, it was this consistent practice that made him a contemplative mystic. The Carmelite saints like St. Theresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, Little Theresa of Jesus and St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara inspired him very much and he tried to imitate them in his prayer life. His inspiring meditations – both audio and video – would tell us the quality of his meditations. He wrote, for example, “*nithyavum nin pade dyanichirippanum sathyathin kanthima kanuvanam, sishiyamennil nin rupam rejikkanum enne orukku ni jeeveswara.*”

Though Fr. Vineeth has gone from this land of the dying, he, for sure, continues to rejoice in the Lord of the living; he has made heaven his home. May the Lord grant him eternal reward and may his soul rest in peace!