



FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic

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A Man of Authenticity



“Time flies, but memories never die. Distance does not matter, for they remain in our heartbeats.” The fond memories of Father Francis Vineeth CMI, Guru and Mentor, remain in our heartbeats, “for he taught them [us] as one having authority” (Mt 7:28-29).

Students, who followed the lectures of Father Vineeth on Metaphysics or Existentialism, would have such gut feeling as “Wow, super!” But, I doubt, how many would attest that Father Vineeth lived and acted, as if he had authority! Yes, indeed, Father Vineeth had authority, for he adorned himself with several offices in the DVK, like Dean (Faculty of Philosophy), Vice-President, and President, the highest office of the Pontifical Athenaeum. But I don’t think he has ever wielded his power over others, either in the classroom or in the office. On the contrary,

as his very name “Vineeth” suggests, he was ‘humble’ and ‘humane’ with his characteristic pedagogy of the heart.

Hence, the question remains: What does it mean to say ‘he taught them [us] as one having authority’? In the life of a Heideggerian like Father Vineeth, ‘authority’ is conceived and construed in terms of “authenticity.” In *Being and Time*, “authenticity” is the translation of the German word *Eigentlichkeit*, meaning ‘my ownness’ or “being true to oneself.” For Heidegger, authenticity refers to the unique and special moment in human (*Dasein*’s) existence, when there is clarity about the self, thereby carving out one’s unique and authentic place in the world, doing one’s work with special intent and self-knowledge. Indeed, ‘uniqueness’ was the hallmark of Father Vineeth’s life, characterized by three elements: realization, understanding, and discourse.

“Realization” is a continuous process of discovering the ‘real self’ (real+i+zation). Father Vineeth, through-

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out his life, sought the meaning of self in its manifold relationships. As his book, *Call to Integration*, suggests, human reveals in its networking, or harmonious relationships. Harmony *ad intra*, for him, involves the integration of the human faculties: the cognitive, conative and the affective; and, on the other hand, harmony *ad extra* envisions integration of the self with other, nature, and God. Father Vineeth always tried to maintain an 'integral' approach' in his life, which also helped him to delve deeper into the nature of things.



The term 'understanding' had become a cliché in Father Vineeth's lectures, meditations, and reflections. Father Vineeth used to ask "Understand?" almost always at the end of each sentence. For the Heideggerian Vineeth, 'understanding' did not mean imposing your vocabulary (especially adjectives) on others, or making claims of understanding other in your own terms and conditions. As a true Heideggerian, understanding, for Father Vineeth, is a process of "making explicit that which was already implicitly

present." For Heidegger, understanding is also closely intertwined with 'interpretation', the capacity to reveal the purpose or function and the totality of involvement associated with an entity. The right disposition to understand and interpret, Father Vineeth would add, must be the basic openness to the disclosure of beings.

"Discourse," for Heidegger, "is the basic signification of *logos*." In other words, discourse is the meaningful articulation of the discovered intelligibility of humanity's 'being-in-the-world'. Father Vineeth, the Heideggerian, takes 'discourse' a step further as

meaningful articulation of words that are life-giving. Logos in Greek means 'word', for example, the first uttered word. As Saint John, the Evangelist, testifies, "[...] the *logos* was with God and the *logos* was God" (Jn 1:1). In the final analysis, discourse, therefore, is the word of God, which is life-giving or salvific. That is why Saint Peter, representing the disciples, said to Jesus: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the



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words of eternal life” (Jn 6: 68). In the true sense, the discourses of Father Vineeth, whether they were lectures in the classrooms, meditations in the chapel, or reflections and input sessions at seminars and conferences, were really inspiring, for they were the disclosure

of his own life and vision. Hence, people – students, friends, and well-wishers – followed him wherever he had been, for he spoke with ‘authority’, or better in Heideggerian terms, he spoke with ‘authenticity’.



Fr. Francis Vineeth Vadakethala, fondly known as Fr. Vineeth or Vineethachan, is one among the amazing personalities I have met in the Preshitha Province.

During my college days 1987 to 1992 and thereafter, I was at Divyodaya doing what best I could. I had chances of meeting

Fr. Vineeth a few times. Each time I have admired his hard work, as he was always found to be working on research papers. I was told by the CMI members that he would spend late hours on his scholarly work.

A true synonym of determination and simplicity... I was told that he was the one who coined the term ‘Divyodaya’. He authored many books. His effi-

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Adieu Father Vineeth!

cient skill of using metaphors from English, Malayalam, and Sanskrit was really awesome.

Though my association was less, he carved a thought in me that to serve the people is to serve the Maker. Devoted people like him are like ‘the salt of the earth’ as stated by the Lord. In 1993, if I am correct, he was made the Vicar Provincial of Preshitha Province. Otherwise, I have known him to serve Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram or Vidyavanam Ashram in Bengaluru.

Farewell, dear Fr. Vineeth: may you find glory in the Lord and may your soul rest in peace!