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A Man of Wisdom with Passion



I looked at him with all admiration! The second encounter with him was when I came for my BPh studies in Dharmaram. I could witness an excellent teacher, immersed in wisdom and pouring it in simple terms. He could take his students into the plenitude of philosophical concepts of the East and the West. Fr. Vineeth was an original thinker with less words, who could

In the first part of 1989, Fr. Vineeth paid a visit to Little Flower Minor Seminary, Saibaba Colony, Coimbatore, along with Fr. Thomas Payapan, where I was a first year aspirant. Fr. Thomas introduced him as professor in Dharmaram holding double doctorates in Philosophy and Theology from Europe. Being an ignorant boy,

emerge himself wonders of the nature with a magnificent heart. He spoke less and reflected more, having a calculated mind of expressing constructive and creative views. He was reluctant to have unproductive and destructive conversations. Meanwhile, hours together he could spend with anyone to elaborate and enrich productive concepts. A straight forward and committed religious who found the value of time and relationship in his journey to the God.

Most probably, it was in December 1995, our then provincial Fr. Francis Thaivalappil CMI asked me, if possible, to go and stay with Fr. Vineeth for two weeks in a rented house at Bannerughatta, Bangalore. It was the beginning days of the Vidyavanam ashram. Being a first year college student and staying in the provincial house, I agreed wholeheartedly to the proposal of Fr. Provincial, even though I had to cancel my classes for two weeks. The stay with Fr. Vineeth was an ever



FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic

memorable one. Mr. Jose was there to help him. None of us knew the basics of cooking! Whatever we cooked he enjoyed well without any complaint. For, he was well aware of his practical knowledge of cooking! Being my professor in philosophy he used to share certain Indian concepts of spirituality every day and I was a good listener. At that age of sixty and having a polio-affected leg, Fr. Vineeth was dare enough to take up any physical challenge. One day, he had suggested to visit a temple hill nearby our residence. He climbed the hill with all enthusiasm and vigour. Though I was tired of the climbing, he was very enthusiastic without expressing his age-related difficulties. While we were on the way back to the residence, he said in his own style, "We can come again tomorrow evening!"

Another venture he initiated at that time was to walk from Bannerughatta to the new land of present Vidyavanam. It was a shortcut passageway of two and half kilometres through the thick forest. The journey was not easy, since we had to climb a hill and to walk through a hazardous and lonely walkway with fear of wild animals. For the first time three of us walked together with much difficulty and reached the desti-

nation safely. Later, Fr. Vineeth walked many times through the same walkway to look after the progress of the construction of the ashram.

Since he wanted each residential building to symbolize Indian tradition, the ideas of the drawings given accordingly. It was on those days he received the sketches of the buildings. I could witness, how he enjoyed the drawings of each building. However, he gathered the suggestions from others and once he came to know the construction would be expensive, he gave up the project and looked for something that would reflect the simplicity of ashram.

Fr. Vineeth was a guru by nature and therefore, to stay with him was a pleasant experience. Those joyful and nourishing experiences with him took our batch mates – Frs. Seby Vellanikkaran, Thomas Chackal, Wilson Chakkyath, Jose Kannampilly, Mr. Martin Brahmakulam, and myself – to visit Vidyavanam on every Saturday and did manual labour.

To conclude, Fr. Vineeth was an encyclopaedia of simplicity, serenity, solitude, and wisdom. The seekers could enjoy well from that God-given treasure abundantly!