



# FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

## *Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic*

was not easy for him to reach the city and to fly home. He sat on a rock and began to cry. After sometime he saw a group of women fetching water from a nearby pond in their pots. He also noticed that after filling the pots they were putting small branches with leaves into the water. It helped them keep the water from spilling over the pots. He suddenly got an insight. The missionary thought like this: "My sorrows of life spill over, but I will put the Cross of Christ into it and it will prevent from spilling over."

When I concluded the speech, Fr. Vineeth came forward and said: "What an inspiring sermon! Fr. Benny, you have touched our hearts." Then, he re-narrated the story of the missionary and said: "Let's put that branch – the Cross of Christ – into the pots of our lives that brim." My great disappointment was turned into tears of joy. That was the best Good Friday sermon I have ever made. To my surprise, later, many a time Fr. Vineeth recalled it whenever we met.

*Namaste, Great Teacher!*



**M**y first encounter with Fr. Vineeth was during my Philosophical Studies (1963-1966) at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bengaluru. During this time, he was my teacher. As far as I can recollect, he taught me Metaphysics and Existentialism. His lectures were really good and interesting and his reflections

were thought-provoking and deep. He was not merely lecturing on philosophical topics, but he used to inter-

## **Alex Thannippara CMI, Saint John's Monastery, Mutholy**

### **My Teacher, Friend and Guide**

perse his lectures with beautiful personal reflections. The atmosphere of his classes was relaxed and pleasant. He really paid attention to each and every student of his class.

In 1985, after my higher studies, when I joined the Faculty of Philosophy as a member of the staff, Fr. Vineeth also was there. Very soon we became good

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friends. We used to share our ideas and even intimate feelings. During this time, I found Fr. Vineeth as a very sincere, transparent, delicate and sensitive human being. He loved and appreciated his confreres very sincerely and warmly. It was almost an impossibility for him to insult or cause pain to a confrere. Sometimes, when one or the other member of the community misunderstood him or took offence of him because of no fault of his, he used to go out of his way and make real and sincere effort to get reconciled to him and win him back. Thus, he was a serene, patient, loving and pleasant presence in the community.

From my experience, I am convinced that he was a philosopher mystic. His writings like, *Discovery of Being*, a work on the Philosophy of the famous German Philosopher Martin Heidegger, *Foundations of World Vision*, a text book on Metaphysics, and several other similar works bear eloquent witness to the fact that Fr. Vineeth was a genuine and authentic philosopher.

Fr. Vineeth has written several books and booklets on meditation, spiritual practices and exercises, etc. He was above all, a man of prayer. Like our Father St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, he could sit at the feet of the Eucharistic Lord long hours immersed in contemplation. During such hours his face used to radiate the

joy of being with his loving Lord. He could forget everything and sit with the Lord conversing with him.

Fr. Vineeth had always an inclination and taste for simple and prayer life. The best proof for this fact was that for a short time he lived in very simple huts together with a few scholastics, who were personally interested, in the Dharmaram campus itself. Fr. Vineeth's interest and passion for contemplative, prayerful and simple life found its culmination in the founding of Vidyavanam Ashram at Bannerghatta, in the suburbs of Bengaluru. With the help of some gifted artists like, Fr. Joy Elamkunnpuza CMI, he designed the Ashram Campus with real beauty and great originality. The central point of the whole campus was of course the "Ant Hill Chapel". It was designed like a cave and decorated with beautiful Indian and Christian symbols. He might have designed the Ashram Chapel in the shape of a cave inspired by the Upanisadic dictum "*Brahman* is to be sought after in the cave of one's heart." Fr. Vineeth was convinced that God was to be sought in the cave of one's own heart, i.e., in the innermost of one's own being, or in silence and contemplation. The whole ambience of the small and beautiful chapel was very suitable for silent personal prayer and meditation.



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Fr. Vineeth's simple, silent and contemplative life in the Ashram very soon attracted groups of Priests, Seminarians and Religious Sisters, as in the case of the ancient desert Fathers, to get his personal guidance for a life of simplicity and contemplation. He could effectively guide them and help them. And all those who came to the Ashram highly benefited from Fr. Vineeth's instructions, guidance and above all his inspiring and exemplary personal life.

Thus, in my perception, Fr. Vineeth was a noble

human being of childlike simplicity and humility, nobility and generosity. He was an excellent and original thinker and teacher. He was a genuine CMI religious, according to the model of our Father St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, who could find real joy in prayer and contemplation. He was an effective and exemplary spiritual guru and guide.

I would like to describe Fr. Vineeth's whole life with the help of a Latin saying: "*Bonum est diffusivum sui ipsius*" meaning, "goodness radiates by itself."



## Thomas Kadankavil CMI, Kottayam

### A Man Who Stood for Indian Way of Spirituality

Over a quarter of a century (1966-1993) I was fortunate enough to work with Fr. Francis Vineeth as a member of Dharmaram College as well as Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram. Immediately after my term of office as Pres-

ident of DVK Fr. Francis Vineeth succeeded me as I was in the thick and thin to bring in the completion of DVK Campus development. When I came back to Dharmaram after my term as novice master Fr. Francis Vineeth as President of DVK was involved very much in the planning and executing of the present cafeteria in the campus. What I identify in him as a special