

# FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

*Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic*



## Saju Chackalackal CMI

Thanks Be to God:

Adieu to Father Francis Vineeth Vadakethala CMI

(A Post-Funeral Note, Province: 1 June 2021)

**I**t was on 30 May 2021 that Father Francis Vineeth left us for his eternal reward; although in his old age he had faced a few health hazards, it was due to Covid-19 that he finally left us and, hence, our plans for a fitting farewell to him was not possible in these pandemic times.

Yet, we planned for the best that we could. Hence, considering the best option in the given conditions, we decided to go for cremation and, then, to conduct a normal burial ceremony, observing the Covid-19 protocol, at Bharathamatha Ashram, Palakkad.

Accordingly, yesterday, 31 May 2021, Fr. Vineeth's body was cremated at Kuriachira, and the ashes were

taken, first, to Preshitharam, Mannuthy, where he lived for the last three years. Fr. Joy Kolengadan, Fr. Prathap, and Fr. Jenson, together with Bro. Arjun and Bro. Shijo, made excellent arrangements for a fitting farewell from the house. It was here at Preshitharam, Fr. Vineeth received excellent care during his old age and the final phase of his life, especially when he was struggling with a number of illness. While we must thank the entire community under the leadership of Fr. Joy Kolengadan for the care and concern with which Fr. Vineeth was taken care, I must specially mention Fr. Prathap for his very filial love and concern that made the life of Fr. Vineeth more comfortable and enjoyable; indeed, Fr. Prathap has a special art of caring the seniors and the entire Preshitha Province is grateful to him for the same.

During the three hours we kept the remains of



# FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

## *Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic*

Fr. Vineeth at Preshitharam, we conducted the first part of the funeral rites at 3:15 pm. It was followed by the visit of his family members, CMI confreres, and a few of his acquaintances. His Grace Mar Andrews Thazhath and His Excellency Mar Tony Neelankavil, from the Archeparchy of Thrissur, joined us in praying for Fr. Vineeth; Fr. Davis Panakkal CMI, Provincial of Devamatha Province, Thrissur, also joined us with a few other Fathers from various communities. Fathers from Sagar Bhavan, Thrissur, also joined us. There were also a few of Fr. Vineeth's relatives who had joined us at Preshitharam. By 6 pm, we made the final prayers at Preshitharam and the ashes were taken to Bharathamatha, Palakkad, by 6:30 pm.

It was by 8 pm on 31 May, that the vehicle carrying the ashes reached Bharathamatha Ashram, Palakkad. In fact, Fr. Francis Vineeth was ascribed to this community, although for the purpose of treatment he was living at Preshitharam. Immediately, along

with Fr. Rupert Panikulam, Prior, and the community, we prayed the simple form of the Office for the Dead.

Then, it was in the morning of 1 June 2021 that the remains of Fr. Francis Vineeth were kept at the prayer hall of Bharathamatha Higher Secondary School, and many of our members joined in prayer, of course, observing the Covid-19 protocol.



By 2 pm, we began the second part of the funeral rite, which was presided over by Fr. Davis Panakkal, Provincial of Devamatha Province, Thrissur.

It was followed by the Requiem Holy Mass, which was officiated by Fr. Josey Thamarassery, Vicar General of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI); the concelebrants were Fr. Saju Chackalackal (Provincial of Preshitha), Fr. Davis Panakkal (Provincial of Devamatha), Fr. Johnson Valiyakulathil (Vicar Provincial of Preshitha), and Fr. Rupert Panikulam (Prior of Bharathamatha). Fr. Saju Chackalackal, Provincial of Preshitha Province, welcomed the main

# FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

## *Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic*



celebrant and concelebrants along the congregation that had gathered at Bharathamatha to say adieu to Fr. Vineeth. Fr. Josey spoke about Fr. Vineeth and his valuable contributions at the opening of the Holy Mass. It was Fr. Anto Vattakuzhy, a long-time companion of Fr. Vineeth at Vidyavanam Ashram, Bengaluru, who had preached the funeral homily. Fr. Anto recalled the years he spent with him, thanked the great learning that he had made under his guidance, especially in being initiated into the Ashram life and Indian-Christian ethos. The simplicity, truthfulness, integrity, great mystical leanings, etc., were the highlights of Fr. Anto's excellent homily.

His Excellency Mar Jacob Manantheodath, Bishop of Palakkad, presided over the fourth part of the funeral ceremony. At the start, he spoke about his personal acquaintance with Fr. Vineeth and recalled the spiritual convictions that Fr. Vineeth had acquired and for which he stood firm all through his life.



He acknowledged the long years of Fr. Vineeth's involvement in priestly formation at Dharmaram College and the establishment of Vidyavanam Ashram and the way of life he had introduced at this Indian-Christian Ashram.

The simple but serene and elegant funeral ceremony during the pandemic times was the best we could offer Fr. Francis Vineeth on the last lap of his earthly presence. I thank Fr. Paul Thekkiniyath, the master of ceremonies, for efficiently organizing the whole event and the community of Bharathamatha, especially Fathers Anil Thalakkottur, Philips Panackal, Lintesh Vellappadi, and Jaison Velukkaran, for conducting an excellent choir, and facilitating the smooth conduct of the entire programme.

The spiritual legacy of Fr. Vineeth will certainly stay in good stead in the coming years; the lasting imprints that Fr. Vineeth has left among thousands of his students and followers will certainly make an



# FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

## *Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic*



impact in the world. His innumerable writings, some of which have not yet been published, will proclaim the great genius that he was, especially from the point of view of Indian-Christian synthesis. Vidyavanam Ashram and the Ashram way of life that he had loved and perpetuated continue to give us an alternative way of living Christian faith in India in a more rooted manner. Some of the art works at the Ashram that he had conceived (and transferred into art works by Fr. Joy Elamkunnapuzha CMI) will proclaim not only his artistic genius but also his unique blend of Christian and Indian traditions and the personal synthesis of his Christian faith and convictions; indeed, his effort was

successful in incarnating Christ in India and within Indian Christianity.

May the enlightened thinking and way of life that Fr. Francis Vineeth has left behind him continue to inspire us; may his child-like faith in Jesus Christ and his filial devotion to Our Lady instil in us the Christian hope; may his genuineness in convictions and truthfulness in all his dealings invite us to be better human beings; may his simplicity and straightforwardness make us more authentic in our dealings with our fellow brethren; may his quest for humane integration and Christian synthesis enable us to lay the foundations for a better world for all of us...

Personally, I am indeed sure that Fr. Francis Vineeth is enjoying the eternal bliss with the heavenly Father. A genuine seeker and seer (*Sadhaka* and *Rsi*), Fr. Vineeth, who taught and practised most of his life an unquenchable thirst for communion with the Divine, in the form of Saccidananda, who was called to his eternal reward on the feast of Holy Trinity, I firmly believe, has already been taken to the presence of that immeasurable and unfathomable Reality that God is in the persons of Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.