

FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic



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A Friend of All

Fr. Francis Vineeth Vadakethala CMI, who died on 30 May 2021, will be fondly remembered by many people in India as well as abroad. He was a scholar and for many years a famous professor at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bengaluru. He was excellent in his teaching career and has contributed much to form an Indian Christian theology. He studied thoroughly the Indian philosophy and spirituality and, in that light, he began to reflect upon and interpret his own Catholic faith. Above all his academic achievements, he was a man of prayer. He became a true *bhakta* of Jesus. He had deep devotion to Blessed Virgin Mary. He used to keep a beautiful picture of our Lady of Fatima at his bedside.

I had the privilege of being a close friend of Father Vineeth. As we were both teaching in Dharmaram, we collaborated to realize some projects of social service. One such project was that we motivated a few seminarians to start a simple lifestyle in the Dharmaram campus. One day, both of us led half a dozen theol-

ogy students to visit Little Sisters of Jesus, who were living in a hut in the Madiwala slums. As we were returning to Dharmaram, we challenged them and asked whether they will dare to lead a simple life in Dharmaram campus. They said 'yes'. They put up two huts, similar to what we see in the villages in the mission areas. They cultivated vegetables around the huts. They spent much time in meditation in the huts. As I was Master of a section of students, I could not stay overnight with the hut-dwellers. So, I asked Father Vineeth whether he can stay





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with them. He readily agreed and stayed with them in the huts and lived the simple life with joy.

Another instance is that Father Vineeth started an Ashram near Bannerghatta, Bengaluru. He called it Vidyavanam Ashram. As he was living there, there was a girl called Molly who worked as his secretary. As a good father, he came to know her personal problems and came forward to solve it. She had a boyfriend in Kerala. Since the family of the boy did not like that alliance, there was no contact with that boy Jose for a long time. Father Vineeth asked me to accompany him to find out that boy. I went with him and made a long journey through the Kattapana hills. Finally, with the help of a Sister who studied in Dharmaram, we managed to bring that boy to Bengaluru, and Father Vineeth blessed their marriage and up to now they lead a happy married life.

Father Vineeth was a friend of all. Through Indian

way of meditation, he tasted the Divine in his heart and he did whatever he could to impart that experience to his friends and students as well. It was for this purpose that he started Vidyavanam Ashram. There he gave courses on Indian Christian meditation to various groups. Many years ago, he, in collaboration with



Father Louis Maliekal CMI and Father Thomas Kochumuttom CMI had created an Indian Liturgy text. He had composed several Sanskrit *bhajans*, which we sing even today to make a good meditation. I still remember: As I was prior at the monastery of Varandarappilly, Father Vineeth called me from his Ashram, and told me to come immediately to assist him to

give a retreat to a group of religious by singing *bhajans* and leading adoration. Even though it was a busy time for me in Kerala, I went immediately to fulfil his wish. His life was so simple, at the same time very profound and spiritually powerful. May the good Lord reward him with a joyful and glorious eternity!