



FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic

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An Integrated Sannyasi



I have a vivid image of Father Vineeth staying in a *kutiya* (hut) in the Dharmaram campus along with a few CMI Brothers. It was the first time in the history of Dharmaram, I think, that a few theology students stayed in *kutiyas*, cooking for themselves and doing everything there. They attended

classes with their companions. After the classes, they returned to their *kutiyas*, engaged in their prayer, study, and other programmes. Father Vineeth, along with these brothers, was experimenting *ashram* lifestyle in the Dharmaram campus and, later, it was expanded into Vidyavanam Ashram, which he founded in Bengaluru.

Those who took 'electives' with Father Vineeth vis-

ited him in his *kutiya* to discuss about the subject or to submit the assignments, etc. I saw there a high-thinking philosopher with a simple lifestyle. I had taken an elective course on 'Theology of Religious Life'. Later, he published his talks on religious life with the title *Call to Integration*. I still remember our discussions on the challenges of religious community life. His emphasis was on the need of the religious developing new qualities of the heart towards life in their interpersonal relationship that would enable them to live as fruitful members in a community. He proved himself as an integrated *Sannyasi*.

Since I was a young junior sister on those days, his thoughts on community life attracted me very much and it enabled me to discover and decipher the vibrations of the heart. I am sure that he was guiding those Brothers who were in the *kutiyas* towards the dynamics and dimensions of religious life at the level of the heart.

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He used to tell that it needs courage, determination, readiness to face challenges and crises in religious life.

I was in the first batch of Sisters who joined Dharmaram for theology studies (BTh) in 1976. I still remember the apprehensions of the bishops of Kerala and their comments regarding the Sisters joining theology classes along with Brothers. They lavished negative comments on the CMIs as well, which created a kind of nervousness or uneasiness in the class and in the whole campus. I gladly remember that Father Vineeth had an extraordinary internal freedom in relating with us Sisters. There was an air of freedom and self-determination in his way of relating with us. I have experienced it more when I visited his Vidyavanam Ashram. He took me around, spoke with full interest and explained his *ashram* philosophy. I could see for myself that he lived there what he had instructed us in the classroom.



Father Johny Manavalan and Swami Sadananda, who were among the ashramites in the *kutiyas* of Dharmaram campus, extended their ashram life in their mission areas and now in heaven: may they have perfect and blissful ashram experience along with their *guru*, Father Vineeth!