



FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic

and genuine. As a great and genuine acharya, who was innovative in thinking, he could guide and lead many *sishtyas* and *sadhakas* to the farther shore of darkness. He could do these and many other great services to the Church because he hearkened more intensely to “what the Spirit says to the Churches” (Rev 2:7). It was with profound admiration, respect, and love we bade a fond farewell to the simple and humble mystic, who tirelessly sought to obtain unity with or absorption into the Absolute and tried to express the desire through his lofty poems. In him we found a genuine, jovial, and loyal religious, who took pride in being an Indian Carmelite of Mary Immaculate, and “in mission

by virtue of his very consecration” (*Vita Consecrata* 72). As we commenced our journey back from Vidyavanam to Vidya Kshetram, after a dramatic silent driving, one in the group exclaimed of “our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us” (Lk 24:32) and listening to him.

Now, as in the case of Fr. Vineeth, “the dust returned to the earth as it was, and the breath returned to God who gave it” (Eccl 12:7), we pray: “Lord, God Almighty, look with mercy on those who are deceased. Protect those who are alive, and grant glorious resurrection to those who died with the hope of resurrection” (*The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 122).



Emmanuel CSSE, Vandana Convent, Guna

Memories of Fr. Francis Vineeth CMI

I feel deeply sad about the sudden demise of our beloved Fr. Vineeth. Vineethachan was very close to the Elizabethan Sisters of Van-

dana Convent, fondly known as Guna Sisters.

We had returned from Germany in the year 1974 after 10 years of training and stay there. As we had our formation and professional training in Germany, we were quite unaware of the Indian Spirituality and

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North Indian culture. Hardly we learnt a few Hindi words when we landed in India. Although Bishop Clemens and the CMI Fathers of those days initiated us to the North Indian culture, it was Vineethachan who introduced us into Indian spirituality and inculturation. It was the peak point of inculturation programmes in the Church and in religious life after Vatican II. The winds of Vatican II blew very strongly and brought in a new perspective at all realms of life.

Vineethachan was an erudite scholar; yet, he was very simple and humble in his approach and very gentle in nature. He was a very good spiritual guide and leader. As he was guiding the first three sisters, namely, Vandana, Archana, and Shanti for their first profession, he was thrilled to initiate them into Indian spirituality and suggested the above names for them. Vandana is bowing to the divine, acknowledgment of His presence leading to Archana, worshipping and surrendering to the Lord, paving the way for inner peace, Shanti. He developed a meditation based on these names. Later, I was told that he shared this meditation experience based on these names Vandana, Archana, and Shanti with the Dharmaram students at Bangalore. This was a common sharing in those days.



With deep gratitude I remember another interaction I had with Vineethachan. Once I happened to meet him at Poornodaya, Bhopal, along with Fr. Joy Elamkunnappuzha. As we were at the very beginning of our congregation in Madhya Pradesh, India, we had to create everything almost out of nothing. I requested Fr. Vineeth and Fr. Joy to give me some idea of creating an emblem for our congregation in India. Without any hesitation or delay they agreed to it. Three of us



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sat down till late in the evening and started the work. After a short discussion and exchange of ideas, Fr. Joy started drawing the design and Fr. Vineeth wrote the explanation of the emblem. Even today I feel very happy and proud of it whenever I see it printed on the letterhead and other official documents. It has provided a specific identity to our congregation in India.

Another great contribution of Fr. Vineeth is the “open hand prayer,” which he wrote for our Congregation. It is a tradition of the Elizabethan Sisters to pray the “open hand prayer” at the altar after the profession ceremonies. It is a tradition of at least 40 years that our Sisters are praying this prayer with open hands on the altar after their profession. The open hand prayer adapted from the Gospel is as follows: “We the Sisters of Saint Elizabeth offer you, Lord God Almighty, our open and ready hands for the re-creation of our world into your kingdom of justice and truth. Anoint our open hands, Lord, and strengthen them to preach the Good News to the poor in a tangible way. May our open hands unite the chains of captivity of every kind – poverty, illiteracy, superstition, and sickness. May our hands bring recovery of sight to the blind, assurance of love and caring to the desolate, healing to the

sick, and confidence to the dying. May our hands set at liberty those who are oppressed by loneliness, fear and neglect; may they communicate love and care and be strengthened to put all things together, however broken they be. May our hands forever proclaim your abiding presence, and receive the body of your son in Eucharist and so become one body and one spirit in Him.”

Spirituality of integration was another important topic shared with Fr. Vineeth. He was a person of



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spiritual integration. Fr. Vineeth was the first source of inspiration for me to explain the *Pancha Kosha* Theory. The *koshas* are considered to be covering the layers of consciousness. The outer *annamaya kosha* is all about the physical world and necessities. The soul is at the innermost layer after opening the *pranamaya* and *vijnanamaya koshas* leading to *anandamaya kosha*. Vineethachan was always calm, quiet, and serene. The joy radiated on his face is a proof that he himself entered into the deepest layers of *anadamaya*. He was inviting others to the inmost level of happiness through integration of life. Besides, Vineethachan was so fond of *Gayatri Mantra* that he used to sing it before the Indian meditation. He was totally immersed in it and used to bring in an ecstatic mood of elevation. He drew the spiritual dimensions of the mantra and was transported to the eternity.

In 1980, the authorities gave me one year for refreshing myself through courses and prayer days, after the hectic days of work at the beginning stage of the congregation in India. After attending Sadhana Course at Lonavala under the guidance of Fr. Tony D'Mello, I had six more months left. So, Fr. George Soares-Prabhu SJ and Fr. Rui de Menezes SJ were

ready to give me some personal guidance while attending their classes at De Nobili College, Pune. After three months, Fr. Vineeth, who was the President of Dharmaram, granted permission to be a guest student at Dharmaram College. I could attend some biblical classes under the guidance of Fr. Pathrapankal and the seminar on Depth Psychology conducted by Fr. Rulla SJ from Rome later, I spent a few days in Vidyavanam for Ashram experience. I could feel a deep spiritual flavour in his talks and reflections. He was speaking so much about the concept of *neti neti*, so as to focus on the reality. Vineethachan has composed and tuned his famous hymn "*Enne Orukku Nee*," meaning, "make me ready, to welcome you Lord, steer clear of my conscience, stay close to me..." In fact, I recall that he wrote the lyrics on a piece of paper and handed it over to me personally when I visited him at Dharmaram College. Thus, Vineethachan always made himself ready to be at the beck and call of Jesus, the Guru. Finally, he is called by the Guru to be with Him.

Let me conclude this write up with loving gratitude and prayer for Vineethachan for being a spiritual Guru for me and our Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Elizabeth.