

FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic



I loved to go to Preshitharam to see the ailing and aged Fathers, especially Fr. Vineeth. It was in January that I met Vineeth when I visited Preshitharam. Whenever I went to his room, I found him seated with a book in his hand. I don't think that he must be reading it. That is his habit, I suppose. He had no distracting things, no phone, no WhatsApp, no TV, etc. But when someone came to visit, he would receive him gladly. It was for me in my old age a lesson. Others told me that he may not recognize me. When I visited him, I had the book *Story of Divyodaya* in my hand. He took it from me. I knew he may not read but because he loved Divyodaya so much he wanted the book. I asked him: "Do you know me?" He replied: "JP!" That is the way he usually called me. Once he told me that he could sit in the chapel looking at the Tabernacle any length of time... Really, he was a mystic. Though he was disturbed when he had to leave Vidyavanam, which was the fruit of his dream, gradu-

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Towards Divine Awakening

ally, he had overcome such feelings and he was totally free. He seemed always composed.

Fr. Vineeth was throughout his life in search of the "divine consciousness," his favourite expression. This search led him to discover the complimentary nature of religions. This has been the nature of all mystics. They found unity in diversity. I think this basic search led him to take Martin Heidegger and Ramanuja Acharya for his postdoctoral studies at Oxford. As I came to know from Fr. Thomas Aykara who was with him at Oxford, Vineeth had the dream of an ashram from his time at Oxford. We know how Vidyavanam became an abode where seekers came to experience the Divine. He was a true acharya and through his presence Vidyavanam became an ashram where many came to become his disciples and grow in divine conscious-



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ness. His understanding of inter-religious dialogue stems from this understanding of the complementarity of religions. This is reflected in the message which he sent to the Decennial Souvenir of Divyodaya.

Fr. Vineeth was one of the few who understood Divyodaya from its start and always stood by me. The name Divyodaya is his gift, meaning Divine Awakening. During our journey to Bangalore after attending the provincial synaxis at Thrissur in 1978 in which the decision was taken to make Coimbatore Region into a Vice Province I shared with Fr. Vineeth my dream of starting a centre to receive people irrespective of religions He suggested the name Divyodaya, divine awakening. With grateful sentiments and a deep sense of loss I give the message he gave to the decennial souvenir of Divyodaya.

“Divergent religions having long traditions of God-experience through their own historical paths, contribute quite a lot to the making and flowering of the totality of the consciousness in humanity. None of our religions singly contain or convey the whole of it. All of us are limited, and we all need further blossoming. It is to our human nature situated in this way in structures of limitation that inter-religious dialogue enters as a divine messenger bringing to us the word capable of awakening the divine within us.



Let Divyodaya as it celebrates its decennial be happy about the fact that it has been a venue of dialogue and divine awakening. And let the Divine blossom further in all the members who visit this institute for inter-religious dialogue and sharing.