

A MESSAGE FROM JOE AND PAT RICHTER

Dear Friends,

Reflection is good for the soul. Paul writes by the Holy Spirit in Philippians 4:8, ***“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”*** Retirement, for both Pat and I, brings us to a place of reflection and these words given to Paul are even more precious to us. They steer us away from the human tendency to dwell on disappointments, the hard things, the “what ifs,” and so on. However, God wants us to dwell on what he has done in our lives and when we do the rest becomes insignificant. We are thankful and rejoice in this truth.

Pat keeps in touch with many of the children whose parents were the first believers that we taught and discipled as missionaries in the mountains of the Philippines. Many of them are married now and have families of their own. They relate to Pat like a mother or an “Auntie.” Most all of them are following the Lord and are bright lights in this world. They share their faith with zeal. They love to keep in touch and each time they do, the Holy Spirit reminds us of the legacy he nurtured among these Igorots. There are now third generation Christians from that small beginning! So, we ***“think on these things.”*** Our hearts rejoice and praise goes forth to our Lord Jesus Christ! **Yes, reflection is good for our souls.**



After our service as missionaries in the Philippines, God opened a new chapter in our lives; serving with FARMS International. This unexpected opening, as the Executive Director, significantly defined our lives for over 25 years. Yes, there were some difficulties and disappointments, but the wonderful fruit of this ministry easily overshadowed these. What an awesome privilege God had given us, to see firsthand his love for the poor. Jesus said, ***“I appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide.”*** This is what he does, he sends us, he enables us, and then he guards the fruit so that it remains. In this, we exceedingly rejoice.

Yes, the Lord Jesus has used FARMS to expand his kingdom in many parts of this world. I know this personally, even though I have only seen a small fraction of the fruit of this work. There are so many untold stories, unbelievable stories of God’s love and provision. Jesus said, ***“To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.”*** Mark 4:30-33. What a picture! A mustard seed is as small as a period on this page. In some ways FARMS is like that, seemingly small, yet where we work, the fruit continues to multiply: souls are saved, churches are planted, and families prosper.

Albin’s story: Albin is a Bengali believer living in the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta that consists of a flat alluvial plain intersected by silt-laden rivers in southern Bangladesh. His home village is very poor and isolated. Travel is mainly by water or narrow rickshaw paths. This story has its beginning 25 years ago when I met Dr. Robert Goddard in upstate New York. He was instrumental in introducing me to ministry opportunities for FARMS in Bangladesh. Dr. Goddard had a long association with Bangladesh and volunteered many times as a physician at the Malumghat Christian Hospital. He was one of the most selfless men I had ever met. Through his encouragement, we established our first two



**Dr. Robert Goddard and Joe Richter
Bangladesh**

programs in Bangladesh: our Chittagong Hills program and our Bengali program. Then in 2006, he asked me to consider a third program in the place Albin lives. Albin's future father-in-law, Swapon, was a well-known evangelist and teacher in this predominantly Hindu region and recently turned over the ministry to Albin. There is much more to this story, but I want to share what a blessing FARMS has been in Albin's life.

Albin and his wife Easter are hard workers and are faithful in sharing the gospel. In 2010, Friendship Bible Church Ministries was able to acquire a small piece of land and with the help of the FARMS loan fund, they developed it into a fishpond and a place to grow crops, poultry, and livestock. Fifty percent of the profit from this venture was used to support the work of the ministry and this practice continues. In early 2016, after many years of personally building up the farm, Albin took out a personal FARMS loan to buy additional cows to help provide for his family. Through hard work and wise decisions, his herd quickly grew to 16 cows; some are pictured here. This is truly a miracle of God's provision. **Not only did the help of FARMS greatly benefit his family, it also facilitated the indigenous support of a ministry reaching hundreds of unreached Hindus and others with the gospel, especially children.** This is just one of many examples of how your generosity has tangibly improved lives and helped the spread the gospel in places of great need.



As a supporter of FARMS International, you have made this work possible. Some of you have partnered with FARMS for decades and all of you share in the fruit. During last September, a group of us from FARMS visited Cuba. During the training of a new committee, I shared how our supporters give generously; not because you are rich, but because you love God and those that need help. In particular, I shared about a woman named Linda, whom I have never met, but for as long as I can remember, she faithfully gives two quarters taped to a card in her remittance envelope. Sometimes, she includes a note or a tract. As I shared her story, my Cuban interpreter, Bart, (pictured on left) had tears in his eyes and could hardly continue. **Her fruit will remain.**



We find it hard to express how thankful we are for your love. **Pat and I consider you family.** Your notes, calls, and hospitality have meant so much to us over the years. Therefore, we are confident that you will continue to support this ministry; there is so much more that needs to be done. Jesus said, **"...whenever you wish you may do them good."** Mark 14:7 This is our prayer.

On a personal note, Pat and I are looking forward to how God will direct our path. We know that I will be consulting with FARMS and possibly doing some travel. In addition, we sense the need to spend some extended time visiting places we have worked to encourage and teach. I will also be writing a book about our mission experiences and what God has taught us. Let us know your interest in this project. We also look forward to what else the Lord has in store. And of course, as good grandparents and great grandparents, we trust to spend more time with family. Pray for us as we enter this new chapter in our lives.

Love,
Joe & Pat