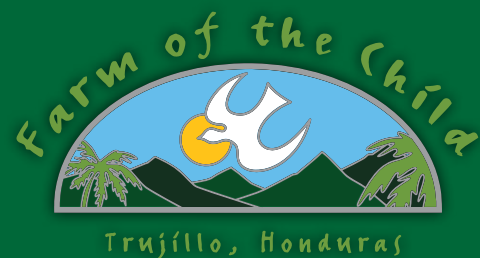


# FRIENDS OF THE FARM

A NEWSLETTER FOR OUR SUPPORTERS

FALL 2009



## Into the World

By Anne Klinkhammer

2009 is a big year for Farm of the Child. After welcoming nine new children to the family at the beginning of the year, we now celebrate the high school graduation of three of our young adults: Joel, Isabel (Isa) and Enma. Each has spent over half of his/her life at the Farm maturing in faith, hope and love. Each came to the Farm carrying the weight of a past no parent wishes for his/her child. Each entered the Farm with four other siblings to learn that "family" can become a hodge-podge community of adults and kids.

As they prepare to leave the Farm, we are attentive to their reflections.

### When someone mentions the words "Farm of the Child" to you, what do you think of?

*(Enma)* Farm of the Child means open hearts, lives that are saved and changed emotionally, spiritually and socially. Farm of the Child is a home of love and peace.

### Describe one of your favorite Farm moments.

*(Joel)* The Christmas season because the Farm community exemplifies an authentic Christian Christmas celebration (complete with Posadas, mass, gifts and the emphasis on being together).

### What have you learned through being a member of the Farm family?

*(Enma)* I have changed my way of thinking and have been given a new heart through learning to let go of pain and receive love. I've learned from all those at the Farm who give without asking for anything in return.

### What do you most appreciate about the Farm?

*(Joel)* I appreciate the special attention given to each child and the sense of well-being that I feel every time I am there. I feel as though I am amongst family, that the Farm **IS** my family.



Enma, Joel, Isabel

### How has the Farm prepared you for your future?

*(Isa)* It has taught me to study, to work and to share with those most in need. It has helped me to analyze the future and to grow in life's values. It has taught me to appreciate others, the church and my faith.

### Do you plan to maintain communication with the Farm in your future?

*(Enma)* Yes, I want to help support the Farm through continuing to pray for all those that are a part of the project, looking for donors and calling the Farm family often.

### What are three of your goals you have upon stepping into independent life?

*(Isa)* (1) To follow the example that the Farm has taught me, such as being involved in the Church. (2) To maintain communication with the Farm, setting the example for other children. (3) To develop myself through university studies so as to be able to give more to others.

### What will you most miss about Farm life?

*(Joel)* I will miss living on the Farm; I will miss playing with the children, telling them jokes and making them laugh; I will also miss the volunteers, especially the visits of former volunteers.

With much pride and love, we send Enma, Joel and Isa into the world, hoping we have prepared them for all that is to come and trusting that God will bless them at every moment with the grace necessary for their journey.

### Reflections from Our New Volunteers

I hope to experience a greater degree of love, compassion, patience, hope, and faith through my ministry at Farm of the Child. I hope to develop some close friendships with fellow volunteers, the Finca community, and the greater community outside of the Farm. I hope to be challenged in ways that help me grow as a person and prepare me better for future life pursuits. I hope to experience a greater sense of connection with the animals, plants, and natural surroundings here in Honduras.

— Ted Nashland, Maintenance & Agriculture

I hope to laugh often with the kids, sing often in the chapel, live with gratitude for the natural beauty around us, notice the stars, learn Spanish (albeit clumsily), share mangos with our neighbors, write lots of letters home and grow personally, professionally, spiritually, and communally. Ultimately, I hope that my experience here stretches and expands my capacity for love.

— Sheena Jacobi, Social Worker

My excitement lies in what is to come. I know that God plans only the best for those He loves, so I am eagerly awaiting His plan. I am eager to start planning events for my job, to start creating lasting relationships with each person at the Farm.

— Kristina Ramos, Spiritual Life & Community Outreach



Welcome to the Finca Kate, Alisha, Keenan, Francesca, Erin, Sheena, Ted and Kristina

SPIRITUALITY

SERVICE

COMMUNITY

SIMPLICITY

# I ONLY HAVE THREE THINGS TO SAY

by Joel Álvarez (Menocal)



Here I am, pen in hand  
with paper anxiously waiting  
for the quill's fine point  
to scratch across its skin.

Once again, it asks,  
"What will you say to me today?  
What will you tell me?"  
The pen takes life in my hand  
and I begin to write...

What I relate – I say to the pen –  
is a very important chapter in my life.  
I could make something up,  
fooling even myself,  
but to my own life, I must be true.

I am young still,  
but to relate what I must tell you  
demands a return to my infancy.  
Let me return to years past  
so that you understand, how I arrived  
in the bosom of this great family.

In this manner I began to relate my life.  
I say to the pen – it was many years ago  
but my memories remain intact  
as though it all happened yesterday...

I was born in Olanchito, in mountains of  
green pines.  
I had a mother...  
And when I was nine, I had a father for two  
short months.  
He's always been my father,  
but never been FATHER.

As many in Honduras, my mother suffered  
the consequences of being a single mother.  
She had six children and simultaneously  
was mother and father.

Maybe this explains her absence at  
home and my living alone with two  
older brothers.  
I have never said "mom" or "dad"  
because in my family, MOTHER was my  
grandmother and Martha was mother.

Did we attend school there?  
Yes, I remember being forced to go  
as my grandmother was raised by the old  
"Stubbornness is treated with a stick."

About 1998 my grandmother dies.  
She dies of cancer I don't know where –  
I was a child.  
Two years later, my mother becomes sick  
and is bed-ridden.

Every day I would get up,  
and walk half an hour to bring home  
the milk.  
My other brothers roamed around  
going to the market or hanging out in  
the streets.

My eldest brother smoked.  
At twelve, he would enter discos  
and shine shoes.  
Our friends were gangsters,  
thugs, people of the street  
who now are in the cemetery.

In 1999, a North American  
appeared in our house,  
proposing that we go to a  
"Farm of the Child."  
My first thought was that there must be  
bananas there,  
or children that grew bananas.

At the end of '99, I lost my mother.  
How I wish that she were here today  
and could see my accomplishments.  
She lives and will always live in my memory,  
soul, heart and mind.

In 2000, we arrived at the Farm.  
I still remember the frustrated face  
we each had.  
I still had not realized that the  
Farm of the Child  
was a mother sent by God  
to replace the vacancy in my heart.

God saved me and gave me His hand.  
All my friends in Olanchito are dead.  
They became gangsters.  
They took the wrong path and lost.  
Poor guys, they didn't have a hand  
to guide them,  
or maybe they did, but were too late  
in realizing.

When I arrived at the Finca, I was a rebel,  
not to the same extent as my brothers,  
but each of us fought and wanted to  
be in charge.

I didn't understand when my mother  
became sick,  
I, who slept by her side and brought  
her the juice  
I'd earned throwing out trash at the  
fast food joint.  
There were times when my brother would  
find me out and rob me of my food.

My mother, upon becoming ill,  
would kneel and stay near her bed  
in silence.  
And I? I was filled with fear.  
Only now do I understand that  
she was praying.

I was at my grandmother's side  
when she departed this world.  
I was there when my mother died  
and left never to return again.

I only have three things to say:  
Thanks to God.  
Thanks to the Farm of the Child.  
Thanks to all who make possible  
this work of mercy.

Yes, I am grateful to this great community  
that is my family  
because it is my second mother,  
because it scooped me into its arms  
and gave to me its entire heart.

Thank you  
for being in the night of my life...  
a Star.

And with a sigh of triumph,  
a flash of lightning on the paper  
and the pen ceased,  
limiting itself to sign:

by Joel Álvarez (Menocal).

## Lessons from the Farm of the Child

By Fr. Mike Erwin

Pastor, St. Alphonsus & St. John the Evangelist Parishes

We discovered on our relatively short mission trip that a high priority of such a trip is to learn about other people's lives, culture, and ministry. I could fill many bulletin articles about the lessons we have gained. This first has to do with the pillars of values that the orphanage maintains for all involved from leaders to teachers and to the children. These pillars are:



**SPIRITUALITY** - The orphanage encourages prayer and discernment in all things. Following our Catholic tradition, they begin the day at 6:00 a.m. with morning prayer or a communion service. Every day ends with a rosary and Thursday night includes a holy hour of adoration. Each Sunday they all get dressed up and go into town to the parish (in this case the Cathedral) for mass with the greater Catholic community. Individual prayer is certainly encouraged throughout as well.

**SERVICE** - Not only do the volunteers from the United States live a life of service but all are encouraged to do the same. When visiting with one of their high schoolers, I asked what service work he does and he quickly stated he helps feed the poor. We had extra pizza at our meal together and he felt we should give it to the poor on our way home in spite of others wanting to keep it for themselves the next day (quite honestly this was my natural inclination as I considered the high schoolers "poor").

**COMMUNITY** - In living in tight confines, one would expect like most people sharing a house, this goal would be natural. But we all know that striving to be in community is different than sharing a house together. This means taking risks to have real conversations with each other and getting to know and love new people. Those who come through the orphanage continue to have a tight relationship with each other after entering adulthood. The volunteers become very close to each other and love gathering back together years later.

**SIMPLICITY** - Perhaps the greatest challenge to us citizens of the United States is to choose to live with less as opposed to having most of what we want. This orphanage operates, as we see in the above Community principle, as one big family who needs to share so all have what they need. We can grow in God's love by expanding that circle and live simply so all on Earth have what they need including generations to come. Perhaps as we apply this not only to treasure, but time and talent as well, we will see a path to greater peace and harmony.



**If you really want to challenge yourself, stop and think of how each of these relates to the others.**

We would do well to consider adopting these principles in our lives as a path to God's joy. In the great exchange between the Farm of the Child (Finca del Nino) and our parishes we get to give a great deal. In adopting these principles, we will gain at least as much as we give.

I believe that this will be a life changing experience and an eye-opening opportunity. In order to allow this change into my life, I plan on taking on as many roles and positions as possible while at the Farm of the Child in order to work with and be around the children as much as possible.

— Keenan Ryan, Teacher - Middle School Math

I hope that God will use this time to form me more and more into the person he has made me to be. I hope to form strong relationships with the kids and the community and really find out what it means to give of myself in service to others.

— Kate Mattoon, Teacher - 3rd and 4th Grade



I hope to experience what it means to selflessly love, what it means to live for and with others in the pursuit of something greater than myself.

— Francesca Pennino, Social Worker

I hope that I can come to know the love of God in a new way – through the kids at the Farm, through my volunteer community, through our house parents, tias and employees and Franciscan sisters...through the experience of people trying to actively and authentically recognize and respond to the love of God in their lives, and incarnate that love for each other. And I hope that, as I am asked to stretch and grow and change, I might be molded and shaped and formed into more and more of the person God calls me to be.

— Erin Ramsey, Teacher - 5th and 6th Grade

I'm looking for that 'push' towards an intimate relationship with Christ, knowing at the same time that while I am stubbornly independent, there will come a point where I need to cling to this faith which is rooted so deeply here.

— Alisha Wilkinson, Accountant and Bodega

# There is a beautiful rhythm to life at the Farm of the Child

By Sor Ana Bueso and Peter Toohar

Today we are in the thick of our first really good downpour of the rainy season. In between trips to morning prayer in the chapel and visits to our kids' houses, we take a moment to reflect in the quiet indoors as the rain pitter-pats on the roof. Next week, five of our children will be confirmed and baptized in the faith during our annual celebration of the sacraments. In November, we will celebrate the end of the school year and the milestone graduations of our 6th graders, 9th graders, and three young adults – Enma, Isabel, and Joel – from high school in La Ceiba.

Having just received with open arms our newest bunch of spirit-filled volunteers, we also know that we are in the process of saying goodbye to eleven volunteers who complete their two (or three)-and-a-half year commitments in December. For those of us who remain, we wonder what life on the Farm will be like without Liz, Anne, Marc, Lupita, Nate, Theresa, Chris, Jenny, Annie, Raúl, and Laura – who are now armed with vibrant experiences, strong relationships with kids and neighbors, trust in God and one another, and understanding of this project.

The Farm of the Child is a transformative place. It always has been – from the days of Vincent learning to fly planes and Zulena courageously taking the helm of the project. And we know that God provides. We know because we have faith.

So when this amazing group of volunteers – who've stuck together from their first stumbling Spanish sentences in September 2007 through their return home in December 2009 – say their goodbyes to the kids and those of us who remain on the Farm, the tears that will be shed will be tears of gratitude and faith: **Faith that God will transform each of us here to carry out His mission at the Farm of the Child. Faith that God will continue to provide for the needs of our children and the children of Honduras. Faith that God will grant our volunteers safe journeys to whatever is next in their lives. And faith that God will keep them close to us in prayer and back to see us again someday.**

We pause to thank and remember all of the volunteers and benefactors who have answered God's call to provide for the Farm of the Child this year, throughout our history, and in the years ahead.

## Goodbye Volunteers!

Muchas gracias por todo su amor para la Finca



FRONT: Lupita Galván, Laura Stankiewicz, Annie Lauer, Elizabeth Smith  
BACK: Jenny Montague, Theresa Conroy, Nathan Conroy, Ryan (Raúl) Gross, Anne Klinkhammer, Chris Castro  
INSET: Marc Rugani

## Our Gift to You!

Farm of the Child Christmas Cards

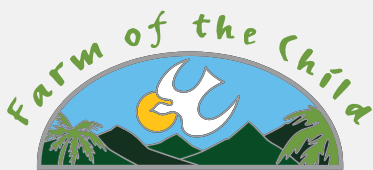


A two-card series of watercolor portraits of two of the beloved children at Farm of the Child, designed by Kathy Turner.

Interior of card reads: May the joy and peace of Christmas be with you today and throughout the New Year.

## Order Now:

Contact Dan Mechenbier at [djmech3@aol.com](mailto:djmech3@aol.com) or call 904-221-7773 with name, address, and number of cards desired.



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We exist because generous people donate money and time to help fulfill our mission – to provide for orphaned Honduran children.



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