



Doing Good That Is Good

The newsletter of FARMS International

March 2018: A story of faith and vision from the Philippines

Providing revolving entrepreneurial loans to poor Christian families - Galatians 6:10

Dear Friends,

Greetings to all of you in Jesus!

FARMS is people, people who love God, people like you. FARMS is people helping people, because they love God and want to do his will. We are a beautiful family knit together spiritually from around the world. We pray for the poor of our family, even though we may not know their names, and they pray for us! Through our help many thank God for his provision and blessings made possible by your faithfulness. This is real family, God's children. Our reward is in heaven, therefore we are encouraged to "*...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" Matt. 6:20-21

Everywhere I travel I meet people that truly impress and fascinate me. **They radiate with joy, real joy.** Their lives are not without difficulties, in fact they face what most of us would consider insurmountable circumstances, yet they have learned to thrive. Their smiles come from deep within, they are contagious! Their lives demonstrate a deep abiding faith, that many would find hard to relate too. I often wonder how one would respond, would we thrive in a similar situation? God said, he has, "*...chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*" What a challenge to us, we can learn so much from our "extended" family, their faith challenges us! Yes, we can thrive, even in the most difficult situations of life. This is what encourages me to see the FARMS family grow. Thank you for being part of this wonderful family.

Vic Estabillo Jr. is a man that inspires my hope. A genuine FARMS inspiration. His story is special, like so many others. He is a great example of joy and faith coupled with hard work and vision. **Christ has given him determination and strength to take what he finds in his hand to create wealth.** I believe as you read his story, you will be encouraged in so many ways. *Joe Richter*

Vic's Story

Vic grew up in a small rural village named Aguilar in Pangasinan, Philippines. This rice farming community was remote and suffered from

persistent poverty. His parents were farmers. One day in 1986, he heard some exciting news. It would change his life forever. His school principal invited a Philippine children's ministry to run a children's camp for their students. Vic was in Grade 5, and eagerly set off to attend the camp. There he gave his life to the Lord Jesus.

In 1995, Vic's interest in agriculture led him to take a course in poultry management at Central Luzon University. During this intensive course, Vic noticed a persistent infection in his left foot! The doctors' only recommendation was to amputate his foot to stop the infection. This terrifying news lead to a serious encounter with the Lord. **Vic was a Christian, but like many others, he had never dedicated his whole life to the Lordship of Jesus. He prayed, "God, if you have a plan for my life to serve you, please heal my foot."** Miraculously, God told him what the doctors needed to do to stop the infection. A small incision was made and the infection poured out and in time, he was completely healed. Vic described his life after this miracle this way,

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Nice crop of okra! Besides the greenhouse operation, Vic grows a large variety of organic vegetables for market and home consumption.



Squash flowers for a salad!
Vic's daughter, Shekinah, is a real helper.



Vic's family: Victoriano, Shekinah, Melanie and Melvic

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"The Lord healed me there and I became a fiery go-go volunteer church worker, youth leader, evangelist, and Bible study leader."

His leadership skills were clearly recognized, and in 1997, he became the assistant pastor in a new church plant in Aguilar, Pangasinan. After finishing his Pastoral Ministry Course in 1998, he was installed as the pastor. In that same year, he volunteered to assist a group of senior pastors and a medical missions' team in an outreach to the island Province of Masbate. Providentially, on board their ship, Vic met Eduardo Ariba. During the following year, Eduardo was instrumental in establishing him in mission work on the island. Yet, there is more to this story. Eduardo was the uncle of Melanie, who became Vic's wife five years later!

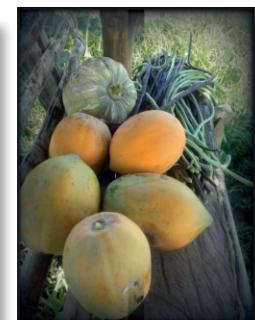
While in Masbate, Vic saw the poverty and the hopelessness of the people in the rural areas and felt a call to become a missionary there. Little did he know, that a young Christian lady, with alcoholic parents, was praying that God would send a missionary to Masbate so that her parents would come to know the Lord. That lady, was Melanie! Sometime later, Vic just happened to meet her on a ship heading to Masbate. There was an immediate bond and in 2004, Vic married the "love of his life."

Vic started his ministry evangelizing deep in a rural area of Province of Masbate. He worked hard to help the new believers to become self-sufficient through his knowledge of agriculture. Never the less, without a demonstration farm it was hard to convince them to turn from their old unsustainable ways. **He decided to ask his father in Pangasinan to sell his future inheritance land so that he could lease 5 acres of farmland and to buy a small tiller. With his demonstration farm, his holistic ministry approach became very effective and the church he planted grew very fast.** Sadly, without adequate funding and time constraints, he had to stop the farm and focus on church ministry. Added to that, his sending agency, Church of the Philippines, stopped all missionary support.

Vic pushed on, using his gardening skills to provide for himself and his new wife, but life was difficult. **He was dismayed by the poverty around him. He was even more dismayed by the moneylenders that preyed on the farmers with up to a 100% interest rate on a 3-month loan!** Lacking opportunity, parents left the area to find work in larger cities, breaking up their families. This all weighed on his heart.

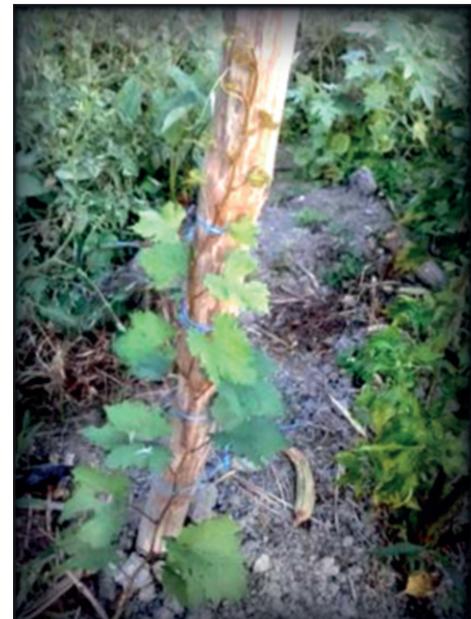


Greenhouse in the tropics? Vic and Jaime Garcia examine leafy vegetables that are growing during the rainy season. The greenhouse makes this possible. Organic vegetables like these command a high price during this off season.



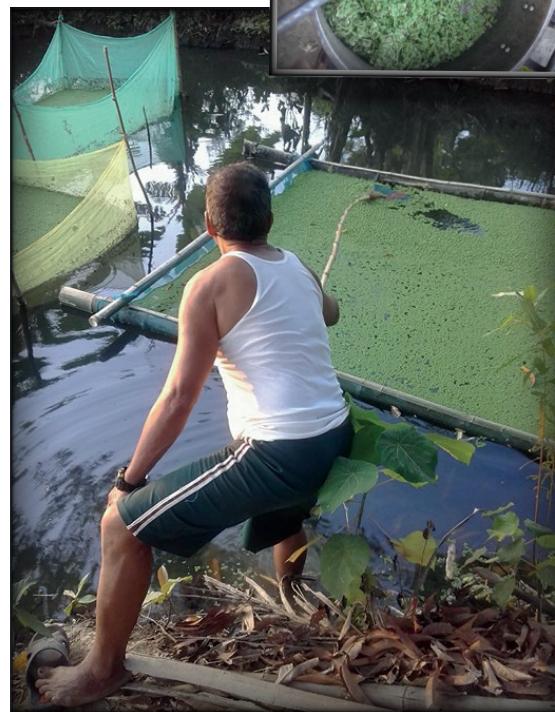
Melons and string beans, they are all organic!
Also grown are corn, eggplant, taro, sugar cane, and squash.

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Vic strives to work with nature even with pest control. In the photo on the left, taken from a video he made, he explained that he grows sugar cane (behind him) around his garden to keep the insects from seeing his light trap in his garden, especially when the surrounding rice is harvested. In the evenings he uses an improvised insect trap, with a low watt bulb, that traps insects in the oil below.

He also shared that he is growing a specialty black rice organically. During the pre-flowering time he uses an all natural "bio-spray" made from tubli, a natural insect killer from a wild vine, citronella an insect repellant, fermented fish amino acid + potassium from fermented banana blossom or heart. His approach not only provides healthy food for his family, but it also increases his income from his crops that are grown organically.



Thinking out of the box, one of Vic's projects was raising the native black pig! This really was a surprise, because of their slow growth rate. He explained why he grows them. First off, they can be grown on locally grown vegetation, such as banana stalks and leaves, no commercial feed needed.

Also, they require no antibiotics. And finally, they are of the preferred size and are a low fat animal, perfect for a Filipino favorite, lechon. Lechon is made by roasting a whole pig over an open fire. So his animals, that cost little to raise, command a very good price, and they are sort of cute!

Vic is seen here harvesting azolla, also called aquatic fern. Azolla is called a super plant because it can fix nitrogen from the air. This is possible because of the symbiotic cyanobacterium that is part of the plant. This fast growing plant can double its biomass in 3 to 10 days. Vic feeds it to his laying ducks, chickens and pigs, and also feeds it to his tilapia. What is left over, he composts to use as rich source of nitrogen in his garden!



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Even though it was very difficult for Vic and Melanie, now with their first child, they decided that they needed to focus on their family needs and leave Masbate. **Vic had heard that in his home village of Aguilar, his father, Victoriano Sr., who was a pastor, was heading up a new livelihood ministry through FARMS International. This gave them hope for their future.** As they left Masbate, they assured the believers that they would pray that someday, God would also bring the ministry of FARMS to Masbate. We are praying with him about this possibility.

Vic's first loan with FARMS was for a laying duck project. Over the years, he has had several loans for various organic farming projects. **He is so thankful for these projects and for those that support FARMS.** His projects have become the sole source of income for their young family and have enabled them to send their three children to school. *JR*



High antioxidant Bignay fruit, is being tested by Vic.

P.S.

God has given Vic a vision to help the poor, especially out of school youth and FARMS project holders. **He would like to establish an organic agricultural training site in his home village.** He believes this approach is a viable way to teach self-sufficiency crop and animal raising, and other useful horticultural skills. **Of course, this will require funding. If this is an endeavor you might be interested in supporting, please contact us.** FARMS' ministry focuses on our loan program, but we would help facilitate seeing this training program site developed, if God lays this on your heart.

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