

Dear Friends,

Let's start from where we last dropped.

We returned to Kurseong and began the serious time of new scholastic year. With our children it's not that serious, though the teachers in the school try to keep the discipline. I have no permission to come to school except to give lunch and to collect them after 4p.m. when the school is over (seems like I have bad influence on them).

As I mentioned in last letter, we had **Franco** for our shifting programme. He was so good and helpful. And not just in journey back to Kurseong. First time in our kitchen we had a **real cook!**

But besides being a real cook, he also turned to be a real friend to us all. And when you appreciate a real friend most? Yes,

when you are in
trouble or in need.



So you will see now that there are also some troubles in our little compound. Every Friday we have Holy Mass and spiritual talk with parish priest of Prabhu Jesu Church in Matigara, which is our parish in Siliguri. So every week I go down to the plains. That particular Friday after the 'spiritual breakfast' served by Fr. Paulus we went to get some more earthly stuff for the Hill house. We got everything except eggs. I stopped the car on the opposite side of the road and was crossing to buy eggs. But before even reaching the eggs shop a motorcycle hit me from one side and another rolled over my legs. I got one but big EGG

...on my forehead. People were very kind to help me get to sitting position, got the ice on my head and after awhile took me to the car where Usha with Chiaciu and Dona were waiting in horror. And the egg seller drove us back to our house. I got the necessary medical treatment. God as ever thinks for us to the last detail and that's why Franco was in Kurseong. We phoned him and entrusted the children to his care. I was really at peace because by that time we already knew that we can rely on Franco. He is such a kind person. With his reassuring words that I can stay and get better, I remained for a while in Siliguri and indeed got better.

So better that now again I drive the car (and the cows out of my way). This environment friendly ‘speed breakers’ – the cows, are really lessening the accidents in India. Unfortunately there was none when on that memorable Friday I crossed the road. Would they be on duty that time....

But I don’t keep grudge neither against heavens, nor against anyone here below and certainly not against the cows. In fact each time I remember the accident my heart is filled with gratitude to God as if I got back my life- my little resurrection.

Other news- we got a handloom machine to make cloth. Already Usha and Porimol learn the skill which later they have to pass on to our girls. Along with the machine came the ‘teacher’- a man from the village from where we imported the handloom machine. I hope you are not fed



Out of my way, please.

Don’t look at the picture too long... the bobbin may hit your head when I pull the string.



up with my ‘remarks’- always the same or similar. Here comes one more. The world was created to be harmonious. The sin distorted this harmony. When things are as God wants them, everything is fine, even if motorcycle makes his way through your legs because God’s Destiny rules the big world and our little world as well. Take, for instance, the man who teaches us the skill. We call him Gandhiji because he walks around only in his

lunki (cloth around the waist), always cheerful, does his work with devotion, now spinning the tread,

now making the cloth. The machine itself is from original Gandhiji’s times, and its clamor takes you many years back. I was observing our ‘Gandhiji’ at work, how every movement has to go harmoniously. The moment the harmony is disturbed comes disaster-the tread breaks. Then he has to repair the little damage and back to harmony. It looks easy but when I got my chance to learn, the bobbin with the tread flew like a cricket ball hit by our famous Tendulkar.

We have great hopes to teach our young girls and boys some skills that will be useful in life. For now we are making cloth so to make from that material simple outfits or/and bags. This is



Easter Joy is that of being again with those we love.

my little dream but I know that if we take the trouble, the dream will come true. In any case, the sound of the machine already makes me feel good. Occupation is an important therapy. I remember my Mistress in formation, when she saw some candidates dragging themselves or even worse-giving up, she would give them (hm...us because at times I also was in that batch) manual work to do to put us back on right track. It really worked. I tried it recently. I was so down and couldn't find a place of rest-none of the prayers worked. . As I was tossing myself between different problems; interior and exterior, I remembered the good time in formation and I thought to myself- let me try the old method. There next to our school people cleaned the drain and threw all the stuff on the road just near our gate. Each time we were passing that way (twice a day) the pile disturbed me but taken by other occupation I left the heap where it was. I think the pile was waiting for me. I put on the apron, called Ningma to assist me (our mentally retarded worker), got some bags and went to do the necessary. As we started the job, I realized that the pile is not that useless to throw it away because it was nothing else but the forest compost- during the rains all the leaves fell to the drain and decomposed thus becoming excellent manure for the vegetables garden. Just we had to remove the non decomposable plastic. Within no time we became a focus of some local residents who always welcome any unusual happening as they sit the whole day long and wait for such happening. On the end of the day everyone got 'appetite' for the pile of forest compost and unsurprisingly- it looked so rich, fertile. Now that Fr. Abraham's 'factory' of compost is closed down the compost is very prized item and not easy to get it either. The following night I tossed in my bed this time with another anxiety... that by next day we won't find anything to collect. But fortunately, though the onlookers liked the pile, they don't like to take the trouble to collect it in the bags. So we got all. But after those two days of hard work, simple, manual, I got cure of my spiritual ailments.

We had another visit to distract us from the 'ordinary' and to remind us that people care and come to tell us just that. That is also another cure for our 'spiritual ailments'.

Jane Davidson and Julie Franc, Fr. Abraham's great friends and helpers from Canada brought not just box of special cloths protecting you from pneumonia, knitted by ladies in Jane's parish and blessed by Father- but also so much joy, a foretaste of Easter Joy.

And then... here comes the **Easter gift!** It did not come from chocolate egg but from the nearby village, next to Maranatha house. Being so close to Passion Week I would say **Pinki** came from the darkness of the tomb of extreme poverty. She is approximately 7 yrs. and was abandoned by her parents. Grandparents took care of her. They do the odd job of collecting the sand and stone pebbles, like the rest of the river bank population. As you approach our area you can see everywhere people breaking the river stones: women, children, elderly. Then, on the river bank everyone collects the sand, piles and piles everywhere. In the scorching heat that already began it is an unimaginable condition. But that is the way these people survive. Yes, they can only survive because the payment they get is next to nothing. The real money gets the 'dada' (big brother) who 'owns' the area and so he and not those



The poor people's sweat makes the rich even more rich.

who do this work, sells all the sand and stones and so makes money. Pinki is Dawn Syndromes child, innocent and lovable.



My name is Pinki

And this is my home

As the grandparents would go for job, she used to be on her own, walking around aimlessly. When grandmother died the grandfather was gravely worried about Pinki but he loved her and so he cared for her the way he could. She was full of sores, with tummy blown up by the 'inhabitants' that most of the poor have (because of lack of hygiene and not because poor have something special for parasites to offer). As the news about our home started to circulate he turned to us with hope that couldn't be turned down.

All the parents or relatives we came across who have handicapped child under their care, share the same anxiety, namely what will happen when they are no more there to care and protect such vulnerable being? Here, on this point I understand them very, very intensely. We share the same anxiety, which however is 'cool down' and put to bearable burden because we know that there is Someone who cares about us all, who loves to the point that He did not spare His own Son for us- the Heavenly Father. Here is the remedy for our anxiety- especially when we are losing hope- to remember that His love is greater than our disappointments and His Plans for our life are better than our dreams. He never turns off those who trust Him wholly. The same Father who provided the relief for Pinki's grandpa will see to our need. Now Pinki walks around our compound, clean and neat and happy. Beginning she missed her grandpa but Usha now and then walks with her for a visit to their home. Needless to say that we are glad that once again we, with your kind support, could transform the darkness and pain of living in extreme poverty into the life and joy of New Life -Easter.

With loving wishes, **Flame of Hope family**



