



## *Christmas 2012*

**PEACE !!**



**JOY !!**



**LOVE !!**



Dear Friends:

Today is a beautiful sunshine day at SOJASI. On our way to SOJASI, after the rain and the long foggy weather we could see the majestic Kanchenjunga range far away. It feels very good. If Father Abe were here he would say “maza-ko hoi-na,” which means, “It’s beautiful. Isn’t it? -- in Nepali!

As soon as we reached SOJASI, Divya, my office assistant and I collected marigold flowers to keep for seeds for next year. We have beautiful local varieties with different shades of gold. Marigolds are sacred flowers here in India, especially in the hills. They are used for “pujas”, “Bhai-tika”--brothers’ day-- and “Diwali,” the festival of lights, celebrations. Marigolds are used to make garlands, and decorations of “pandals,” (high decorated alters of different shapes and sizes where idols of different diets are worshipped) and homes. Fr. Abe used to say a special Mass in honour of ‘Christ the light of the world’ during “Diwali”. We used to decorate the altar with lots of marigold garlands and marigold flowers and candles. We felt so happy and enlightened after the Mass. We could happily and equally relate with and greet our Hindu friends. And now I think that is how Fr. Abe gave us firsthand experience of “love your neighbour as thy self” because “Christ is the Light of the world” and “He came for all people”.

Fr. Abe all his life provided food, shelter and education to all poor and needy people, “His” people, without discriminating because of their age, caste, creed or colour. Of course Fr. Abe did this miracle with you, with your love and generosity, for so many years. Thank you very much.

Recently I was looking at a magazine called “Jesuits” and most of its contents were about “inter religious dialogue,” dialogue with Islam, dialogue with Hinduism, dialogue with Buddhism and so on. It is a very serious and important topic at present in the world. Fr. Abe so simply and clearly taught us that we are all brothers and sisters and we are children of one God, our Father in Heaven. We have to love and respect each other; we have to take care of each other and His beautiful gifts, our land, forest water and environment. Fr. Abe’s life and vision were so great and simple.

The SAS alumni organized an all-religion prayer service for Fr. Abraham on the 5th of Sept., on Teachers’ Day. It was very appropriate and suitable for Fr. Abe because Father himself was a great teacher. People of all walks of life came for this prayer meeting for Fr. Abe. The priests of all great religions, Islam, Hindu, Sikh, Christian, and Buddhist, chanted their prayers so piously and respectfully that the whole SAS hall transformed into God’s abode, so peaceful, so beautiful and so harmonious. I felt the actual presence of Fr. Abe there among the priests. And I felt that reflected Fr. Abe’s life and vision.

Good Sheppard village is a small village of 26 homes built by Fr. Abe in Simanatar near Deorali. The majority of the villagers are Buddhist, second is Hindu and Christians are minorities, only six families. But still village people around Simanatar and Deorali held an all-religion prayer in respect for Fr. Abe on the 7th Sept.

Buddhist lamas chanted their prayers; a “Bahun bajay” (Nepali Hindu priest) chanted his Hindu prayers and a Catholic priest said Mass. All the village people, young and old, respectfully lighted little oil lamps and remained prayerfully and peacefully all together in one room of the unfinished community hall (again started by Fr. Abe). I was totally moved by this. And again for me it reflected Fr. Abe’s life and vision.

I was actually talking about marigolds previously. I have not forgotten my bottom line. This year we tried to grow more marigold flowers, but the non-stop monsoon rain killed most of the saplings. The surviving plants bloomed late, just after the “Diwali” and “Bhai Tika,” celebrations. Next year we will grow marigold seedlings in the green house and plant them outside when it rains less. We have to think and try new ways to generate money so we can help more people.

We cannot compete with huge varieties of vegetables from the plains. They are in the market earlier because in the plains varieties of vegetables grow fast. But our organic Vegetables are tasty and good for health!

I miss Fr. Abe in many ways: in his vision, mission and work. But I also believe he is with us in our work at SOJASI, in Simanatar-Deorali, Chimney among his people, at Wood Cot (Ex-SASAC) where there will be a spiritual centre soon, at SAS among the students and staff and among all people who were touched by Fr. Abe with his love, joy and peace forever.

When Jesus our Lord ascended to heaven he said he would send the Holy Spirit in his place to guide mankind. When Fr. Abe went home to his Father, he brought us Immanuel, the Lord is with us!

May Baby Jesus bless Fr. Abe and all of us with His Peace! Joy! And Love! Merry Christmas to you all and Happy New Year!

With love and prayers,

*Cecilia*

