



Easter 2012

Dear Friends:

PEACE !!



JOY !!



LOVE !!



I'm so happy that my Easter letter will reach you on time to greet our Risen Lord! I'm going to tell you what we've been doing since last year December.

SOJASI staff took a break of one-week winter holiday in the first week of January. Then we organized a month-long Work Scholarship program for thirteen village school-going children from 17th January to 10th February until their new school session started. These children are from around SOJASI and need financial help for their books and fees. The mother of two of the children is a widow and ex-SASAC worker who works at SOJASI as a casual worker now. They lost their father two years ago. He was sick and out of work. One day he hanged himself. Their mother was working as a maid in a teacher's house at that time. She had to leave this job to be with her little children at home. Since then she is working at SOJASI and very happy. Thanks to our faithful friends!



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Another grandmother who works at SOJASI has two abandoned granddaughters to support. She herself is also a widow. So I selected this kind of special children for the SOJASI Work Scholarship Program.

During their training, the children got a feel for and know-how about Square Meter Vegetable Gardening (SMVG) and oyster mushroom production. This winter was quite cold. The children were delighted to play with warm straw while making mushroom cylinders. They got a good hot lunch every day during the program. Sometimes we served them bread-jam, eggs and hot tea, or hot noodles and bread-butter, or sometimes rice-'dal' and vegetable curries. I totally agree with Fr Abraham that 'hungry children cannot learn anything'.



Getting the SMVG plot ready for re-planting.



Learning to use a template for correct seed spacing.

The children spent their time mostly learning reading and writing English in our kitchen-cum-dining-cum-meeting room which is the warmest room in winter. All these children go to local schools and cannot learn proper English. They do not have input from home. Fr Abe used to say that if you learn English you can learn anything by reading books in any subject. It is very true. So I followed his method while teaching them. I selected a simple book he used to teach. Children of class 3 to 10th level read it. Funny thing, smaller children learn faster. But the older children work hard to learn. It is so heart-warming an experience to see these children so happy and keen to learn. I think we should have this Work Scholarship program every winter. their school holiday time. There will be more children next year. We have to find the poorest and the neediest. They don't come on their own, we have to hunt for them and bring them.



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Shanti Lakpa Doma got a two-week holiday from her nursing school. She gave some tips on hygiene, health and care to our children. Nine of my Morning Star children went to relatives for two weeks in winter. Eight of them stayed back with me because they don't have a place to go to. But they came with me to SOJASI every day and they were like big sisters and brothers to our village children. To wrap up the Work Scholarship program, they put up a cultural show on the 10th of Feb 2012. It was a wonderful idea to end a month long program with children's dances and songs, followed by a delicious meal of rice-'dal', meat, egg and vegetable curry. Fr Abe had not come back from the plains so we invited Fr John Cherian to be the guest of honour for the children's cultural program. (Fr Cherian is the Secretary of SOJASI board.) After the cultural program, our children got their stipend for their books and fees.

We have two additions to our Morning Star home from the children of our Work Scholarship program. Now we are a family of 20 children and two adults. I'm still giving birth!

The last two weeks of December were quite hectic but very pleasant.

Fr Abraham was one of the honoured guests during the four-day Tea and Tourism Festival 2011-12 that was held from 22nd to 25th of December 2011 in SAS hall in Kurseong.

The SOJASI team booked a stall to display our organic vegetables, compost and mushrooms during the festival. The team sold vegetable soup, 'momoes', salad and mushroom 'pakoras'. We didn't make profit from our vegetables and the food we sold. There were practically no tourists-customers during that time. It was not the season for tourists. Secondly, we stuck to our theme "organic" and from our garden! But for the long run we advertised SOJASI as a Home of Organic Farming!



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We have two additions to our Morning Star home: Sheetal and Kajol.

On the 29th of December, we celebrated Christmas at SOJASI. We invited Fr Paul Lepcha from St. John's parish to offer Christmas Mass especially for five Christian families who are settled in "Good Sheppard Village", a village of 26 homes built by Rev Fr JM Abraham in Simanatar near SOJASI. We had a newly ordained priest Paulose Namchu, to offer Holy Mass for all of us.

I'm so happy and grateful to our dear friends who have made it possible for us to do all these good things for His people. Thank you so much.

Happy EASTER!!! The LORD IS RISEN!!! Alleluia!!!

With love and prayers,

Cecilia