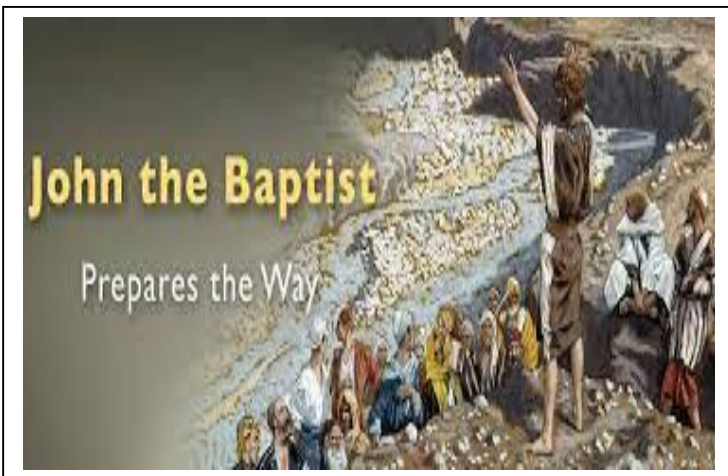


SASAC – NEWS (October– December 2023)



SASAC, Sepoydhura, Tung P.O., Kurseong – 734224, Darjeeling District, West Bengal, India. Email: sasac.sojasi@gmail.com

He (John the Baptist) went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God’s salvation.” - Luke 3:3-6



Pope Francis encouraged people to carefully prepare their hearts with prayer and with charity. Prayer and active charity are the two sides of the same coin. One without other is incomplete. Someone asked Jesus which is the greatest commandment and his reply was, “Love God... and Love your neighbour as yourself”. Charity is not feeling pity and giving out something. It is recognizing the other person as an image of God and a person with human dignity. Mother Teresa says, “It’s not how much we give but how much LOVE we put into giving.”

time, concrete assistance." Advent, he said, also is a good time to "approach his forgiveness" through the sacrament of reconciliation and make more time for prayer and Bible reading. Remaining vigilant may take practice, he said, and starts by not letting oneself be distracted by "pointless things" and by trying not to complain so much. This is a beautiful piece of advice from Pope Francis. We spend so much time, energy and money for “Pointless things” in our lives and specially during the Christmas season. Let us give importance this time to the “meaningful things” like relationships, sharing and caring, forgiving, reconciliation, fostering peace and harmony and by doing so making our “Common Home” a peaceful place to live in for all of us, God’s children.

A good program for Advent," pope Francis suggested, would be "to encounter Jesus coming in every brother and sister who needs us and to share with them what we can: listening,

-Fr. Pramod Dabhi SJ

SUPERIOR'S TRAINING PROGRAM:



Fr. Pramod Dabhi had an opportunity to attend a five-day Superior's Training Program at Atmadarshan in Patna from 05-10 October. The program was well designed and executed by the expert resource persons. Along with Temporal and financial management the course placed lots of importance on human relationships and human resource management. The importance was placed on creating healthy, safe and humane environment.

SPIRITUAL RETREAT: MR. PAUL & GROUP-GUJARAT



Under the leadership of Mr. Dinesh Paul from Ahmedabad (Gujarat) a group of 15 visited Woodcot for a Spiritual Retreat at the end of October. The specialty of the group was that, it was a multi-religious group. Mr. Amrutlal Vaghela, an elderly gentleman was the head of the non-Christian members of the group. Initially the group struggled because for most of them this was the first retreat. Towards the end everyone appreciated the outcome of the retreat as they experienced inner peace and harmony. Fr. Pramod gave discourse from the Bible and Bhagavad-Gita for reflection and meditation.

The group also visited my sights of tourist interests in Darjeeling and Sikkim. The group has invited Fr. Pramod to Ahmedabad on 6, January 2024 to meet again and conduct a similar program for a day.

RETREAT: MR. SOLANKI & GROUP-GUJARAT



Mr. Jayanti Solanki and fifteen other faithful came to Woodcot for a spiritual retreat in mid-November. This was a group of very pious Catholics from Chavdapura Parish. Every member of the group was well disciplined and they took the retreat very seriously. The group was extremely happy with all the spiritual activities as well as sight-seeing. As these people shared their experience back at home more and more people are interested in making their retreat at Woodcot. Mr. Solanki who planned this tour so meticulously has already fixed another tour in May 2024.

RETREAT: MR. DABHI & GROUP-AHMEDABAD



Under the leadership of Mr. Anil Dabhi a group of 22 visited Woodcot for a renewal and a retreat in mid-November. The group had an adventurous train journey from Ahmedabad to Siliguri. The total members of the group were 25, but only 13 of them could manage to board the train due to the rush of the festival season. The train was over crowded. Highly disappointed and embarrassed, the other members returned home. However, some of them managed to get the flight tickets and reached Woodcot. Those who came by the train had a hard time till they crossed the state of Bihar.

Reaching Woodcot was a great relief and a sense of achievement for the group. For Mr. Dabhi this was like a

home coming as he is an ex-Jesuit of the Darjeeling Province. He knows many places and people specially his companions during his formation time.

Though a little 'disorganized' and 'indiscipline' this group was very lively and enthusiastic. They had a nice time with Bhajan –Mandli and Garbas, the Gujarati folk dance. The group had a wonderful time together visiting the places of tourist interest in Darjeeling and Sikkim.

It looked like the Indian Railways had designed a special adventure package for this group. On their return journey to Ahmedabad their train got delayed for 12 hours!

RETREAT FOR SENIOR CITIZENS: GUJARAT



A group of 18 Senior Citizens from Anand, Gujarat came to Woodcot to make a spiritual retreat at the end of November. Anand is one of the oldest Catholic centers in Gujarat established by the Jesuit Missionaries. It is also the home parish of Fr. Pramod. The group was very glad that a Jesuit priest from their own parish is working in Darjeeling hills. Mr. Piyush Parmar, a retired teacher was the leader who carefully planned the tour in consultation with Fr. Pramod.

The group enjoyed various religious activities such as talks, meditations, Eucharist, Group sharing, Pilgrimage to the Grotto of Our Lady. They also enjoyed getting up early in the morning and walking through the forest as a part of Eco-spirituality. The group also visited the Nepal Boarder and Darjeeling town. They also visited St. Joseph's School, North Point and the Jesuit Parish in Darjeeling.

On their way back the group spent the whole day going around the Kolkata city. They had an opportunity to visit the Mother Teresa House and praying at her tomb.

The group reached home safely with plenty of good memories to cherish. Anand Parish has a large and very active Senior Citizens' group with more than 200 active members. They help and support the parish priest in all the parish activities.

ASHA TRAINING PROGRAM:



(ASHA Worker measuring the temperature of an infant)

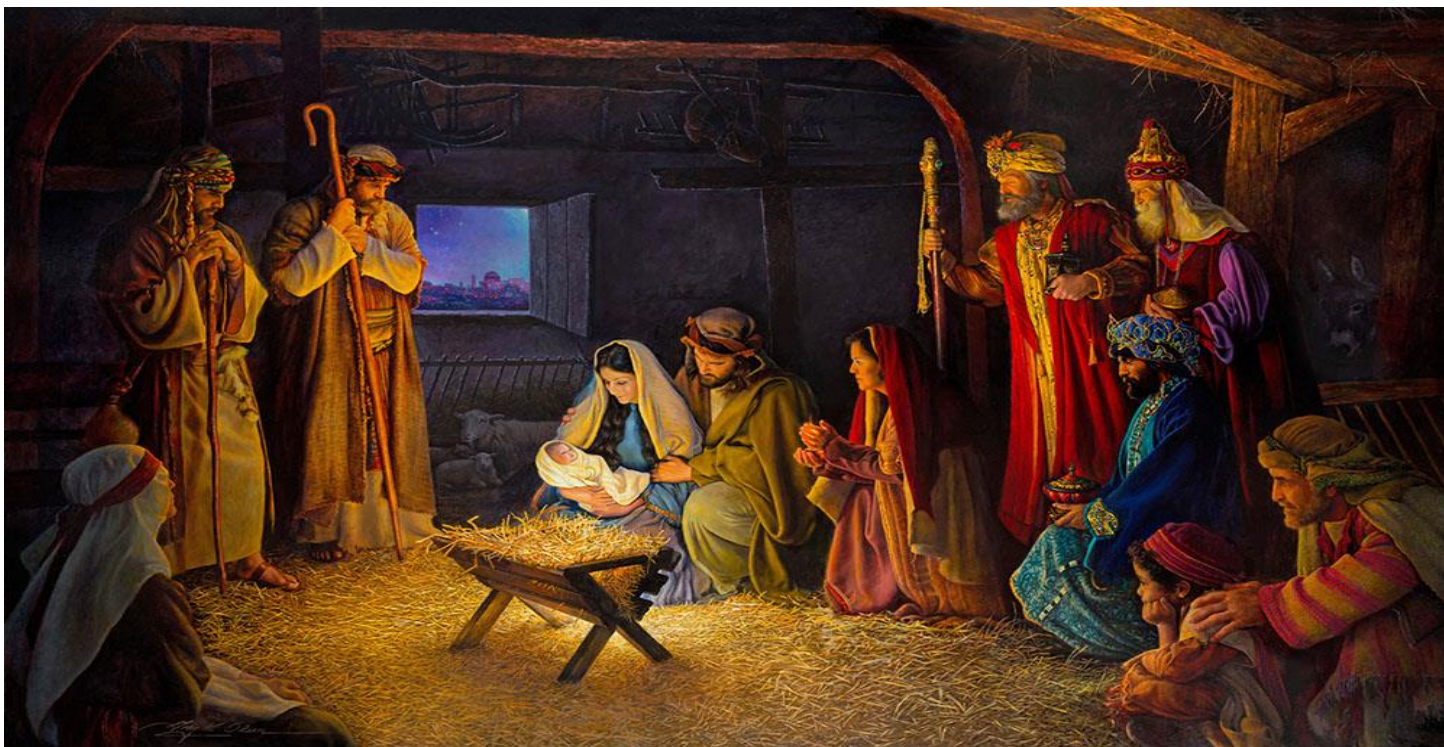
This calendar year (2023) SASAC-Woodcot successfully organized 115 training courses and trained 3147 ASHAs for Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts. ASHAs work at the grass root level with women and children. Their main aim is to prevent child mortality. Their work includes motivating rural women to give birth in hospitals, bringing infants and children to immunization centers, treating basic illness and injuries, keeping demographic records, improving village sanitation, promoting health and hygiene, surveys and so on.

We congratulate Fr. Sundeep who is the Coordinator of the ASHA Program and his entire staff who has worked hard round the year to train so many ASHAs. Fr. Pramod looked after the logistics to run the program smoothly. Due to the care and timely assistance of the ASHA Workers, hundreds of babies have seen today the light of the day.



(ASHA Worker teaching a woman who to wrap an infant)

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE: SASASC, WOODCOT, KURSEONG, INDIA



UNITED WE STAND:

The Institute of Cooperative Management for Agriculture & Rural Development has asked SASAC to organize some capacity building programs for the rural farmers. SASAC has recently conducted three such programs for 120 rural men and women. The Cooperative Management is based on seven fundamental principles.

Seven Cooperative Principles:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership. ...
2. Democratic Member Control. ...
3. Member Economic Participation. ...
4. Autonomy and Independence. ...
5. Education, Training, and Information. ...
6. Cooperation among Cooperatives. ...
7. Concern for Community.

SASAC is basically collaborating with the Institute of Cooperative Management for Agriculture & Rural Development to respond to the 5th Principle that is to impart Education, Training and Information.

The main objective of these programs is to empower the rural farmers with cooperative system of working, living and decision making. This is very much in line with the vision of

Fr. Abraham Murray, the founder of St. Alphonsus Social and Agricultural Centre (SASAC) who wanted farmers to stand on their own feet and become self-reliant and live a dignified life. The heart of cooperative system is a community. It is not an individual enterprise. The community as a whole owns the resources, works together, lives together and grows together. This is also how the early Christian Communities lived. This Christmas let us pray that Christians all over the world be united as a church of God, people who share common faith and common values.

WE wish all our benefactors and well-wishers a meaningful Christmas and a joy filled New Year.