Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

May the joy of the Risen Christ fill you!

Once again in Holy Week we have journeyed on the road to Calvary with our Lord, from Palm Sunday, through the Last Supper, to the Cross and waited in silence at the tomb. And once again we have met him on the day of the Resurrection. The experience of the Liturgy has been more than a “play or re-enactment” but a reliving once again of the Paschal Mystery.

Pope Francis began the Year of Mercy by telling us:

“The mercy of God is revealed in the face of Jesus” (Misericordia Vultus).

In His dying and rising, our reality has been irrevocably changed. Jesus has become like us so that we might become like Him. He has conquered death so that we might enter into eternal life in the love of the Trinity. In unity with the whole Church, we celebrate this amazing and transforming event, and especially experience it again on Divine Mercy Sunday, when the Lord says “do not be afraid” and “do not persist in your unbelief, but believe!” Thus, Faith, Mercy and Mission are joined together in this Season of “Eastertide” and beyond.

Thank you for the many ways that you share this Good News with your family and friends, coworkers and neighbors. Most especially, thank you for sharing this Good News with the children that you lead in the life of faith, in your Faith Formation programs. Just recently I had the opportunity to be with a number of catechists at the vow ceremonies of the Society Dedicated to the Sacred Heart. I experienced there, once again, your testimony and the witness of your lives helps each of these children recognize the transforming love and mercy of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I so very much appreciate all you do to build up the body of Christ with the gifts and presence of the Holy Spirit that is in your lives. Thank you for your efforts and for the many ways you sacrifice to serve the Body of Christ.

May all the joy of Easter be yours in these fifty days of this holy and joyful season and beyond!

Gratefully yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann, J.C.D., D.D.
Bishop of Orange
Like a Strong Wind

In the Easter season, we read from the Acts of the Apostles. Together we reflect on the life of the early church that has received the Holy Spirit and is out on the mission of spreading the Good News to all the world.

In Acts Chapter 2 we read about the coming of the Spirit on the Apostles:

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

The Holy Spirit is described with words and images like: “noise”; “a strong driving wind”; and “tongues of fire.” And, scripture says, it comes “suddenly.” When I read this passage the word that comes to my mind is POWER. There is nothing subtle about the way the Holy Spirit comes into the lives of the Apostles. It is bringing something totally new and dynamically different than what was before. In his article, “Boom Goes Dunamis,” Keith Strohm writes that “Both Jesus and His disciples preached with effectiveness. In Greek, the scriptures identify this as dunamis” (a word from which we get our word for an explosive—dynamite), which means power.”

Too often we misunderstand true power, we associate it with worldly domination that seeks to control and constrain. But this is not the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit frees us and enables us to evangelize the world and to share the love of Jesus Christ. It is the capacity to call out of every person and every situation that which is true, good and beautiful. It is the power of God, who is love.

“Like a strong driving wind” the Holy Spirit comes into our lives to heal us, change situations, restore relationships, and save the world. This is the Good News of the Gospel: just as this Holy Spirit came into the lives of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost and rested on each one of them, this same Spirit rests on and in each one of us. The Holy Spirit never tires of filling us and sending us out to proclaim the Gospel to all we encounter.

In these days leading to Pentecost, let us ask the Holy Spirit to make us more aware and open to the leading and power of the Holy Spirit by praying the following prayer:

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your spirit and we will be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

As you reflect upon your ministry of catechesis consider this question: How can I help those to whom I minister become aware of the power they have received through baptism and confirmation?
Models of Mercy

Now that Lent has passed and Easter baskets are put away, we may feel like Easter is over. But the season does not end on Easter Sunday. The Easter season lasts 50 days, and concludes on Pentecost Sunday. Jesus continued teaching after his resurrection. As parents, we can follow His example by teaching and celebrating throughout these 50 days, providing our children with a deeper understanding of Christ’s love and sacrifice.

How can we celebrate this season with our families?

- **Feed the Hungry**
  Volunteer at a shelter, or participate in a food drive. Have your child pick their favorite food to donate

- **Visit the Sick**
  Visit a children’s hospital, or write letters to children who are ill

- **Clothe the Naked**
  Donate baby clothes or kid’s pjs to a local transitional housing shelter. Pray together for the families living there

- **Counsel the Doubtful**
  Nearly all parents struggle with doubt. Be merciful to yourself- you are doing a great job. To ease your doubts, make time each day for prayer, or go to Adoration regularly. Ask the Lord to guide you in your decisions

- **Pray for the Living and the Dead**
  Keep a prayer jar in your home. Leave scraps of paper nearby for your family members to write down their prayers, and set aside time to pray them together

- **Bear Wrongs Patiently**
  When children make mistakes, our instinct is to discipline. Children learn through repetition, and may make the same mistakes over and over. When your child gets in trouble, it can be an opportunity for him or her to grow. Have your children describe what they could have done differently. Together, discuss solutions to avoid making the mistake again. When you mess up, acknowledge your mistake openly to your children

Pope Francis says the family is the “first school of mercy,” and there is no better place than home for children to experience mercy firsthand.

Jesus: A Pilgrimage

escorts the reader on a journey through Israel, visiting Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem and other important sites. His writing is accessible and enjoyable – and now he offers another dimension to the journey via a “video pilgrimage” to the Holy Land.

Join him and his tour group in their pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Fr. Martin provides a beautiful way for armchair tourists to “visit” the Holy Land.

http://tiny.cc/virtualpilgrimage

Virtual Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land may be out of reach for most of us – but Fr. James Martin, S.J. offers all of us an opportunity to make a virtual pilgrimage from the comfort of our own home. His book, Jesus: A Pilgrimage, escorts the reader on a journey through Israel, visiting Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem and other important sites. His writing is accessible and enjoyable – and now he offers another dimension to the journey via a “video pilgrimage” to the Holy Land.

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Pentecost Cupcake Cones

Ingredients

- Yellow Cake Mix
- Ice Cream Cones
- Oven
- Yellow Frosting (can also use orange-red frosting)
- Toothpicks
- Fruit Roll-up

Directions

1. Mix up cake mix
2. Place ice cream cones in high baking dish (such as a bread pan)
3. Spoon cake mix in cones until 2/3 full
4. Bake @ 350° for 30 min (oven times vary)
5. About 1/2 way through, move the cones around in the pan for even baking
6. Let cool
7. Pipe on some frosting
8. Cut fruit roll up in “flame-like” shapes
9. Wrap around toothpick to keep flame upright
10. Place flame in center of cupcake
11. Enjoy!

Adapted from: Sweetology-archived July 18, 2012
http://sweetology101.blogspot.com/
#10 You'll deepen your relationship with Jesus as you grow in the knowledge of the teachings of the Church.

True wisdom to share and to pass on. You don’t need an advanced degree to talk about the love of God found in Jesus Christ.

#3 You'll be saving lives (a bit dramatic—but…). Salvation means to be saved from the deadly effects of sin. As a catechist you are sharing salvation!

#9 You’re needed! In a world hungry for Good News, you have the Good News of Jesus to share!

#2 You’ll be putting your faith into action. We are called to practice our baptism each and every day—and being a catechist is a great way to proclaim the good news to others!

#8 Let your light shine! Jesus is the source of our life of faith. As a catechist you get to share that life with others in a particular and regular way.

#5 You’ll meet new people and become part of a vibrant faith community. A community within the community.

#4 Teaching is renewing! Teaching, while challenging, is also energizing and can be fun.

#7 You’ve got a lot to share. Don’t underestimate what you have to offer.

#6 You’ll be provided with excellent resources that provide you with great support.

#1 You are fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28). We become catechists because it is a way to live out our baptismal call to “Go, make disciples…”

# You'll be putting your faith into action. We are called to practice our baptism each and every day—and being a catechist is a great way to proclaim the good news to others!