

*Illuminations – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Easter*

***First Reading: Acts*** (17:22-31)

Even after the resurrected Jesus returns to the Creator, God remains in the world. The Holy Spirit is with us. This is the reassuring message of Sunday's readings: The God who made us all is with us always, watches over us, and hears our prayers. In our first reading we find Paul in Athens, trying to persuade skeptical Greeks that their altar "to an unknown god" actually celebrates our God, who made the world and everything in it, who gave us life and breath, and who remains so near to us that in God we live and move and have our being.

***Psalm 66*** (66:7-18)

Why do bad things happen to good people? The Psalmist ponders this eternal question in the portion of Psalm 66 that we read on this Sunday. Sometimes it seems as if God is testing us when we face burdens that seem too heavy to bear, the psalm reminds us. But God keeps watch over all the people of the Earth and ultimately brings us out to a place of refreshment, a spacious place of relief. God hears our prayers and does not reject them; at the end, God's loving kindness is not withheld.

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***Second Reading: 1<sup>st</sup> Peter***

***(3:13-22)***

This passage from the first letter of Peter mirrors the theme of hope amid burdens and difficulties that we heard in Psalm 66. It assures us that when we suffer for doing the right thing, we earn blessings, a promise that may have brought some comfort to an early church community facing persecution. Just as Noah and his family endured the flood so that humanity could survive, the author using Peter's name declares, "Jesus suffered on the cross, died, and was resurrected so that we too may be brought to God through baptism."

***Gospel: John***

***(14:15-21)***

Continuing in Jesus's final discourse to the apostles as told in John's Gospel, Jesus promises them that, although he will leave soon to return to the Creator, he will not leave them orphaned. God will give them an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to remain with them forever. Then, emphasizing the intimate connection among this Trinity of Creator, Son, and Spirit and those who believe, Jesus goes on: "If you love me, keep my commandments ... They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

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