**THEME:** FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT [Part I]

**READINGS:** Acts 7:55-60/ Rev. 22:12-14, 16-17, 20/ John 17:20-26

7th Sunday of Easter

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Last Thursday was the feast of our Lord’s Ascension. On the day of his Ascension, our Lord asked his disciples to remain in Jerusalem for the reception of the Holy Spirit. They waited in prayer and on the tenth day, the Day of Pentecost, they received the powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are also in a period of prayerful waiting until the feast of Pentecost. In this period, the messages focus on the Holy Spirit.

Looking through the readings of today, I find a message about the Holy Spirit in the very first verse of the first reading. It describes Stephen as ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 7:55). So for today and next Sunday, we shall consider what it means to be **‘filled with the Holy Spirit’**, or to be ‘full of the Holy Spirit’.

St. Luke is the author of the Acts of the Apostles, so we intend to look at what he means by being ‘**filled with the Holy Spirit’** in both his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

In Luke’s Gospel, the expression ‘**filled with the Holy Spirit’** is used, at least, thrice and in the Acts of the Apostles, at least, nine times.

**LUKE’S GOSPEL**

1. In Luke 1:41-44, Elizabeth, ‘**filled with the Holy Spirit’**, exclaimed before her visiting young cousin, Mary: ‘Why is it that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?’ Thus, the Holy Spirit enabled Elizabeth to have a **revelation:** that her young cousin, whose pregnancy she had no previous knowledge of, was carrying the Son of God in her womb.
2. Secondly, Zechariah was ‘**filled with the Holy Spirit’** to **praise God and prophesy** after his tongue was loosened at the naming of his son (Luke 1:67-79).
3. Thirdly, St. Luke says, Jesus was ‘**filled with the Holy Spirit’** after his baptism; and he was then led by the Spirit to the desert (Luke 4:1). Thus, anointed with the Holy Spirit Jesus had v**ictory over Satan in his temptations, and he faithfully and successfully accomplished his mission.**

**ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

1. Acts 2:4 = On the day of Pentecost, the apostles and other disciples were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** who enabled them to speak in foreign tongues and to proclaim boldly.
2. Acts 4:8 = Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit,** courageously addressed the Sanhedrin, the very ‘Supreme Court’ which tried Jesus. It is also amazing how this ‘illiterate’ fisherman confounded the ‘Supreme Court’ with divine knowledge and wisdom (cf. Luke 12: 11-12).
3. Acts 4:31 = when the believers had prayed, they were **filled with the Holy Spirit** who enabled them to continue to proclaim the Word with boldness.
4. Acts 9:17 = Ananias told the blind Saul that he was to regain his sight and be **filled with the Holy Spirit** so as to be the witness of Jesus in many towns and nations.
5. Acts 13:8-9 = St. Paul, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, prevailed over the magician, Elymas (at Paphos).
6. Acts 13:52 = the disciples (including St. Paul) were **filled with the Holy Spirit** to withstand a persecution in Antioch in Pisidia.

**ST. STEPHEN** (We single out St. Stephen because of a special mention of him in today’s first reading):

1. Acts 6:3 = the criteria for choosing Stephen and six others to serve as deacons were ‘respected men, **full of the Holy Spirit** and wisdom.’
2. Acts 6:5-10 = Stephen is singled out as a man ‘**full of faith and Holy Spirit’**. Thus, filled with the Holy Spirit, who gave him grace, power, the gifts of miracles and wisdom, St. Stephen easily defeated the men from the Synagogue of Freedom who engaged him in arguments.
3. Acts 7:55-60 = ‘Stephen, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus sitting at God’s right hand.’ Thus, the Holy Spirit graced St. Stephen with ‘**beatific’ vision** and personal **holiness**.

**Part I – Conclusion**

Beloved, as we look forward to considering what it means to be ***personally*** filled with the Holy Spirit (in Part II), we pray that we shall so prepare ourselves (by prayers, meditation on the Word, confession of sins) such that on the feast of Pentecost we shall experience a gentle yet a greater stirring of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds. Amen!