

# St. Basil the Great Catholic Church

## Meaning of the Mass

2019-1-13

### The Stole

The **stole** is a thin colored vestment that goes around the priest's neck (around both shoulders) or deacon's neck (around one shoulder). It is a sign of authority, but not the authority of a tyrant, but rather the **authority of a servant**. It is shaped like a **yoke** because priests and deacons are beasts of burden put to work for Christ to serve God and serve laypeople. For instance, after Jesus' Resurrection, He gave priests the authority to forgive sins when He said, "*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained*" (John 20:23). This is a special power, but in reality it translates into the special power to sit in a confessional and listen to our sins for 3 hours or more! The priest wears a stole during those hours in the confessional as a sign of his role of service. Priests and deacons also wear stoles during Mass and other sacraments as a sign of their service to God and us. The stole color matches that of the liturgical season or of the Sacramental ministry he is performing.

In the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15), the Good Shepherd goes in search of the 1 sheep out of 100 who went astray. When He finds it, He brings it home by carrying it on His shoulders with its legs wrapped around His neck, *just like a stole*. This is a beautiful image for the Sacrament of Penance. Christ through the priest brings us back into the sheepfold after we have gone astray. Every one of us is the lost sheep. Another useful perspective is that it may be the case that you have most of your life in order - most of the sheep are in the fold - but there is one part of your life that is not in line with the Gospel. Jesus helps bring that sheep home so that all 100 sheep are where they should be, and **all 100% of you** is in right relationship with God.