

Fifth Wednesday of Lent

Theme: stole

Centering thought: Jesus says: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.”

Scripture:

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11: 28 – 30

Reflection and Questions to Ponder:

The stole is the symbol of ordination. This is why Licensed Local Pastors do not wear stoles. The stole is worn only by ordained deacons, pastors, and Bishops.

Deacons wear the stole like a sash, the vestment resting on the left shoulder and passing across the breast and back to the right side. The stole of the Ordained elder lies from the back of the neck across the shoulders down the front of the elder, where the two halves either cross each other or fall down straight usually over an Alb or robe.

Both elders and deacons receive stoles at the time of their ordination when their ordaining Bishop places the stole around the shoulder of the Deacon or the shoulders of an Elder. Most Bishops share words similar to those found in Matthew 11, "Receive the yoke of the Lord, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light," as a reminder that in ordination the deacon or elder is yoked with Christ.

The stole is a reminder that the Deacon or Elder has a call to be in service to God's people and are sent to share God's mission and message to the world. The stole is a reminder that those who are called are never alone. Christ walks with us even to the end of the ages. The stole reminds Elders and Deacons that we are not meant to be lone rangers – but to work together with and as the body of Christ. The stole is the reminder that we have been called to and accepted the call of Christ to lead.

The stole is the reminder that Deacons and Elders have been called apart to serve and not to be served. The stole is important to those who are Deacons and Elders because it is also a call to humility – we are yoked with Christ and one another. We cannot fulfill God's call alone. We need one another.

God in Christ is greater, and it is God's will and not our own that is important. The stole reminds us that we have been called and accepted to follow in the order, wisdom, and grace of God. It is a call to pick up the cross and to follow and to sacrifice on behalf of others and to share the gifts God has given us on behalf of others.

While some are called to be set aside as Deacons and Elders in the Church, all are called to the mission and ministry of Christ. There is a yoke upon all our shoulders, whether we can see it or not, when we say yes to Christ.

Pastor or lay person, every one of us who say yes to Christ are yoked with him – sometimes the burden of life is too hard to carry and at that time Christ carries most of the load. At other times we journey steadily with Christ. At other times we pull and tug in a variety of directions, but Christ steadies our way. Sometimes we want to run, but the yoke of Christ holds us in place. Thank God, for a love that will not let us go, no matter what we are experiencing along the journey.

- 1. How are you experiencing the yoke and presence of Christ in your life?**
- 2. How has the presence of Christ helped you in challenging times and in fairly easy times?**
- 3. What is it that you need in your life to remind you daily of Christ's call?**
- 4. Where is Christ attempting to lead you?**

Prayer: *Almighty God, thank you for the example of humility and grace you gave to us through your son Jesus Christ. Your son did not travel alone but lived in utter dependence upon you. Help us not to trust in ourselves but to trust in you. Help us to not travel alone, but to lean upon, learn from, and walk with you and your son our Savior. O God, help us so to live - yoked with you - that we learn to live in and with a humble hearts and gentle spirits, surrendering ourselves always to your will and your way. Amen*