



There are gestures in the liturgy that often go unnoticed by many of the faithful, yet they contain an immense spiritual depth. One of them is that brief, almost silent moment when the priest takes the stole... and kisses it.

It may seem like a minor detail. However, in the logic of faith, the smallest signs often contain the greatest mysteries. And this gesture, in particular, speaks to us of love, of self-giving, of sacred authority... and also of responsibility.

Today, we will delve into the profound meaning of this act, exploring its history, its theology, and above all, what it can teach us for our Christian life.

What Is the Stole and Why Is It So Important?

Before understanding the kiss, we need to understand what is being kissed.

The stole is a strip of cloth that the priest places over his shoulders. It is not merely an ornament. It represents the **priestly power**, that is, the authority he has received in the sacrament of Holy Orders to act *in persona Christi*—in the person of Jesus Christ.

From the earliest centuries of the Catholic Church, the stole has been a sign of sacred ministry. Deacons wear it diagonally; priests and bishops wear it over both shoulders. It is, in a certain sense, the “sweet yoke” spoken of in the Gospel:

| *“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt 11:30).*

The stole does not symbolize human power, but **sacrificial service**.

The Origin of the Gesture: A Tradition Full of Meaning

The kiss of the stole is not an improvised or recent gesture. It is part of the liturgical tradition, especially visible in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, though also present—albeit more discreetly—in the Ordinary Form.



When the priest vests, as he puts on the stole, he prays:

*“Restore to me, O Lord, the stole of immortality which I lost
through the sin of my first father...”*

And in many cases, he kisses it.

Why?

Because in Christian tradition, **kissing something sacred is an act of veneration, love, and commitment**. One does not kiss an object, but what it represents.

Just as the altar is kissed—symbolizing Christ—or the Gospel is kissed—the living Word of God—the stole is kissed because it represents the **priesthood of Christ entrusted to the minister**.

A Gesture of Love... But Also of Holy Fear

Here we find a key insight.

The kiss is not only affection. It is also **an awareness of the greatness and the weight of the mission**.

The priest kisses the stole as if to say:

- “I love this ministry I have received”
- “I recognize that I am not worthy on my own”
- “I accept to bear this responsibility”

It is a gesture that unites love and humility.

In a world where power is often understood as domination, the stole reminds us that true Christian power is **to serve, to suffer, and to give oneself**.



Theological Dimension: Configured to Christ

The priest does not act in his own name. When he celebrates the sacraments, it is Jesus Christ who acts through him.

For this reason, the stole symbolizes this **ontological configuration to Christ the Priest**.

Kissing it is, in essence, a deeply Christological act:

- It is to acknowledge that the priesthood comes from Christ
- It is to accept being His instrument
- It is to remember that all grace comes from Him

The stole is not a badge of prestige, but a sign of **participation in the Cross**.

A Call to Purity and Coherence of Life

This gesture also has a very concrete moral dimension.

The priest who kisses the stole is implicitly saying:

“*I want to be worthy of what I represent.*”

Because it is not enough to wear the stole. One must live according to it.

In this sense, the gesture becomes a silent examination of conscience:

- Do I live according to my vocation?
- Am I coherent with what I celebrate?
- Am I faithful to Christ in what is hidden?

A devoutly kissed stole becomes a call to holiness.



And What Does This Have to Do with You?

It might seem that this gesture concerns only priests. But that is not the case.

All the baptized share, in some way, in the priesthood of Jesus Christ (the common priesthood of the faithful).

For that reason, this gesture also speaks to us.

1. Loving What God Has Entrusted to You

Just as the priest kisses his stole, you are called to love your vocation:

- your family
- your work
- your mission in the world

Do you embrace it with love... or endure it with resignation?

2. Living with Coherence

The stole reminds us that it is not enough to “appear” Christian.

You too have an “invisible stole”: your baptism.

Do you live according to who you are?

3. Rediscovering the Value of Gestures

In our culture, symbolism has lost much of its force. But the Christian faith is full of meaningful signs:

- kneeling



- making the Sign of the Cross
- kissing a crucifix

These gestures educate the soul.

The kiss of the stole teaches us that **true love is also expressed through the body.**

A Lesson for Our Time

We live in an age that tends to trivialize the sacred. Everything can seem relative, interchangeable, superficial.

In contrast, the liturgy—and gestures like this one—remind us that there are realities that deserve reverence, silence, and respect.

The priest who kisses the stole proclaims, without words:

| *“This is not just anything. This belongs to God.”*

And that affirmation is profoundly countercultural.

Conclusion: The Kiss That Reveals a Heart

The kiss of the stole is not a mere liturgical detail.

It is an act filled with meaning:

- love for the ministry
- fidelity to Christ
- humility before the mission
- commitment to holiness

It is a gesture that, though brief, contains an entire spirituality.



The next time you see it—or reflect on it—remember that the Christian faith is not lived only through ideas, but also through visible signs that lead us to the invisible.

And perhaps, in silence, you can make your own interior gesture:

to kiss what God has placed in your hands... and to live it with love.