

From the Rectory

May 2018

months ago about the mishap that happened to my beautiful white ordination stole, when I managed to spill a goodly amount of coffee down it after the service one Sunday morning. Although the stain didn't reach the embroidery, the silk was badly marked and the stole was unwearable.

I hope I value church vestments, whilst not placing *too* much stock by them. While they can be aids to worship, they should never be indispensable but this particular stole had a great deal of sentimental value to me, as it had been an ordination present and the design was adapted particularly for me, so I decided to see if anything could be done to salvage it. I contacted the firm who had made it, confessed my error and sent pictures. They invited me to send the stole to them, saying they thought they could take the embroidery and make it part of a new stole. I sent it off and I waited...

My expectations weren't all that high to be honest. I thought I would get back something wearable but clearly mended and probably with some edges of the stain visible if you looked closely enough. A little while later a package arrived in the post, and on opening it, I couldn't believe that it was actually my stole. "Yes, that's my design and looks like the original – but there is lovely new silk – and I can't see the join!" So the thoughts went through my mind.

I looked more closely. How on earth had they done it? It was beautiful, clearly using the original but making it new and I couldn't see how they had achieved it. Finally, I worked it out. A line of embroidery, following the "flame" design around the cross, was actually masking the join between the old and new fabric. Some additional gold embroidery had also been added above and below to distract the eye and make it all seem integrated. What superb craftsmanship! If anything, it looked even more beautiful than before.

Isn't that just what Easter is all about, what faith in the risen Christ does for us? We are clearly ourselves, yet different; we are the same people but made new; we are recognisably us but with a new beauty. That wonderfully mended stole is, for me, a parable of the resurrection as it applies to us.

The original was beautiful but then was spoiled. The master craftsman (or woman!) in their skill recreated it, keeping its uniqueness but restoring it and making it even more beautiful. That's what the Holy Spirit does for us as we place our faith in Christ and as we learn the difference that it makes to us to follow the risen Christ. That's what new life in Jesus is all about. We are ourselves but renewed, restored, recreated. We learn what it means that Christ said he came to bring us "life in all its fulness" (John 10:10). We have a fresh start and are made beautiful once more, whatever our past.

May we each know the wonder of Christ's risen life within us this Easter season.

Rev'd Katie