



## Catholic Church and School

---

That “wascally wabbit”, Bugs Bunny, became famous for always taking the wrong turn at Albuquerque. It appears in the Gospel that the wise men made a wrong turn at Jerusalem. They appear to be lost and ask for directions from King Herod. Even in the midst of being lost, the magi teach us about faith.

Having faith does not mean having all of the answers. These wise men had questions along the way. They had to stop and ask for directions. There is a lesson in there for all of us guys who hate to ask for directions. We’d rather just keep driving until we find it. These magi were kings but they weren’t too proud to ask for directions. Most all of us have questions about our faith. Having questions does not mean that we don’t have faith. It’s okay to have questions.

Why is there evil in the world? Why are babies born with birth defects? Why did my dad or mom or son or daughter or friend or relative have to suffer and die? Why do my prayers go unanswered? How can I get more patience? What am I doing here now? It’s okay to have questions.

God leaves us signs along the way, like the Bible and the Church. Signs point us in the right direction much like the star and the scriptures and the scribes pointed the magi. Signs along the way, like the Church and Scriptures, let us know that Jesus is getting closer even if we still have questions. Even if we still have a ways to go. The Church is a sign. A sign gives direction but not necessarily information. The Church not a help desk to answer all of our questions. In fact, if you’ve ever dealt with a help desk, you know that most help desks don’t answer all of your questions either, and they put you on hold longer than it takes for a Sunday Mass.

The magi continued following the signs in faith even though they didn’t have all the answers. It is only about six miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. So when the magi stopped at King Herod’s, they were only about six miles from Jesus. After traveling weeks and probably even months, they were only about four hours away, maybe three hours if they were speeding. They continued on in faith that Jesus was leading them closer through these signs along the way.

You and I live more of our lives on faith than we realize or care to admit. Think about the food that we eat each day. How do we really know it hasn’t been poisoned along the way? We have faith that it’s okay. Think about those Flintstone vitamins that you used to take and maybe give to your children now. How do you know that they are safe or that they even do what they say they are doing? Have you ever seen a vitamin actually do its work inside the body? No, food and vitamins are taken on faith. You have faith in what other people are telling you and selling you.

Where is your faith? I was discussing faith with another seminarian one time. We were trying to decide if faith is in your head or your heart, if faith is something you think in

your head or something you feel in your heart? We asked another friend to help us decide. He said, "You're both wrong – faith is in the seat of your pants." Faith begins with a thought or feeling but it leads to an action. We never say that actions earn us heaven or replace what Jesus did on the Cross, but we do say that as Jesus draws us closer, faith causes us to want to act. Faith motivates us as it motivated the magi.

Compare the magi and Herod. They all had the same knowledge, that the Messiah was born in Bethlehem. They were all in the same place, about six miles from Jesus. The difference was that the magi acted but Herod did not. They got up off of the seat of their pants and went to Bethlehem while King Herod just sat there and stayed at home. The difference was that the magi saw Jesus but Herod did not. Faith is not simply believing in a thought or a feeling which is independent of action.

Faith means:

- getting out of bed in the morning, even if you don't feel like it.
- continuing to drive on, even if the road is dark and foggy and hard to see.
- continuing in our everyday journeys to get up and dress up and show up so that we, like the wise men, will someday see Jesus.
- coming to church, even if you're distracted and having trouble concentrating.
- taking some wrong turns in life and asking Jesus for forgiveness and directions.
- remembering that the risen Jesus is always close to us in His One, Holy, Catholic Church, throughout the world, in South Bend and in Albuquerque.

*Fr. David Ruppert at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana  
Solemnity of the Epiphany, 2012*