

For many, Lent and guilt are synonymous. Lent is the yearly opportunity to reflect on our “wrongness,” purge guilty consciences and practice self-denial, so one might live unfettered by these weighty topics the rest of the year. After discovering Kathryn Schulz thought-provoking [TED Talk](#) video entitled, “On Being Wrong,” I have decided to commemorate Lent early this year...and I suspect that I will continue on through the rest of the year.

As Schulz suggests, many of us avoid thinking about being wrong—because we fear the feeling of being wrong. Although all of us are willing to cognitively admit that we are wrong from time to time, and although all of us can look back over our personal and collective histories and witness mistake after mistake, all of us persist in believing that in the present moment we are, indeed, right. Of course, this feeling of rightness is a merely an illusion—for chances are even when we “feel” that we are right, we may be wrong. Watch the video, it might just totally change the way you view things...then again, I could be wrong.

As the [Praying in Color](#) books advocate, the beginning of spirituality is the wonderment of creativity. And the beginning of creativity is the willingness to experiment...the willingness to be wrong. Instead of teaching our children and our youth to be right and perfect, perhaps it is time to teach them to embrace their wrongness and to begin to wonder.

With wondering hearts and minds...the whole world becomes a canvas. Now, anyone with small children knows to fear this statement. I have encouraged my own son to risk being wrong, despite the anguish it might cause his perfectionist heart or the grief it might cause his loving father. So it was not surprising when my 3 year-old, Aidan, chose to find a canvas on his very bed. Shortly after having his bed turned into a guest room to accommodate a visiting family member, Aidan helped me see how “wrong” I had been to re-appropriate *his* bed. After naptime, I discovered his name inscribed on the headboard of his bed. When I asked him, trying not to get angry, why he had written on his bed even though he knows to only write on paper, he said, “So that everyone who comes in the house knows that this is my bed.”

Any anger in my heart immediately ebbed away. I was wrong. I had cajoled him out of his bed against his will to accommodate an adult. With his shaking handwriting and his crayon, Aidan had not only written on his bed, but on the canvas of my heart. Sometimes it is our children who teach us—reminding us to awaken to wonderment and learn to let ourselves be wrong. This one incident is my own personal reminder of the Prophet Isaiah’s statement, “a little child shall lead them” (11:6).

With a cruciform swatch of ash on our foreheads, Ash Wednesday invites us to reflect on our mortality and the corruptness of our human nature. This year don't limit the appreciation of your "wrongness" to a mere 40 days, but let it last 365 days. As we prepare to begin a holy Lent, may we humble ourselves, embrace our "wrongness," and risk ourselves in God's mission to the world, called the Church.

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