

# Common fears

*Nicodemus came by night.*

**In short.** The Church teaches that the act of faith is of its very nature a free act, and that nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will.<sup>1</sup> Believing is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason.<sup>2</sup>

## Key points

- Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them.<sup>1</sup>
- There can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason.<sup>3</sup>
- The faith needed for Baptism is a beginning that is called to develop.<sup>4</sup>
- No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone.<sup>5</sup>

## Try this, this week

1. **Read John 3:1–21.** Notice that Jesus takes Nicodemus' questions seriously.
2. **Write down your three biggest fears.** Cross out any you could ask about this week.
3. **Read Mark 9:14–27.** A father brings Jesus his faith and his unbelief together.
4. **Tell one person you are looking into this.** Choose someone who will listen.

*“And there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him: Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God; for no man can do these signs which thou dost, unless God be with him.”*

John 3:1–2, Douay–Rheims

## Watch out: what this does not mean

- Freedom is not indifference: all people are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and his Church.<sup>9</sup>
- Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.<sup>10</sup>

## Common questions

### Will my family or friends have to agree?

The Church teaches that nobody may be forced to act against his convictions, nor be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience in religious matters, within due limits.<sup>6</sup> The act of faith is of its very nature a free act.<sup>1</sup>

### What if I still have doubts?

The Catechism admits that faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test.<sup>7</sup> It also says that revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but “ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt.”<sup>8</sup>

**Remember: You are free, and you are not alone.**

## Sources

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|-------------|-------------|
| 1. CCC 160  | 6. CCC 2106 |
| 2. CCC 154  | 7. CCC 164  |
| 3. CCC 159  | 8. CCC 157  |
| 4. CCC 1253 | 9. CCC 2104 |
| 5. CCC 166  | 10. CCC 153 |

Quotation above: John 3:1–2, Douay–Rheims. Catechism: official text on vatican.va.

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