

Journey of Faith



In Short:



- Faith is a virtue freely given by God.
- Faith, science, and reason coexist.
- Faith grows when we're alone and part of a community.

What Is Faith?

Some people love to get lost in an adventure. Their journeys can last years and cover miles. They thrive on not knowing what will come next, who they'll meet, or where they'll end up. They don't care if they head off into their journey unprepared—planning lessens the adventure.

Other people aren't quite as ready to leave everything to chance. They make plans, figure out what they need to pack, and trace exactly where they'll go. They don't leave room for the uncertain—they don't have room on their adventure for the unexpected.

• *Do you think either of these ways is the best way to travel? Why or why not?*

- *What's the purpose of going on a journey?*
- *What kind of journey has your own life been?*



Life is a process. A journey is a process, too. Both involve growth, change, and development. When we're on a journey, we don't stay in the same place, at least not for long. We move on.

We choose new roads. We discover new things. We grow in wisdom and understanding. We mature. We are always in process.

The Journey of Faith

Faith means having certainty in God and all his works and is more certain than all human knowledge. However, having faith doesn't mean never asking questions or ignoring empirical facts. Actually, as your faith grows, so does your desire to know more about God. Faith is a grace we can't have without God, but it's also a human act. So while God can give us the grace and courage to live and act with faith, it's still up to us to take those steps (CCC 156–162). When we have faith, we live each moment knowing that God loves us, even when life seems to tell us otherwise. To have faith means to trust that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from the love of God.

Faith is also a process. It's the most important process and most important journey of our lives because it brings us closer to God. The more we live our faith, the closer we get to God. Being close to God brings us an inner joy and peace that can't come from anything else. We all want to feel close to God, yet the process of getting there may seem difficult, if not impossible.

Let's take a deeper look at what it means to have faith in God.

"What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?...No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us."

Romans 8:35, 37

- What are some other things you've had faith in?
- Has that faith paid off? Why or why not?



The good news is, you're not alone. There are a lot of people of faith out there, and they're struggling to live like Jesus, too. If you're able to tune out noise from the rest of the world, you'll see you're not in this alone.

- Are there circumstances where you find it difficult to live your faith? How do you handle them?



The teachings of the Catholic Church on faith come largely from Scripture.

Take a few moments and look up the following passages in your Bible. Then briefly write or discuss what each passage means:

Mark 9:23

Matthew 21:22

1 Peter 1:8–9

Our Personal Faith

Because faith involves trust in something that goes beyond our human understanding, it can be very difficult to accept. As a teen, you're transitioning into the adult you will become. That's a process filled with questions and doubts, a time when you question nearly everything you once believed to be true. You'll question your parents and society—their wisdom, their values, and their beliefs. You might even find yourself looking around and wondering, "Isn't there anyone else I can ask?"

It can be tempting to trade in these questions for answers, to want these mysteries of faith to be solved. You might think that having faith means you're no longer allowed to ask questions or that you have to give up your own opinions to blindly follow some Church authority. Rest assured, having faith doesn't mean we stop asking questions; it means we live like we are loved and desired by God—and that we treat others like they are, too.

When we become people of faith, we take on the values of Jesus Christ. But while living like Jesus leads us to a more authentic life, it isn't an easy lifestyle. It can seem like the world values beautiful people and expensive things over values like simple living, chastity, and sacrifice.

Sometimes even when we do have faith, we don't always feel sure of our beliefs. We shouldn't judge our closeness to God by how we feel. God is just as close to us when we're depressed, irritated, or stressed out as when we're joyful and carefree. When we're going through tough times, we can feel like God is very far away. But God's perfect love for us is always there, even in times of doubt and trouble. We cannot hide from the love of our Lord.

When we question God, we may not receive the answers we want. But that doesn't mean God isn't listening or that he doesn't care about us. God reaches out to us in our ordinary, everyday lives. God wants us to become the thinking, creative, feeling people we were created to be, and sometimes that means struggling with our faith or changing part of how we live.

In the future, when you start to worry about this thing, pray: *"I give the burden to God, I relax and let go."* Then take a deep breath and as you breathe out, know that God is taking your burden and working on it.

- How do you handle times of fear, mistrust, or a lack of faith?
- Think of something that you're trying very hard to control in your life. Perhaps you struggle with a particular classmate, school subject, or family member. It could be a person, a situation, anything. Write it down.
- What about that situation can you give up and turn over to God?



Called to Faith

"Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains."

Acts 9:1–2

For some, the gift of faith comes in surprising ways. One day, a man named Saul was making a journey to the town of Damascus. All of a sudden he was blinded by a flash of light and heard a voice from heaven. "He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'" (Acts 9:4). He went from someone who persecuted Christians to a follower of Jesus Christ himself and a great teacher, spreading the story of Jesus throughout his part of the world. God even changed Saul's name to Paul as a sign of his new identity as a follower of Jesus (Acts 9:1–19).

For most of us, our faith beginning isn't as dramatic. God is like a quiet gardener who knows where the "good soil" lies within us better than we do. God plants the first small seed. But if we want our faith to grow, we have to be active about it. Once you ask God for the gift of faith, God gives it to you freely. But we can't just ask God to give us the gift of faith and be done with it. We have to nurture the faith he gives us. We can't expect our faith in God to grow if we do nothing.

There's another important element in Paul's story, too. Once he found faith, he didn't keep it a secret. He went out and told other people about Jesus. He spread his faith to others. You might not be called to be a missionary or an evangelist like Paul, but you are called to share your faith in some way. And the more you share your faith, the stronger it will grow.

- What have you learned about your faith so far that you are most excited to share with others?



Growing Our Faith

Here are some things you can do to nurture your faith:

Read

Reading Scripture (the Bible) and other spiritual writings introduces you to the great wisdom of others. Spiritual reading gives you the knowledge and strength to resist the temptation to put other things before God—like money, power, popularity, physical beauty, or drugs.

Pray

For faith to grow, you must pray on your own and with others. If we want to get to know God, we must spend time talking with God. This means making time for quiet moments. Finding time to pray is sometimes the most difficult aspect of prayer.

Live

This is another challenging part of growing in faith. If you want to live authentically, the way you live your life must match your religious ideals. You may have friends who pressure you to do things that make you feel uncomfortable or that you know are wrong. Having faith means avoiding behaviors that would lead you away from God.

Get Involved

The Catholic sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist will bring you into the life of the Church, the community of believers. As you live, work, and play with others, you come to know God, and you bring God to others. We belong to our community, and belonging helps our faith grow.

Faith



With a group or as a class, imagine your journey of faith is a real journey. What would you need to pack? What would you have to leave behind? What obstacles might you face? What places or people might you see along the way? You may write your responses in a list, draw scenes from the journey, or anything else you can think of to create.



What doubts do you have about your faith? Are there questions you still haven't answered or things you're still struggling to accept on faith? List them in your journal.

Find someone you're comfortable talking to and discuss these questions with that person.



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