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Little Jenny was misbehaving and really giving her mother a hard time. The mother told her to go sit in the corner and wait there until her father got home. She went over and stood in the corner but refused to sit, another symbol of her defiance. After another hassle, the mother literally forced the child to sit down. When the father came in, he asked her what she was doing sitting in the corner she retorted, 'Well, on the outside I'm sitting down but inside I'm still standing.'

It could be the same with us – on the outside we could appear more catholic than we really are.

Last Sunday Jesus told us to take the lowest place, the Sunday before he told us to enter by the narrow door and today he is asking us to put Him first in our lives – even before family ties.

Yes, good relationships are important but they will have limited depth if there is little or no sharing of faith among family members. Human relationships can also be shallow if one party has strong religious convictions and the other is a non-believer. I could have a rock solid belief in the existence of God that shapes my outlook on life, whereas my friend or even my married partner may be quite happy being an agnostic if not a downright atheist. The Church sees atheism as one of the most serious problems of our age. You can get different shades of belief or non-belief even within the same family unit.

A more ardent following of Jesus will mean that we have the resolve to follow Him more radically? We may start off well, like the man who half built the tower, and promise Our Lord the earth but slacken off when things get more demanding. For instance we promise to bring our children up in the faith at their baptism which includes taking them to Mass as often as possible even when something more enticing beckons. Coming to Mass should be a high point of our week as catholic

Christian families. Marrying in Church also shows that a couple are taking seriously an important component of their Catholic Faith. Marrying outside the church would be far from their thoughts and yet there is a surprising number of Catholics who do precisely that and thereby deny themselves the grace of receiving the Eucharist.

Or, like the little Jenny in the opening story we may pride ourselves on being catholic on the outside but inside ignore certain parts of church teaching or have adopted a way of thinking and acting not that much different from people with no professed belief.

The onlookers started making fun of the man who half-built the tower and was unable to finish. One of the reasons why 'Fr Ted' may have been such a send-up was that it portrayed Catholicism as a joke which not even the clergy were taking seriously. Jesus says: "he who is not with me is against me" and that means with him in everything through all life stages.

In the Old Testament God is described as a jealous God. He asks for all our love and nothing less. Starting out in the race as a believer is one thing – crossing the line at the finish is quite another. He or she who perseveres to the end will be saved.