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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 until her father got home. She went over and stood in the corner but refused to sit. After another hassle, the mother literally forced the child to sit down. When the father came in, he asked the little one what she was doing sitting in the corner. She said, 'Well, on the outside I'm sitting down but inside I'm still standing.' *It's the same with us – on the outside we could appear catholic but on the inside it may be a different story.*

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 and friends. Our attachment to the Lord can cause ripples among family members. Family accord is important but 'twill be all the deeper if it stems from our shared love of Jesus. Without the strength which comes from Him, family cohesion can be quite fragile.

Like the man building the tower Jesus asked us to first sit down and work out what it would cost us to follow him more radically. Some answers may come from our everyday lives. For instance spending extra on a thing of quality more often than not turns out to be a more sensible decision than going for something cheaper. We often say 'it's worth the extra few quid'.

We should apply the same philosophy to our relationship with God. A more ardent following of Jesus will mean that we need to be strong enough to take the rough with the smooth. We won't fall at the first hurdle. When contemplating Christian marriage, for instance, have we got what it takes to take on board the 'highs and the lows', the 'ups and downs' of the married vocation? If we opt for ordination or religious profession do we fully realise what we're taking on. God doesn't want us to make hasty life-changing decisions which we haven't properly thought through and are easily shelved when tested in

'the cauldron of life'.

Like the man who half built the tower, we may have started off well but flagged when the going got tough. That's hardly putting the Lord first in our lives.

The onlookers started making fun of the man who left the tower half finished. This could be one of the reasons why 'Fr Ted' was so popular – it portrayed Catholicism as a joke which no one, not even the clergy were taking seriously. Or we might have taken it seriously at first but then had second thoughts when people poked fun at our faith or peer pressure got the better of us. That's hardly giving the Lord pride-of-place in our lives. Jesus says, "he who is not with me is against me" and that means with him in everything with no exceptions.

Last Sunday and the Sunday before and again today Jesus invites us to give him pride of place in our lives even if it unintentionally puts a strain on family bonds. Loyalty to God should inform everything we do and say. It will be well worth the effort in the end.