Hate your family? Really?

I don't think I'd be on my own in asserting that discipleship is by no means an easy option… And I'm still sometimes taken aback when I read parts of the New Testament (generally the ones that quote things that Jesus said) without wondering "did He really meant that?". Today's gospel is a case in point; Luke 14.25-26: "Now large crowds were travelling with him; and he turned and said to them, '***Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple'.***"

This passage (and there are others like it) pose ethical, moral and practical questions such as, for example: how does that fit with the commandment to honour your father and mother; and where does that leave me, today, here and now? - I can't possibly leave my family to fend for themselves?

Well of course Jesus didn't mean that call-to-action in a literal sense. But in even thinking this way, it poses a dilemma for a hope-to-be disciple. How do I discern what it means to a follower who already is, in reality, family-orientated? indeed, is it even right to pick and choose what we believe He meant.

It strains the brain.

Thought for the Week: I've come to understand that such sayings are meant to strain the brain; they're meant to make the listener/reader think about what's actually required of a disciple, there and then, and here and now.

In such situations, I've found it helpful to start from the premise that God's loving purpose and loving ways - that Jesus followed absolutely, with no compromise - are very far removed from any human understanding even of the terms.

So, when faced with the challenge of such passages, I tend to start from 'the other end' - that God-in-Jesus is far, far too loving to mean that we

(disciples) should, literally, hate our families and abandon our responsibilities to them.

Maybe we're being challenged to take a step back to consider something to this effect (so I'll pose the questions):

- "You know how much you love your father, mother, sister, brother, wife and children (= family)?
- "You know how much you're committed to their welfare and wellbeing"?

Answer? Well, that's nothing like how much God loves us - there's no comparison! His love is total; He is totally committed to the whole of His creation - including us.

As we can't really grasp just how great God really is… we're being called, as disciples, to live our lives (with family commitments, and all that these require of us) **God's way,** first and foremost. Though in a previous homily recently, I mentioned it's also true to say that God comes first, even if we end up at odds with 'family' who may not.

That's still no call to abandonment - it's a call to "fix it" - but fix it God's way.