The English actor Clive Owen was recently quoted saying “one of the things I’m most proud of about my career is the fact I’ve manged to keep my options open.”

Given the choice, I wonder how many of us would prefer to make a cast-iron, gold-plated, no-turning-back decision, or one you could back out of if you needed to?

I can’t be the only one who, given the choice, would prefer to “keep all my options open.” The reality is our life is full of reversable decisions; the 30-day money back guarantee or the 100-night trial on your new mattress, are but two examples.

The psychologists will tell us why we have trouble committing, why we love to keep our options open. I’d hazard a guess that they will say something like “our inherent nature demands choice. We demand options. We imagine that more options mean more freedom. And most people think that limitless freedom must be a good option.”

But, does this apparently limitless choice really make us happy?

The number of choices available to us becomes overwhelming and makes it difficult for us to ever have the joy of fully committing to anything or anyone. Even if we do commit, our culture makes us feel dissatisfied with the choice we’ve made.

During a recent Starbucks visit, I stood behind a customer who ordered a decaf grande, sugar-free, vanilla, skinny latte, with extra foam, and the milk heated to 140 degrees. As I stood in line, I started to think, Maybe I want 140-degree coffee too. Maybe, I thought to myself, my choice of milk temperature up to this point has been catastrophically wrong. Suddenly, that customer’s choices made me unhappier about my own. I wasn’t sure what I wanted anymore. Was I sure I was ready to commit — either to my kind of coffee or to theirs?

Is this really freedom of choice, or slavery to it?

What if we take the same multiplicity of trivial options we have at Starbucks, and apply them to bigger questions: Where we should work? Where we should study? Where we should live? Whom we should marry? Where we should worship? What should I believe? It seems that the more options we have, the more we become enslaved to being noncommittal. We don’t want to make a mistake or cut down our options. In fact, we may become so fearful of making a choice, we simply refuse to choose.

Pope Francis’ visit to Ireland has caused the BBC to run a series of articles in the run up. The most recent was titled “between the two popes.” It was an attempt to narrate the decline in religious affiliation of Irish citizens over the last 40 years, between Pope St John-Paul II and Pope Francis. No surprises, but the number has declined; people have simply refused to make a choice; they have simply refused to choose to be a Christian.

But even when we do make a choice to follow Christ, how happy are we to stick with that choice? As traditionalist Catholics, we have chosen to be in a church which attempts to follow all the teachings of the Church, even the difficult ones! We have chosen a to be in a church where some of what we believe is out of sync with contemporary society and political correctness, putting us on the fringe of our Church. do we stick at it; do we work through the difficult stuff, or do we just give up? Do we ‘cash in the money back guarantee’, and shop around elsewhere?

Or do we, like my Starbuck’s experience, look at other Christian communities and covet their worshipping style; their music, their building; or their way of “being church”, and start to question our own choice of worshipping community? Do we start to think our choice of Church is catastrophically wrong?

Refusing to choose. ‘It’s all too difficult’. ‘Maybe it’s better elsewhere’.

To put it bluntly – its not easy to be a Catholic-Anglican!

But, if anything, today’s readings should reassure us. We are not the only ones who have faced these challenges. Our first reading shows us that the Israelites, all them years ago, were experiencing the same inability to commit to God, just as our generation struggles to do so today. Joshua must call them out to make a choice. To choose God or not. Our Lord asks the same thing of us in today’s Gospel. Like Joshua, he offers us the choice: to follow him, to serve God and therefore experience real joy and happiness, or to walk away. Even St Paul gets in on the action. Setting us a rather uncomfortable teaching; No not the wives and husbands’ bit *per se*, but the wider reality of that teaching, that each one of us, whoever we are, must be subordinate to each other.

Refusing to choose. ‘It’s all too difficult’. ‘Maybe it’s better elsewhere’. All three of our readings today give us the ability to take those easy paths, those easy ways out, or to choose Christ. They are essentially about Christian Discipleship. About the conscious decision to choose Jesus, to put him first. He must be the first love of our hearts, the centre of our lives despite all the uncertainties of this world, despite all the apparent choices at our hands.

This conclusion of the Bread of Life discourse focuses on personal faith in the life of Christian discipleship. Each one of us must make our own judgment about who Jesus is and in doing so determine the way of life that we will follow. God’s grace invites us to be Jesus’ disciples, but each person must respond to the grace of God and confess as his or her own the belief that Jesus is the one from God. This faith then commits us to the path of life, leading us to eternal life.

Who will you choose to serve? What path do you choose?

But Christian discipleship is not cerebral. It’s not something that we read about and then think about. Being a Christian is a lived faith. One which requires action and response. Merely listening to the word is not complete. We consume flesh, the bread of life. We imitate his life, his attitude and his service to others. We use our gifts and talents to build the kingdom of God.

Refusing to choose. ‘It’s all too difficult’. ‘Maybe it’s better elsewhere’. Despite our own doubts and fears, we know that in the end, Jesus himself will triumph. For that is the gospel story. I pray that each one of our hearts are fixed on this reality.