

Call No Man Father

On occasion you will encounter one of our separated brethren who will criticize Catholics because they call their priest "father," citing Matthew 23:9 "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, who is in heaven." (KJV). If one takes this passage literally, this might seem to be a fair criticism.

What does this individual call their male parent? Daddy? Papa (which, incidentally, is Italian for Pope)? When they fill out a credit application what do they put in the block which asks for their father's name -- God? Obviously, there is a meaning of this scriptural passage other than the literal one. This meaning is that there is only one creator, from whom all 'fatherhood' comes (Ephesians 3:14-15). This does not preclude addressing someone as "father" so long as you understand that all fatherhood (both biological and spiritual) originates with God the Father. We are all members of God's family, a fact we acknowledge every time we recite the 'Our Father' or the Creed.

Paul calls himself a "father" in 1 Thessalonians 2:11 "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a *father* does his children." (KJV) and again in 1 Corinthians 4:15 "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many *fathers*: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." (KJV). In both of these passages Paul considers himself a *spiritual father* just as the priest is today. This same interpretation is presented by John in 1 John 2:13-14 where he says twice "I write unto you, *fathers* because ye have known him that is from the beginning." (KJV).

Finally, you might ask this individual if he or she is familiar with the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible (a common modern Protestant translation). If so, refer him or her to Matthew 23:10, the passage immediately after the one quoted to you: "Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ". Even they have Sunday School teachers.