



The above billboard states a common objection from Fundamental Protestants that Catholics call their priests “Father.”

One obvious answer is to simply ask them what they call their biological parent. Isn't it “father?” Another simple question is: “Isn't one of the commandments, “Honor your father and mother.”

Notice that the billboard has added a new twist to this old objection to the Catholic Faith. It reads: “Jesus forbids calling religious men FATHER.” Does scripture forbid calling religious men fathers?

Here is the verse cited in the billboard: Matthew 23:9

“Do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.”

That sounds rather convincing. The Catholic Church must be going against the Word of God.

It is always important to read the entire context of a passage and not just one sentence. Here is the quote in its context

#### Matthew 23: 1-12

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others. But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called master, for you have one master, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”



If Jesus is condemning calling religious men father then Saint Paul missed His message. Here is what Saint Paul says about calling religious men “fathers.”

Acts 22:1 "Brothers and **fathers** hear the defense which I now make before you."

Paul said in Romans 9:10, “ And not only she but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, Isaac our father.”

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:14-15: "I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many **fathers**. For I became **your father** in Christ Jesus through the gospel"

Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:3: “I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience, as did **my fathers**, when I remember you constantly in my prayers.

Paul said in Philemon 1:10 “I appeal to you for my child, Ones'imus, whose **father** I have become in my imprisonment.”

John the apostle said in 1 John 2:13–14. “ I am writing to you **fathers**.....I write to you children, because you know the Father. I write to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning.”

If Jesus meant that we can call no man on earth “father” then he violated His own teaching:

Jesus said: 'We have Abraham as **our father** for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.’ Matthew 3:9

Jesus seems to prohibit the use of the term "teacher," in Matthew 23:8 yet no one will have a problem calling someone a teacher.

“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers”

In Matthew 23 Jesus is simply responding to the Pharisees’ proud hearts and their quest for status and prestige. He was showing the scribes and Pharisees how sinful and proud they were for not looking humbly to God as the source of all authority and fatherhood and teaching but rather instead setting themselves up as the ultimate authorities, father figures, and teachers.

Jesus is clearly not saying that Catholics are violating scripture when they call their priests “father.”

**Next topic:** What does the bible say about “Tradition?”