

## Call No Man Father

To properly interpret and understand Scripture, we must consider the context in which it is written. Consider the context of the following passage, which many people, ignore and misunderstand “call no one your father on earth” to oppose calling priests father. **Jesus is teaching that worldly ambition has no place in the religious life of a Christian** whether he is a priest, bishop, deacon, monk, nun or layperson.

*“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ‘the scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; **but to not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach.** They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. **They do all their deeds to be seen by others;** for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. **They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them Rabbi. But you are not to be called Rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.**”*

(Matthew 23:1-12)

In the context of this passage, Jesus is telling people and especially, his disciples, **not to be ambitious** in a worldly way like the Pharisees and scribes. We will be following Jesus and **pleasing God, not by seeking titles and marks of respect from others, but by serving them** as Jesus did. A priest should not want to be a priest in order to be called father or monsignor or bishop, but in order to serve the Lord as St. Paul did. To beget or **father the faith in others** is wonderful work.

*“For though you might have 10,000 guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus **I became your father through the gospel.**” (1 Corinthians 4:15)*

*“Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the*

*Kingdom of God without being born from above. Nicodemus said to him, 'how can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, **no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit**. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, you must be born from above.'*” (John 3:3-7)

A person is born into the spiritual life offered by Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church by solemn baptism given by one who shares by ordination in the authority and power of the priesthood of Jesus Christ. That person has been born again, given the grace of God by baptism to begin living the Christian life.

*he has turned away from all the sins which he committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.*” (Ezekiel 18: 21-28)

When we profess belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and are baptized, we have entered into an intimate relationship of love and truth, with God in Jesus Christ. We must continue to live in that relationship, and persevere in the Christian life of love and truth, in order to be saved.

We must not presume, as some are doing, that God is so merciful that anyone who, even only is baptized, or says at some time in life, that he or she believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, will be saved regardless of what ever they do, good or bad, after that. **God is merciful and forgiving to the repentant sinner** who is trying, at the end of his life, to live the life he was called to live by Jesus Christ. **God is not permissive.** In the Holy Bible, **we will never find Jesus condoning sin.** He warns us to avoid sin, and when we fail, return to the good Christian life as repentant sinners, pleading for his mercy and forgiveness.

*“Be on guard so that your hearts and not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and **that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap.** For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and **to stand before the Son of Man.**”* (Luke 21:34-36 )

*“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ When it comes, it finds it empty, swept ,and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; **and the last state of that person is worse than the first.** So it will be also with this evil generation.”* (Matthew 12:43-45)

*“My brothers and sisters, **if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another** , you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering **will save the sinner’s soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.**”* (James 5:19-20)

*“For if, **after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered,** the last state has become worse*

*for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment that was passed on to them.” (2 Peter 2:20-21)*