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The Meaning of Ordination

Yesterday was the feast of Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit is moving! At this time of year there tend to be a lot of ordinations (when someone becomes a deacon, priest, pastor, minister, bishop – depending on your denomination). Your presence at an ordination is a powerful witness of support and a testimony to the body of Christ. Then there is the question: do I bring a gift? A card? Well, a gift is usually not necessary. But a card is wonderful. What to say? Here are five tips to point you in the right direction.

5 Tips for Writing an Ordination Card

1. Don't say congratulations

I know, it's the first word that comes to mind. And I have certainly started ordination cards with “congratulations.” But ordination, unlike graduation for example, is not something that someone *achieves*. Rather, one is *called* to ordination – called by God and called by a community. While there is indeed a lot of work involved, at the end of the day, ordination is never earned. It is a gift and a sign from God.

So what can you say instead of “congrats”? Try: Blessings to you; God bless you; Thanks be to God, etc.

2. Do include a Scripture verse

The Bible has been taking care of itself for thousands of years – surely it can help you out in this situation. Remember to cite book, chapter, and verse. Also, you *are* allowed to use ... (an ellipsis) ... in order to connect two nearby verses or to omit an off-topic phrase. Just be faithful and reverent.

Some suggested verses:

“But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”
-Joshua 24:15

"Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth.'"

-Jeremiah 1:9

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

-Matthew 28:19-20

"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

-Luke 22:27

3. Do make it personal

The card is coming from you, and it can speak to your relationship with the person being ordained. You could offer a memory, or a shared experience. Or, you might mention a specific quality which you see in that person; something that will be important for his or her ministry. Try not to be condescending (I remember back when you were a little kid with chocolate on your face...) Instead, rejoice in the person that he or she is today.

4. Don't feel the need to give advice

We often feel the urge to be helpful - and that is a good urge! We should realize, however, that persons being ordained have a lot going on at that time, and a lot of information swirling in their heads. If you have some small piece of wisdom to share, by all means do so. But if nothing comes to mind, don't force it.

By the way, the single most important advice I ever received, was also the simplest: "You keep your relationship with Jesus strong, and you will be a good minister." -The Rev. Andrew Sherman.

5. When in doubt - head to the Christian bookstore

Ordination cards DO exist, but you won't find them at CVS. Instead, try a Christian bookstore. If you don't have one locally, try the web. I love [The Printery House](#) (great for all sorts of religious cards).

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