

32963 Faith Column, 6-2-11
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Birthday Greetings

Quite a few times every year we make a trip to the greeting card racks to find suitable birthday cards for friends and family. And we've found that the array and diversity of cards has become staggering! We find colorful and enticing cards specifically aimed at people by year of birth. Then there are cards for female relatives or male relatives, step children and first cousins and grandparents. Add to that the choices to be made among the singing cards, the humorous cards, the religious cards, the sentimental cards, and the belated birthday cards, and the purchase process becomes downright bewildering. We can only applaud the creativity and ingenuity of the greeting card industry. They've thought of everything!

And yet, by simply allowing the beautiful, polished sentiments expressed on the cards to represent our personal thoughts, perhaps we are missing an opportunity. What if we had to write the birthday greeting for each card we sent to family members and friends? Might that little exercise help us to assess just what each special person really contributes to our lives? Might writing our own greeting help us to better convey our appreciation to those who are dear to us?

We gave it a try not too long ago when a special friend had a special birthday, and we'd like to share our effort with you. The words we came up with may not be worthy of placing on a greeting card. They might not sell. But they were heartfelt, personal, and reflected our great love and esteem for our friend.

We sent our friend a prayer that said: "God, how grateful we are for this day of celebration. Today we remember and give thanks. We look back with deep appreciation for the sustaining care of her parents, the childhood triumphs and losses that forged her character, the talent of teachers that challenged her to stretch her mind, the hard work that honed her considerable talent, the faith of companions that urged her to grow in spirit, and the constancy of family and friends that surrounded her and allowed her heart to flourish.

"These everyday gifts of life take on such significance, God, as time moves on. Let our friend look back today and see all the little events, and all the varied people who have shared her life, as the treasures they are. Thank you for the delightful, remarkable, unpredictable, rich gifts she has enjoyed in her life.

"And on this special day, we not only look back with gratitude, we also look forward, to hope and to dream for our friend. We know, God, that as our Creator you harbor dreams for what each of us may become. May your dearest dreams for our friend be realized. We send her into the years ahead with our blessing and with our prayers that she may be swift to meet each new challenge with enthusiasm, but stable enough never to stumble. May she be sustained in all that lies ahead by the sure knowledge of our deep commitment to her. And may the shimmer of your eternal love grow ever stronger for her, and glow more brightly within her, with every passing day."

Well that was our first effort at the greeting card business. Not very flashy, perhaps, but we recommend the writing process to you nonetheless for all it helps you to see about your friend. Give it a try. Maybe together we'll start a new trend in personalized greetings. No, we're not suggesting that you boycott the card aisle. The commercial cards are too clever and beautiful to ignore. By why not tuck your own message inside? We're pretty sure what you have to say will mean even more than that clever card!