

Imaginative contemplation

Sending Christmas cards is a big deal in England. It is one of the first tasks in the preparation for Christmas, after stirring the Christmas pudding.

You may have sent all your cards, or perhaps the cards, address lists and stamps are still lying around on the table?

Going through your address list is a good opportunity to remember people, family, friends, colleagues, the relationships we have with them, what we have experienced together, the gratitude for the past, and the bond for the future.

Carefully, we choose a card, a motif, that will suit each person, that will please them, echo their faith, perhaps even make them smile.

We slip the card into the envelope, write the address and stick the stamp, if possible a nice one, from the Christmas collection, rejoicing that the theme refers to the nativity this year.

Then, all that's left to do is to dress warmly and put the lot in the mailbox.

A few days later, an envelope falls on the doormat with a clatter of the flap, will be picked by a friendly hand, be turned front and back, in an attempt to guess who has sent it, before opening the envelope, jump to the signature inside the card before looking at the picture and read the message.

And then, it will be displayed with the flock of the other cards and looked at by the other members of the household, for the whole season of Christmas.

Today, I would like to invite you to ponder the mysterious journey of the cards from the mailbox to the home where it is sent. To imagine the emptying of the box, to see the postal bag placed in the van and the transport to the sorting centre. The card changes bag and direction, joins the stream of other mail and heads off into the night, by train or plane, to be handled again and redirected, from stage to stage, until the familiar red-clad figure, your postman/woman, pulls it out of its satchel and drops it off at its destination. At least that's what I imagine, I don't really know how the post works.

Today, I would like to invite you to be grateful for all the anonymous hands that manipulate the post, the feet that carry it, the eyes that sort the addresses, the shoulders that bent under the weight of the mail bags, the discreet minds, tickled by all the messages they carry, attentive to send the mail in the right direction.

Today, I would like to invite you to applaud all those who work in the postal services, the transport companies, the delivery companies, through thick and thin, through all weathers, and especially through the challenge of the pandemic this year.

As we send and receive our Christmas mail, let us remember them, with a big thank you.