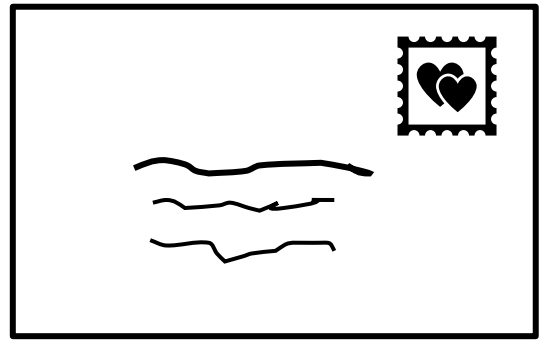


## Royal Mail ?

The man behind the Post Office counter wearily took my package. Pointing to the first line of the address he asked ‘What’s the street number – is it an 8?’



I looked at him and said: “It’s ‘St.’” ... ‘St Michael’s Church.’ A sigh drifted through the glazing as he uttered an exasperated ‘Yes, of course it is’.

Placing the package on the scales, still without looking up, and with that resigned tone of having asked the question of a million customers, he said ‘May I ask what’s inside?’ ‘Prayers.’ I answered.

This was the point of no return; an unexpected answer. He looked up sharply to encounter an old woman, cross in lapel, with no trace of sarcasm in her face. The steely professional expression cracked into a gentle smile and the exchange became a conversation, which enlightened the time of day between us.

It was one of those moments when a chance remark opens up a pastoral opportunity – a moment to engage in a significant conversation about someone, or something, which one or other person is carrying and needs a listening ear. You will be familiar with such moments. They are quite commonplace in the prayer world. It’s God’s way of answering a prayer by opening a conversation.

**Prayers are indeed ‘Royal Mail’.** First class and addressed to ‘The King of Kings’. They are never ‘lost in post’, or ‘damaged in transit, or ‘returned to sender’. They enclose the capacity to touch lives in the very act of sending. Mothers’ Union is about prayer and action: the latter relying on the former.

All this day, O Lord,  
let me touch as many lives  
as possible for thee;  
and every life I touch,  
do thou quicken,  
whether through the word I speak,  
the prayer I breathe,  
or the life I live.  
Amen. *Mary Sumner*

The new vicar at St Michael’s Church in Alnwick, to whom the Mothers’ Union prayers were sent, may be amused to know that his ministry extends to the west of Newcastle. You simply never know how far your prayers can travel !!