

I am one of the many who still send Christmas cards, while a lot of people have elected to support charities instead.

The actual card may not be important but I do believe the message is, and even more so, the link. There are a whole range of reasons while people are on my card list, but strangely missing - with a few special exceptions - are the people that I see fairly often, probably because the link is continuous and we greet each other on most days.

Many of the folk on my list date back longer than I can remember,. They include precious relatives, and friends from way back, many of whom I haven't seen for years, and it's our only way of knowing that we're still up and about - and sadly each year some leave us! And there are a few who don't return a card, probably because they are supporting a charity - but each year new friends are made and replenish the list.

There are of course a few good friends that I have lost touch with, who are not on my list, and every now and again I make an effort to find someone - with some surprising, and some distressing results.

All of these people have at some time in the past been involved with us and influenced our lives over a long period of time - or maybe for only a moment - leaving us with a lasting and sometimes ever present memory.

But every year, of all the cards that I regularly receive, there are a few missing, & at the end of the Christmas season - when all the late post has arrived! - I go through them all looking for signs that I should do more than just put them away & wait for the next time.

Missing 'cards' I like to follow up, but sometimes a message received - maybe in a letter - indicates that something may be happening that needs a response - and every year there are a couple! So, with every best intention, I make another list, pledging to get in touch with as many as possible - doing the seemingly more urgent ones straight away. To my shame, I rarely get to them all, although Easter provides me another opportunity to catch up! And sadly there are those, try as I may, with whom I am unable to make contact, and I am left pondering the reason.

The strange thing that frequently occurs, is that the people we feel closest to are the very people we are separated from at the very moment when we most need each other. The unforeseen accident, when the doctor or an ambulance is called and the patient is whisked away to the care of others, leaving you standing seemingly hopelessly by. I have recollections of one or two startling experiences of just such a thing.

Of each other, we should be kind, while there is still time

The concluding words by Philip Larkin, in his poem 'The Mower'

IF I KNEW

This poem was circulated in memory of all those who perished in the USA on the morning of September 11th 2001.

If I knew it would be the last time
That I'd see you fall asleep,
I would tuck you in more tightly
and pray the Lord, your soul to keep.

If I knew it would be the last time
that I see you walk out the door,
I would give you a hug and kiss
and call you back for one more.

If I knew it would be the last time
I'd hear your voice lifted up in praise,
I would video tape each action and word,
so I could play them back day after day.

If I knew it would be the last time,
I could spare an extra minute
to stop and say "I love you,"
instead of assuming you would **KNOW** I do.

If I knew it would be the last time
I would be there to share your day,
Well I'm sure you'll have so many more,
so I can let just this one slip away.

For surely there's always tomorrow
to make up for an oversight,
and we always get a second chance
to make everything just right.

There will always be another day
to say "I love you,"
And certainly there's another chance to say our
"Anything I can do?"

But just in case I might be wrong,
and today is all I get,
I'd like to say how much I love you
and I hope we never forget.

Tomorrow is not promised to anyone,
young or old alike,
And today may be the last chance
you get to hold your loved one tight.

So

So if you're waiting for tomorrow,
why not do it today?
For if tomorrow never comes,
you'll surely regret the day,

That you didn't take that extra time
for a smile, a hug, or a kiss
and you were too busy to grant someone,
what turned out to be their one last wish.

So hold your loved ones close today,
and whisper in their ear,
Tell them how much you love them
and that you'll always hold them dear

Take time to say "I'm sorry,"
"Please forgive me," "Thank you," or "It's okay."
And if tomorrow never comes,
you'll have no regrets about today.

Originally titled "Tomorrow Never Comes," the poem was actually written by Norma Cornett Marek in 1989 as, in her words, "a tribute to a beloved child I lost, in hopes it would cause people to never be careless or too busy to let our loved ones know we love them."

"I am honoured that it was used for the Sept. 11th tragedy as a tribute but no one asked me to use it," Marek told BreakTheChain.org. "I really do not see why this certain poem is so coveted. It is a mother's heart speaking, not a great poem by any means, yet many seem to think so."

She's flattered by the attention the poem has garnered, but saddened by people who try to claim it as their own, change it or use it without her permission. "I do not like the use of any of my work without written consent from me," she said. "As of this moment I give anyone permission who wishes to use the poem to go ahead as long as I get credit and the date is correct."

Norma Marek passed away July 18, 2004, after a prolonged battle with cancer. Before her death, she began working with singer/songwriter Ray Paquet to put her words to music. The song was completed in May 2004 and Norma got to hear it before she died.

You can listen to the track on Paquet's web site. 