

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Only 73 Days Away
The 2011 Holiday Forever Stamps on Sale Today



To obtain a high-resolution image of these stamps for media use only, email roy.a.betts@usps.gov.

NEW YORK — It's hard to believe, but Christmas is only 73 days away. To help get everyone in the spirit, the Postal Service today is kicking off the 2011 holiday season with the issuance of the new Christmas stamps.

"Holiday gift catalogs are already in the mail," said David Williams, vice president, Network Operations, who dedicated the stamps today at the American Stamp Dealers Association National Stamp Show. "Soon we'll be delivering millions of extra packages, cards and letters. Many of them will be dressed in their holiday best — wearing one of the 2011 holiday stamps we are dedicating today."

Williams was joined at the stamp dedication by James E. Lee, president, American Stamp Dealers Association; Wade E. Saadi, president, American Philatelic Society; Raschelle Parker, manager, Marketing, New York District, U.S. Postal Service; and Stephen Kearney, executive director, Stamp Services, U.S. Postal Service.

"All of our holiday stamps are being issued this year for the first time as Forever stamps," said Kearney. "These popular stamps rank among our best sellers."

"Last year, we sold 1.3 billion holiday stamps from October to December. That amounts to one in every 10 stamps we sell for the year. We hope to sell even more this year and, remember, they last forever," Kearney noted.

Inspired by 1950s-era ornaments, the festive Holiday Baubles Forever stamps feature four colorful ornaments sure to add to the joys of the season. These baubles also may inspire fond memories of beloved ornaments from childhood — objects that still have the power to enchant us today.

Art director William Gicker used illustrations by Linda Fountain of Hilton Head Island, SC, to create the ornaments shown in the stamp art.

For many years, the Postal Service has issued traditional Christmas stamps featuring the Madonna and Child. The Christmas stamp for 2011 presents a detail from a painting by the Italian master Raphael, entitled *Madonna of the Candelabra*. This circular painting dates around 1513, and, is now in the Walters Art Museum collection in Baltimore, MD.

In 1508, Raphael was summoned by Pope Julius II to Rome, where he spent the last dozen years of his short life in an inspired burst of activity. The masterpieces he produced in Rome include the painting reproduced on this stamp.

The stamp art is a detail of the painting, as the original photograph was cropped to fit the stamp format. Richard Sheaff served as art director for this issuance.

Both the Holiday Baubles and Madonna of the Candelabra by Raphael stamps are being issued as Forever stamps which make them good for one-ounce First-Class Mail postage forever.

"In this small way, the Postal Service extends its warmest wishes to you and yours for a very festive, healthy and happy holiday season," said Williams.

The stamps go on sale today at Post Offices nationwide, online at usps.com and by phone at 800-782-6724.

How to Order the First-Day-of-Issue Postmark, Holiday Baubles Forever Stamps

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at a local Post Office, at The Postal Store website at usps.com/shop or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others) and place them in larger envelopes addressed to:

Holiday Baubles Stamp
Postmaster
421 Eighth Ave., Rm. 2029B
New York, NY 10199-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes by mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by Dec. 13, 2011.

How to Order First-Day Covers

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly "USA Philatelic" catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

Information Fulfillment
Dept. 6270
U.S. Postal Service
P.O. Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Philatelic Products

There are four philatelic products available for this stamp issue:

- 679663, First-Day Cover Set of 4, \$3.52.
- 679668, Digital Color Postmark Set of 4, \$6.40.
- 679691, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.
- 679699, Cancellation Keepsake (4 DCP w/Pane), \$15.95.

How to Order the First-Day-of-Issue Postmark, Madonna of the Candelabra by Raphael Stamp

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at a local Post Office, at The Postal Store website at usps.com/shop or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others) and place them in larger envelopes addressed to:

Madonna of the Candelabra by Raphael Stamp

Postmaster

421 Eighth Ave., Rm. 2029B

New York, NY 10199-9998

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Dept. 6270

U.S. Postal Service

P.O. Box 219014

Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Philatelic Products

There are four philatelic products available for this stamp issue:

- 679561, First-Day Cover, \$.88.
- 679565, Digital Color Postmark, \$1.60.
- 679591, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.
- 679599, Cancellation Keepsake (4 DCP w/Pane), \$10.95.

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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For reporters interested in speaking with a regional Postal Service public relations professional on this issue, please go to <http://about.usps.com/news/media-contacts/usps-local-media-contacts.pdf>.

A self-supporting government enterprise, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation, 150 million residences, businesses and Post Office Boxes. The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses, and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations. With 32,000 retail locations and the most frequently visited website in the federal government, usps.com, the Postal Service has annual revenue of more than \$67 billion and delivers nearly 40 percent of the world's mail. If it were a private sector company, the U.S. Postal Service would rank 29th in the 2010 Fortune 500. *Black Enterprise* and *Hispanic Business* magazines ranked the Postal Service as a leader in workforce diversity. The Postal Service has been named the Most Trusted Government Agency six consecutive years and the sixth Most Trusted Business in the nation by the Ponemon Institute.

