

POSTAL NEWS

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Nativity Forever Stamp Dedicated Today

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Postal Service is ready for Christmas with a new *Nativity Forever stamp* issued today. The stamp was dedicated at Saint John's Church in Washington, DC, and is available nationwide today.

The public is asked to share the news using the hashtag #NativityStamps.

"Today we honor one of the most symbolic images in the world. An image that for Christians from all walks of life celebrates the story of the Nativity – the birth of Jesus Christ. This beautiful stamp includes a brilliant star that stands out in both its illustration and in its meaning of Christmas," said U.S. Postal Service Corporate Communications Vice President Janice Walker. "There are no greater traditions than those of the holidays, and the Postal Service is happy to help you celebrate and honor your traditions."

Joining Walker in dedicating the stamps were former U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors member Louis Giuliano; St. John's Church Rector Reverend Dr. Luis León; and Florida Avenue Baptist Church Pastor Adamio Charles Boddie. U.S. Postal Service Shipping Solutions Manager John Samuels III served as master of ceremonies.

"During my time with the Board of Governors I witnessed the launch of a stamp series that spoke deeply to my Christian faith," said Giuliano. "The first stamp, aptly named Holy Family, was issued in 2012 and illustrated the journey of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus into Egypt. In 2014, I was honored to stand here in Saint John's Church to help dedicate the second stamp in the series, Christmas Magi, which illustrated the story of the Three Wise Men."

"It is with great pleasure that I welcome the United States Postal Service back to St. John's Church for the unveiling of the 2016 Nativity Forever stamp," said León. "Our ceremony today celebrates the remarkable mystery of the Incarnation, the world's most widely observed holiday. This new stamp reminds us of God's gift of his son as our savior; his continuing gift of grace in our lives and the possibility for us to receive the power to become his children."

Art director <u>Greg Breeding</u> of Charlottesville, VA, designed the stamp with original artwork by <u>Nancy Stahl</u> of New York City.

The stamp art features an image of the Holy Family silhouetted against a dawn sky. As the baby Jesus lies in a straw-filled manger, Mary kneels to the right and Joseph stands to the left, holding a lantern. Over the scene, a bright star shines on the trio. The color palette features simple shades of blue and white highlighted by deep shadows.

The Nativity Scene

Artists through the centuries have celebrated the Nativity in painting and sculpture. Carvings of Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus, often accompanied by an ox and a donkey, date back at least to the fourth century. St. Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first crèche in the 13th century. In 1223 in a cave near a small village, he set up a manger as a visual way to deepen the message of his sermon on the birth of Jesus.

Today Nativity scenes remain the centerpieces of many church and family devotions during the Christmas season.

Nativity is being issued in booklets of 20 Forever stamps. Forever stamps will always be equal in value to the current First-Class Mail 1-ounce price.

Ordering First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at local Post Offices, at The Postal Store website at <u>usps.com/shop</u>, or by calling 800-782-6724. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others, and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

Nativity Christmas Stamp Stamp Fulfillment Services Cancellation Services 8300 NE Underground Drive, Pillar 210 Kansas City, MO 64144-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark up to a quantity of 50. There is a 5-cent charge for each additional postmark over 50. All orders must be postmarked by Jan. 3, 2017.

Ordering 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, online at <u>usps.com/shop</u>, or by calling 800-782-6724. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-782-6724 or writing to:

U.S. Postal Service Catalog Request PO Box 219014 Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

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