

Hungarian Stamps 2011

**MAGYAR POSTA
STAMP ISSUE
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CHRISTMAS 2011



In keeping with its traditions Magyar Posta is issuing a set of postage stamps to celebrate Christmas, the feast of love.

In 2011 the festive stamps show two Catholic churches with Nativity scenes that are unique both in Hungarian and world terms. In Central Europe the arrangement of Biblical tableaux using sculptures to depict the birth of Christ during Advent is a tradition dating back several hundred years.

Nagykarácsony • Magyar Posta is cancelling mail sent via the post office in the village of Nagykarácsony, whose name means Christmas in Hungarian, with a special postmark for the 23rd time. Here the “post office of love” first opened in 1992 and since then has opened to the public on the first Sunday in Advent every year. There has also been the Hungarian Nativity in Nagykarácsony since 2000. The Catholic church in Nagykarácsony, built in 1936, has an unusual interior with a finely carved wooden gallery and a panelled ceiling. The altarpiece is Our Lady of the Hungarians, which portrays Saint Stephen offering Hungary to the Virgin Mary. It was painted by István Takács, a celebrated artist from the Matyó region of Hungary. On the side walls there are eight icons of saints and martyrs associated with the approach of Advent and the period after it painted by László Patay, an artist from Ráckeve, in 2001. These show Saint Francis Xavier, Saint John of Damascus, Saint Nicholas, Saint Lucy, Saint Stephen, Saint John, the Holy Innocents and Saint Sylvester.

Vörs • The first written record of Vörs dates from 1261. The most important building in the village is the Roman Catholic church, consecrated around 1720. It was extended considerably one hundred years later and rebuilt in a late baroque style. The arrangement of a Nativity scene in Vörs is a living tradition dating back more than half a century. The first crib in the Roman Catholic church in the village lying near the Kis-Balaton area in Somogy county was arranged in 1948. The special indoor scene of the Nativity, which is rebuilt every year, is unrivalled in Europe. The monumental work is sited at the altar of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the church in Vörs. Apart from the people and animals made of plaster, everything is made of natural materials, and there is even a small pond with water. Approximately fifty boxes of moss, several dozen fir trees and many cubic metres of timber are used to build the scene.

The Nagykarácsony church is on the left of the HUF 90 stamp, and next to it is a detail of the largest outdoor Nativity scene in Hungary, which is to be found in Nagykarácsony. The Roman Catholic church in Vörs is on the left of the HUF 115 stamp, with a detail of the largest indoor Nativity scene in Europe, which is rebuilt every year, next to it. Gold-colour foil has been used for the inscription Karácsony (Christmas) and other decorative motifs on the stamps. On the outer edge the wording “THE NAGYKARÁCSONY CHURCH IS 75 YEARS OLD” is repeated. The churches are depicted on the first day covers for the set of stamps and the motif of the special cancellation is an angel.

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