

Madonna and Child



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Madonna and Child

The Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) reviews suggestions for new stamp designs and recommends these designs to the postmaster general. Following years of customer requests, CSAC recommended that the U.S. Post Office Department issue a Christmas stamp. The first Christmas stamp — Holiday Celebrations: Wreath and Candles — was issued in 1962.



1962 • Scott 1205
Wreath and Candles

Three years later, CSAC faced the question “How could you issue a stamp to commemorate Christmas without addressing the central theme of religion?”

However, CSAC was concerned about the division of state and religion. Their answer was a stamp issued with an image of a church weather vane in the shape of the angel Gabriel blowing a trumpet — a stamp that might be considered religious.



1965 • Scott 1276
Wreath and Candles

This did not end the controversy because stamp collectors, as well as the general public, were looking for a Christmas stamp with a religious image. CSAC found the answer — stamp images based on paintings of the Madonna and Child would not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Scott 1321 • 1966

This is the first of several Christmas stamps taking inspiration from early paintings located at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. The stamp design shows the central portion of the painting *Madonna and Child with Angels* by Hans Memling (1430–1494). The Virgin Mary is holding the Christ Child, who with one hand is touching a missal (a book of prayers) and with the other hand is reaching for an apple, the symbol of sin.

Scott 1336 • 1967

The stamp design shows a larger central portion of the painting *Madonna and Child with Angels* by Hans Memling that was used for the 1966 Christmas stamp. The elongated version shows more of the original painting including Mary's garments and the panel behind her. The original oil on panel is on display at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 1414 • 1970

The *Nativity* artwork was painted in 1523 by Lorenzo Lotto (1480–1556). The painting depicts a Bethlehem stable where Mary and Joseph are leaning over baby Jesus as three flying angels lower a cloth to keep him warm. The original oil on panel can be seen at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 1444 • 1971

The *Adoration of the Shepherds*, or the *Allendale Nativity* as it is commonly known, is now generally accepted as the work of Giorgione (1477–1510). The scene is one of intense meditation; the shepherds are the first to recognize Christ's divinity and they kneel accordingly. Mary and Joseph also participate in the adoration, creating an atmosphere of intimacy. The original oil on panel is located in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

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Madonna and Child

Scott 1321
1966



Scott 1336
1967



Scott 1414
1970



Scott 1444
1971



Madonna and Child

Scott 1507 • 1973

The *Small Cowper Madonna* painting the Italian High Renaissance artist Raphaël (1483–1520) that this Christmas stamp design is based on, is so named because it was owned by the Cowper family of Hertford, England. The painting depicts Mary and Child in a typical Italian countryside with the small church assumed to be the church of San Bernardino, near Urbino. Original oil on panel is located in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 1579 • 1975

Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449–1494) likely painted the *Madonna and Child* that this stamp is based on. The gold background is unusual, a little old-fashioned for a painting done in the 1470s. It is not clear whether the present gilt surface (not original) replaced original gilding or was applied over a now-obliterated landscape. The original tempera on panel transferred to hardboard painted surface can be seen at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

NOTE: Because postage rates for late 1975 were uncertain, the Christmas stamps were issued with no denomination becoming the first non-denominated U.S. stamps.

Scott 1701 • 1976

The Nativity was painted by Bostonian John Singleton Copley (1738–1815) around 1776 and first displayed at the Royal Academy in London in 1777. The oil on canvas shows Mary, adorned in white, the color of purity, keeping her gaze upon her first born son. The dog, a symbol of fidelity, looks at its master, a lowly shepherd. Saint Joseph, sits protectively over his wife, greeting those who seek to visit the Christ child. The original artwork is located in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Scott 1768 • 1978

This stamp design comes from *Madonna and Child with Cherubim*, a sculpture by Andrea della Robbia (1435–1525). The Virgin Mary holds the Child gently, her forehead grazing his hair. The child rests his left arm against her chest and clutches her left hand, as he clings to a corner of her veil. The Virgin's downcast gaze suggests meditation on the child's fate. Their thoughts seem to converge on the sorrowful theme: the coming Passion and death of Christ. The original glazed terracotta is on display the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 1799 • 1979

The design on this stamp centers on a portion of *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt* painting by Gerard David (1460–1523). The weary family paused during their three-day journey. Mary wears robes in her symbolic colors of red and blue; fine rays of golden light emanate from the mother's head and that of the child; and the bunch of grapes held by the Madonna is a well-known symbol of the Eucharist. The original oil on panel can be seen at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 1842 • 1980

The 1980 Christmas stamp shows Mary with the infant Christ child on her lap and is a representation of the Epiphany stained glass window in the National Cathedral's Bethlehem Chapel in Washington, DC. The five floor-to-ceiling window set was designed by Walter E. Tower (ca. 1910) of Kempe and Company.

Scott 1939 • 1981

Madonna and Child was painted by Italian artist, Sandro Botticelli (1446–1510) showing the tender embrace of mother and child and the Virgin's wistful expression which was typical of Botticelli's lyrical manner. The original tempera on panel is displayed at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Scott 2026 • 1982

This stamp design is based on the *Madonna of the Goldfinch* painting. There are two versions of the oil on canvas painting in the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. The painting used for the stamp was a gift to the National Gallery's collection in 1943. In this painting, Mary cradles Jesus with both hands as he holds her mantle in one hand and a goldfinch, symbolizing his coming death, in the other hand. Though the painting is depicted on the stamp with the words "Tiepolo: National Gallery of Art", its attribution to painter Giovanni Battista Tiepolo has been doubted by some, who believe it to be that of an assistant or the painter's son.

The other version of the painting by the same name became part of the National Gallery collection in 1997. In this painting, Mary seems to tilt her head down a bit more and her cloak is closed by a strip of fabric across her chest. It has always been accepted as a painting by Tiepolo himself.



Madonna and Child



Scott 1507 • 1973



Scott 1579 • 1975



Scott 1701 • 1976



Scott 1768 • 1978



Scott 1799 • 1979



Scott 1842 • 1980



Scott 1939 • 1981



Scott 2026 • 1982



Madonna and Child

Scott 2063 • 1983

The *Niccolini-Cowper Madonna* painted in 1508 by Raphaël (1483–1520) shows Baby Jesus, imposing and playful, grabs at his mother's bodice as if wanting to nurse. The original oil on panel is in the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 2107 • 1984

Madonna and Infant Savior with roses in the background was painted by Fra Filippo Lippi (1406–1469). Mary's hand is at her son's throat in a "gesture that actually refers to the sacrificial aspect of the Lamb of God". The original tempera on poplar panel is located at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 2165 • 1985

The inspiration for this year's stamp design came from *The Genoa Madonna*, a sculpture by Luca della Robbia (1400–1482) completed around 1445. The hair and haloes of both figures show traces of gilding and the pupils of the eyes have been painted blue. The original white enameled terracotta is owned by the Detroit Institute of Arts in Michigan.

Scott 2244 • 1986

Shown on this stamp is part of the *Madonna and Child* painted by Pietro Perugino (1450–1523) in approximately 1500. This stamp, like others in this featured collection with the exception of the 1978 stamp of a della Robbia sculpture, modestly crops out Jesus' nudity. The original oil on popular panel is owned by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 2367 • 1987

A quarter of *A Gentleman in Adoration before the Madonna* painting by Giovanni Battista Moroni (1525–1578) is shown on this stamp. The gentleman was excluded from the stamp design in keeping with the tradition of U.S. Christmas stamps depicting only the mother and child. The original oil on canvas is owned by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 2399 • 1988

The *Madonna and Child* was painted around 1470 by the Florentine painter, Sandro Botticelli (1446–1510). Art historians have discovered that when painting the portrait of mother and child, Botticelli actually made many changes. For example, Mary's dress initially was belted and the infant's clothing shortened for the finished painting. The original tempera on panel is located at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Scott 2427 • 1989

The Dream of Saint Catherine of Alexandria was painted by Lodovico Carracci (1555–1619). Carracci illustrates Saint Catherine sleeping to represent her legendary dream in which Mary and the infant Christ are accompanied by angels appearing to her in her dream. Catherine and the angels are not included in the final stamp design. The original oil on canvas can be seen at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Scott 2514 • 1990

Madonna and Child is assumed to be painted by Antonello da Messina (1430–1479). Mary and the baby Jesus' faces touch, and in a realistic manner, the baby indicates that he wants to nurse, lending the portrait a very human aspect. The original oil and tempera on wood transferred from panel painted surface is located at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 2578 • 1991

Virgin and Child with Donor painting by Antoniazio Romano (1461–1508) was created around 1480. Romano painted in a realistic style, using light and shadow to add to the depth of his subjects. The original tempera and gold leaf on wood is in the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas.



Madonna and Child



Scott 2063 • 1983



Scott 2107 • 1984



Scott 2165 • 1985



Scott 2244 • 1986



Scott 2367 • 1987



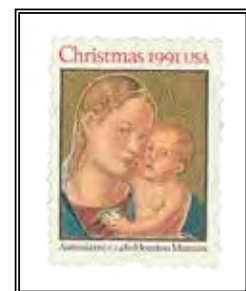
Scott 2399 • 1988



Scott 2427 • 1989



Scott 2514 • 1990



Scott 2578 • 1991



Madonna and Child

Scott 2710 • 1992

The 1992 Christmas stamp design was based on a painting of the *Madonna and Child with Saints* housed in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. Though signed Giovanni Bellini, the painting was probably done by a contemporary follower of the better-known artist. In the painting, the saints surrounding Mary and child give the composition a more crowded and symmetrical feel. Their gazes are somewhat foreboding; with Mary wearing a slightly concerned, yet serene expression, perhaps foreshadowing Jesus' death. It illustrates Bellini's particularly Venetian style of Madonna and Child portraits, in which Mary frequently gazes out of the painting, hauntingly engaging the viewer.

Scott 2789 • 1993

Virgin and Child by Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano (1459–1518) has brilliant blues and greens and is among Cima's finest works. The active twisting pose of the baby Jesus evolved from earlier more sedate paintings of him. The original oil on wood is located at the National Gallery in London.

Scott 2871 • 1994

Virgin and Child was painted by Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1665) in 1663. Sirani portrays Mary not as a remote queen of heaven, but as a very real, young Italian mother, wearing the turban favored by Bolognese peasant women. She gazes adoringly at the plump baby Jesus wriggling on her lap. The original oil on canvas is in the collection of the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC.

Scott 3003 • 1995

Painted during the latter part of Giotto's (1265–1337) career, the *Madonna and Child* was the central part of a five-section polyptych or altarpiece in many panels. Giotto utilized a conservative Byzantine-style background in gold leaf, symbolizing the realm of heaven, and the white rose is a traditional symbol of Mary's purity as well as a reference to the innocence lost through Original Sin. The original tempera on poplar panel is in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 3107 • 1996

In 1711, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* was painted by Paolo de Matteis (1662–1728). It is a masterpiece of the Naples' style during the late Baroque and early Rococo periods. The original oil on canvas can be seen at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond.

Scott 3176 • 1997

The first self-adhesive Madonna and Child stamp was based on the *Madonna and Child with Saint Jerome, Saint Bernardino, and Angel* painted by Sano di Pietro (1405–1481). The bright colors and the rich gold, textured with punched decoration, have a jewel-like quality that appealed to the Siense taste for ornament and luxury. The original gold leaf and tempera on panel is located at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 3244 • 1998

The stamp design comes from the magnificent Florentine *Madonna and Child* which is among the most beautiful and best preserved example of a polychrome and gilded terracotta relief. It was created in Florentine by an unknown artist around 1445. The baby Jesus is chubby and realistic, as he playfully reaches for her headdress. Mary seems to be leaning to one side to support his weight. The original, with wood backing sculpture can be seen at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 3355 • 1999

Bartolomeo Vivarini's (1432–1499) *Madonna and Child* painting is considered more realistic than some of its counterparts, particularly in the expression of the child and the rendering of their hands and feet. The original tempera on poplar panel is located in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.



Madonna and Child



Scott 2710 • 1992



Scott 2789 • 1993



Scott 2871 • 1994



Scott 3003 • 1995



Scott 3107 • 1996



Scott 3176 • 1997



Scott 3244 • 1998



Scott 3355 • 1999



Madonna and Child

Scott 3536 • 2001

Virgin and Child was painted by Lorenzo di Ottavio Costa (1460–1535). Costa is known for his mature style as a sweet Peruginisque with a delicate feeling for landscape. The original oil on panel is located at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in Pennsylvania.

Scott 3675 • 2002

Virgin and Child was painted by Dutch artist Jan Gossaert (1478–1532). The Virgin's classicizing draperies and the child's athletic figure shows Gossaert's command of the new Renaissance style. The original oil on panel is in the Art Institute of Chicago, IL.

Scott 3820 • 2003

The 2003 Christmas stamp was a variance of the previous year's stamp. The Virgin presents the Child so that his glance and blessing gesture are directed beyond the picture to the right. This suggests that the panel was once paired with another with which it would have formed a portable folding altarpiece. Earlier Netherlander painters had favored this format of paired, hinged panels, now called a diptych.

Scott 3879 • 2004

Madonna and Child was painted by Lorenzo Monaco (1370–1422) in 1413. The tempera on panel inspired the 2004 traditional Christmas stamp with a golden glow in the background and on the reverse of Mary's garment. The panel can be seen at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 4100 • 2006

Madonna and Child with Bird was painted by Ignacio Chacón around 1765. Birds were sacred to the Inca, partially because of their ability to fly and move closer to Inti, the sun god. So in Cuzco, Peru, where Chacón was when he painted this artwork, colonial artists often incorporated birds or feathers into images of the Virgin and Christ to indicate their divine status. The original oil on canvas is located at the Denver Art Museum in Colorado.

Scott 4206 • 2007

The Madonna in the Carnation was painted by Bernadino Luini (1481–1532). The painting shows the Virgin with Baby Christ seated in her lap as he turns to grasp a carnation growing in a pot nearby. This may seem like an everyday gesture, but during the Renaissance a carnation symbolized either the Crucifixion or the Virgin's pure love. The original oil on panel is owned by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scott 4359 • 2008

Virgin and Child with Young Saint John the Baptist was painted by Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510) also known as Alessandro Filipepi. The original painting is a round form, called a tondo, which was popular during the 1440s. The artwork was made from tempera on wood and is in The Cleveland Museum of Art in Ohio.

Scott 4424 • 2009

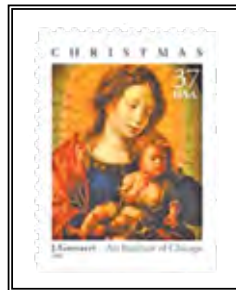
This self-adhesive stamp depicts Giovanni Battista Salvi Da Sassoferrato's (1609–1685) *Madonna Sleeping Child*. The Virgin Mary is cradling the sleeping Christ Child tenderly in her arms. With his rosy cheeks and plump arms and legs, the Child appears as a typical, healthy baby. Mary is shown as a radiant young mother. The original oil on canvas is currently on display at the Musée du Louvre in Paris, France.



Madonna and Child



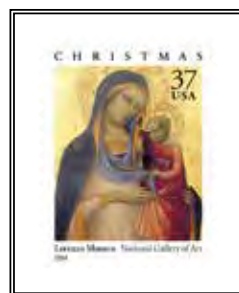
Scott 3536 • 2001



Scott 3675 • 2002



Scott 3820 • 2003



Scott 3879 • 2004



Scott 4100 • 2006



Scott 4206 • 2007



Scott 4359 • 2008



Scott 4424 • 2009



Madonna and Child

Scott 4570 • 2011

The first U.S. Forever Christmas stamp was based on the *Madonna of the Candelabra* by Raphaël (1483–1520). The Virgin and Child project the grace and serenity typical of Raphael's work. The original tondo (circular painting) oil on panel is at The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, MD.

Scott 4815 • 2013

The 2013 Forever Christmas stamp features Gossaert's 1531 painting, *Virgin and Child*. Draped in purple and blue, the Virgin Mary supports her own head by leaning on one of her hands, an unusual pose that art historians see as a sign of sadness and contemplation. In her other hand, a curly-haired infant Jesus draped in white holds a bunch of red currants, which scholars believe are meant to foreshadow his future suffering. The original oil on wood is currently in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art in Ohio.

Scott TBD • 2016

The USPS has announced the Madonna and Child issue for 2016. The Florentine *Madonna and Child* stamp design is from the top part of the Follower of Fra Filippo Lippi and Pesellino painting by an anonymous artist, known only by the painting's name. The Madonna holds the Infant Savior with roses in the background. The original tempera on panel is found at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Scheduled release date is October 7, 2016.



Madonna and Child



Scott 4570 • 2011



Scott 4815 • 2013



Scott TBD • 2016



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Information about each U.S. Madonna & Child stamp by Kristin Patterson, Feb. 9, 2016.
Graphic design and layout by Janet Houser.

The United States Postal Service did not issue Christmas stamps (neither the Virgin Mary and Child nor any other Christmas symbol) until 1962. In 1966, the U.S.P.S. authorized its most religious design used on a U.S. postage stamp when it began issuing the Madonna and Child stamp.

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