

Christmas 2007



Christmas 2008



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The 2007 Christmas set of 3 stamps was a special issue. Special because this was the first time that the local post office had a joint issue with the Philatelic and Numismatic Bureau of the Vatican City. In fact the Vatican stamps shows the same images as that of the Malta stamps.

Issued on 20 November 2007 this set shows a reproduction of the Nativity painted by the Maltese artist Giuseppe Cali and found at St. Andrew's Parish Church in Luqa, Malta. Cali was born in Valletta of Neapolitan parents and educated at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Naples. Several churches in Malta and Gozo boasts a work of his. He was sometimes nicknamed '*ix-xitan tal-pinzell*' ("the Devil with the brush"). He died in Valletta and was commemorated by the Republic of Malta with a series of four postage stamps in 1996, and a coin in 2004. This painting, together with another two, were unveiled on the occasion of the feast of Saint Andrew in November 1908. The painting as depicted on the €0.37 value shows, with his the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, two shepherds and a girl looking in amazement at the Son of God in a manger. The €0.19 and €0.63 values shows a detail from the same painting, Mary watching over her Son and the little girl looking at the new born Baby. The original painting is signed by the artist.

Printex Ltd. Printed this set using the offset method. Each stamp is 35.0mm square and have a perforation of 14.28 x 14.28 (comb). As on many other Malta stamps the paper is watermarked with Maltese Crosses.

Ref.: *MaltaPost stamp official bulletin no.260*

Maltese Scenery - 2007

Maltese Scenery was the title of a set of 5 stamps issued by MalatPost plc on 1 October 2007.

The €0.37 value features a Qrendi scene while the €1.07 value depicts the Mgarr (Gozo) harbor and the village of Ghajnsielem.

Qrendi is wee known for celebrating two feasts in honour of Our Lady under two titles, Our Lady of Lourdes which is celebrated either on the last Sunday of June or on the first Sunday of July, and the titular feast of the Ascension of Our Lady, popularly known as the feast of Santa Maria on the August 15. The ornate baroque Parish Church, designed by Lorenzo Gafà the architect of Mdina Cathedral, was completed in 1720.

The Qrendi stamp was chosen to form part of a joint stamp issue in the new Small European Postal Administrations Cooperation known as SEPAC.

The other stamp with Marian connection is the €1.07 value. It features Mgarr Harbour and the village of G'ajnsielem with its gothic parish church. Depicted several times on Malta postage stamps, M!arr is the visitor's first beckoning view. It is a welcome scene for tourists - and especially for Gozitan emigrants returning home. Mgarr harbor is dominated by a small chapel. This small yet imposing church dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, a replica of the famous *Notre Dame de la Garde* in Marseille, was built in 1888. It is complete with a cave in the cliffs underneath and a statue of the Virgin as found at Lourdes in France.

Ghajnsielem parish church is dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto. The original parish church knows its beginning to a legend that states that a certain shepherd, Anġlu Grech, while attending his sheep in the vicinity of the spring, saw an apparition of a young Lady dressed in immaculately white garments. She invited him to raise a statue in her honour in an area close by. Anġlu informed his fellow shepherds, friends and farmers of the vision and of the Lady's wish. In no time, a life-size

statue of the Virgin Mary was erected and the residents started meeting together in front of it, reciting the Rosary and other prayers. Parish Priest Dun Frangisk Mizzi was of the same idea. Architect Ugo Mallia was given the assignment to design a church on a Gothic-Lombard style in the form of a Latin Cross. Work started on 4 June 1922 and the foundation stone was officially laid in a special ceremony on 14 September 1924. When the first master mason retired, it took years to find a replacement. Then the Second World War brought the project to a standstill. Several other reasons were the cause for more delays that hampered the progress of the new church. One should mention a near double tragedy since builder Toni Vella fell from up high on two different occasions. Moreover, architect Mallia was replaced by Ġużè D'Amato. After the latter's death, his successor Joseph Mizzi was again replaced after eight years by the last architect: Joe Ellul Vincenti from Sliema. Under the leadership of Archpriest Espedito Tabone, the people of Ghajnsielem saw their dream fulfilled: at long last the church was completed in 1979. The next Archpriest, Mgr. Joseph Zerafa continued to enrich the church with works of art, including an elaborated wooden niche for the statue of the Madonna ta' Loreto.

This set of stamps was designed by artist John Martin Borg and printed by Printex Ltd., using the offset process. Each stamp measures 44.00mm x 31.0mm. And has a perforation of 13.9 x 14 (comb). The paper is watermarked with Maltese Crosses.

Ref.: MaltaPost official bulletin no. 278.
'Gozo—the isle of joy on stamps' published in 2011 by the Gozo Philatelic Society.

Christmas 2008

Another set of 3 stamps featuring Old Masters was issued for Christmas 2008 on 27 November 2008. All three stamps depict Our Lady as a mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The €0.19 value shows Mary holding her Son close to her chest. This painting is entitled 'Virgin and Child with Infant St. John the Baptist, St Joseph is seen resting on his staff., while Jesus' cousin the child St. John the Baptist is depicted on the front, kissing the left foot of the Saviour. This painting is attributed to Francesco Trevisani, one of the major late baroque Italian artists active in Rome. The painting was transferred from the Grand Master's Palace to the Malta National Museum of Fine Arts in 1950.

The €0.26 value. The image on the stamp is a detail from a painting on panel entitled 'The Nativity of Christ.' The painting is signed by 'Alberto.' Very little is known about this artist although it is definitely a work of the 15 century. These are two unidentified personalities One of these, paying homage to the Lord is wearing a 15 century contemporary costume. This painting was donated to the Maltese Nation by Mrs. Emilia Zammit Clapp in 1922

'Madonna and Child with Infant St. John the Baptist' is the title of the €0.37 value. It is the work of Carlo Maratta, a prominent baroque painter of Rome. Former Inquisitor of Malta, Fabio Chigi, and later Pope Alexander VII commissioned this artist, several paintings. This painting originally belonged to the Grand Master's Palace, in Valletta.

The design for this set was prepared by Dniel Mangani an official of MaltaPost Philatelic Bureau, and printed by Printex Ltd., using the offset process. Each stamp measures 48.00mm x 39.0mm. And has a perforation of 14. x 14 (comb). The paper is watermarked with Maltese Crosses/

Ref: Sandro Debono-Heritage Malta/ MaltaPost official Stamp Bulletin no. 270.

Anthony Grech

Maltese Scenery - 2007

