

# Hungarian Stamps 2011

**MAGYAR POSTA**  
**STAMP ISSUE**  
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## RELIGIOUS HISTORY: SAINT MARTIN OF TOURS



Magyar Posta is issuing a special stamp to commemorate Saint Martin, the bishop of Tours, who was born in the province of Pannonia and is the patron saint of the diocese of Savaria (today Szombathely), Gaul (today France) and Burgenland (Austria) as well as of soldiers, beggars and many crafts. Many hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of places and churches around the world bear his name. His legend has inspired a multitude of artworks and the events of his life are captured by folk traditions. Besides religious deference, many folk traditions enliven his feast day, 11 November, and the surrounding period. Saint Martin's day is the start of winter, when it is the custom to taste the new wine and to eat goose. The bird's wishbone is then used to forecast the weather.

**Saint Martin** (316/317 – 397) grew up in a well-off, pagan family. His father, who was an army officer, was given an estate in Italy as a reward for military service, so Martin was raised in present-day Pavia. At the age of 12 he decided to become a Christian. When he was 15, he joined the army at his father's behest and at the age of 19 became a real soldier. Records mention his helpfulness and benevolence. He was baptised when he was 22. In 341 barbarians attacked Gaul but Martin did not wish to fight and set off for war unarmed. In the

end this conflict was averted because the Frankish ruler sued for peace. This greatly surprised the people, who thought it was a miracle. Martin then left the army and went to Poitiers. In 355 he accompanied the Roman emperor Julian to Gaul and then returned to Pannonia, where he began converting people. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century the heretical teaching of Arianism was gaining popularity. Martin was expelled from Savaria. In 360 the danger passed and he returned to Gaul and began evangelising in the villages there. In 361 he founded Europe's first monastery in Ligugé. He was appointed bishop of Tours in 371. His evangelisation was of great importance, and miracles and healings accompanied his life. He was buried in Tours and a chapel was erected over his grave. After his death, veneration of him spread quickly although many legends about his goodness had already circulated while he was still alive. In 461 the Synod of Tours announced a feast in honour of Martin. (Source: [hu.wikipedia.org](http://hu.wikipedia.org) \* [agorasavaria.hu](http://agorasavaria.hu))

The main motif of the stamp shows Saint Martin as a bishop in the centre of the design. Other parts of the composition depict events from the life of Saint Martin. In date order these are baptising his mother in the top left corner; the drawing at the bottom right illustrates the legend of how he gave half of his cloak to a shivering beggar in Gaul; and at the bottom left another turning point in his life is symbolised by a goose – the noisily gagging bird betrayed where Martin, the Roman soldier turned monk, was hiding because he was reluctant to become a bishop. Next to the goose is a book symbolising erudition and wisdom as well as the Bible. The first day cover for the stamp features the Saint Martin presbytery in Szombathely and a version of the statue of the baptism shown on the stamp. The special cancellation employs motifs associated with Saint Martin, a goose, and a bishop's mitre and crozier.

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Order code: 2011210010011 (stamp) • 2011210060012 (FDC)

Date of issue: 11 November 2011 • Face value: HUF 160 • Number of copies issued: 300,000 with 50 stamps per sheet  
 • Perforated size of the stamp: 35 x 45 mm • Printing method: offset • Printed by Pénczjegynyomda • Photo by József Hajdú • Designed by Eszter Domé