

# Hungarian Stamps 2009

## 250<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE MÁRIABESNYŐ DEVOTIONAL STATUE

Magyar Posta greets the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the Máriabesnyő devotional statue with the issue of a commemorative stamp.

In the 1750's the third wife of the region's count, Antal Grassalkovich became fatally ill. At this time he made a resolution that if his wife recovers he would build a church to the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. When the work was started stonemason János Fidler saw a vision and heard the words: "If you dig among the ruins of the church where once the main altar stood you will find a beautiful object." On the following day, on 19 April 1759 he started to search at the location spoken of, and at a depth of two spades he found the statue of the Virgin Mary, which was an 11 cm tall carved piece of ivory from the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century. From his family jewels Antal Grassalkovich had two crowns and a belt of precious stones, even today it is these and the gift of a gold ring from Franz Josef I that decorate the work. The statue was placed in a silver house behind crystal glass in the chapel, which was completed by 14 August 1761. Due to increasing demand the church was continuously extended and was consecrated on 17 March 1771. The news of the miraculous find of the country's smallest devotional statue spread quickly and Máriabesnyő became a place of pilgrimage. Even today several hundred thousand people visit it every year, asking for the graces of the Holy Virgin mother. Starting from the very first times very many prayers were answered and miracles took place here. The small presents of thanks located in the area around the altar bear witness to this.

Count Grassalkovich entrusted the care of the shrine to the Capuchins in 1763. The church was renovated by the order in 1912 and then in 1942, but in 1950 when the orders were disbanded they were forced to abandon it. After the change of regime they returned to Máriabesnyő, which became the second most visited Virgin Mary shrine in Hungary in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Pope Benedict XVI with the decision of the Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued on 2 May 2008 raised the Máriabesnyő chapel to the rank of basilica minor, which was announced on 7 September 2008 at the festival of the Virgin Mary. Source: <http://hu.wikipedia.org> • <http://mariabesnyo.vaciegyszegymegye.hu> • <http://uj.katolikus.hu> • <http://ujember.katolikus.hu>

The stamp includes the statue decorated with the jewellery and the basilica. The first day cover belonging to the stamp shows the main altar of the church and the statue holder, the graphic of the special cancellation stamp shows a stylised drawing of the statue.



TM

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Printing press: Állami Nyomda

Designer: Barnabás Baticz

Perforation size: 27.2 x 50 mm, 40 stamps/sheet

The stamp is issued in 200,000 copies.

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