

How many of you have heard the Italian song *Santa Lucia*? It refers to Saint Lucy, and celebrates the picturesque waterfront district of the Gulf of Naples, Italy. The words invite the boatman to turn in his boat, and better enjoy the cool of the evening.

Here are the lyrics from the first stanza of “Santa Lucia”:

*Upon this brilliant sea, a star of silver,
Across the gentle waves, the wind is sweeping.
Upon this brilliant sea, a star of silver,
Across the gentle waves, the wind is sweeping.
Come help my little boat sail swiftly to the shore,
Santa Lucia! Santa Lucia!
Come help my little boat sail swiftly to the shore,
Santa Lucia! Santa Lucia!*

A Prayer to St. Lucy

Saint Lucy, you did not hide your light under a basket, but let it shine for the whole world, for all the centuries to see. We may not suffer torture in our lives the way you did, but we are still called to let the light of our Christianity illumine our daily lives. Please help us to have the courage to bring our Christianity into our work, our recreation, our relationships, our conversation, and every corner of our day. Praised be Jesus! Amen.

Saint Lucy, pray for us!

For Reflection

- What stood out to you about her story?
- Why is Saint Lucy patron of eye problems?
- How would you approach Saint Lucy with your prayers?

Excerpts from Sources: Catholic News Agency, Catholic.org, bbc.co.uk, yourguidetoitaly.com

Socials with the Saints – PILGRIM CENTER of HOPE

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St. Lucy

Virgin & Martyr



Born: 283 A.D.

Died: circa 305-308 A.D.

Major Shrine: Syracuse, Sicily

Feast: December 13

St. Lucy was born to rich and noble parents in the year 283 in Syracuse, Italy. Her father was of Roman origin and her mother was of Greek heritage. On her feast day, many countries have their traditions in celebrating her feast day. Lucy, whose name can mean "light" or "lucid," is the patron saint of the blind. She is often seen with the emblem of eyes on a cup or plate. In paintings, she is often depicted with a golden plate holding her eyes and often holds a palm branch, which is a symbol of victory over evil. Some images show a dagger at her neck, which was the means of her death.

First, let's get to know her. She consecrated herself to God at a young age, and hoped to devote all her worldly goods to the service of the poor. Like so many of the early martyrs, Lucy had consecrated her virginity to God. Her desire to dedicate all she had to the poor was certainly counter-cultural for a noble woman of a wealthy family.

Her mother arranged a marriage for Lucy, but for three years Lucy managed to postpone the marriage. She would pray at the tomb of Saint Agatha asking her intercession and help, especially to change her mother's mind about her marriage. As a result, her mother's long illness was cured, and she acknowledged this as a grace from God. So, her mother finally consented to Lucy's desire to live for God.

However, Lucy's rejected fiancé was not happy! He denounced Lucy as a Christian, and informed the governor of Lucy's Christian faith.

The governor first ordered Lucy to make sacrifices to his idols, but she refused and said that she would only sacrifice to Christ through her good works.

Hearing this, the governor sentenced Lucy to forced prostitution as an intensely degrading punishment, but she claimed that her soul would remain pure no matter what was done to her against her will.

When the guards came to carry her out, the Holy Spirit made her body heavy and immobile, impossible to lift. They could not move her even when they hitched her to a team of oxen.

So, the governor ordered Lucy to be tortured and killed instead. After a gruesome torture which included having her eyes torn out, she was surrounded by bundles of wood which were set afire, but the fire quickly died out. She was then executed by being stabbed in the throat with a dagger. She died at the age of 25 in the year 308.

When her body was being prepared for burial in Sicily, it was discovered that her eyes had been miraculously restored. This and the meaning of her name ("light" or "lucid") led to her patronage with eyes; the blind, eye trouble, and other eye ailments.

Though details of her life remain unknown, it is widely known that during her lifetime Christians were persecuted for their faith. They were forced to endure horrific torture and often met painful ends during Diocletian's reign.

Her veneration spread to Rome, so that by the sixth century the whole Church recognized her courage in defense of the faith. Her story continues through cultural traditions especially in Syracuse, Sicily as well as in Sweden.

The city of Syracuse in Italy honors Saint Lucy every year with a week-long celebration with festivities and fireworks, sweets, and the vow not to eat pasta or bread. There are two processions; one on the 13th and another on the 20th of December, during which a procession with the silver statue of Santa Lucia by a 16th century sculptor is paraded through the streets.

A dish called Cuccia is eaten in memory of Saint Lucy's miraculous averting of famine. According to the legend, the Saint rescued the Syracusans when two ships, loaded with wheat, miraculously arrived in Syracuse, affected by a harsh famine. The starving population was so desperate to eat, that they boiled the wheat and ate it simply dressed with olive oil. This was the first cuccia ever made. Afterwards, a sweet cuccia was made by adding cooked wine or honey.

Cuccia is prepared differently from family to family, and in different regions. Some make cuccia as soup, others as a pudding. In Kansas City, Missouri, many Sicilian-Americans prepare cuccia as a hot cereal.

In Northern Italy, Santa Lucia Day is celebrated in a similar fashion to the Saint Nicholas Day tradition. Saint Lucy arrives in the company of a donkey and brings the good children gifts in the night between December 12 and 13. Children are asked to leave some coffee for Lucia, and some flour for the donkey.

No one is absolutely certain how the story of Santa Lucia made it to Sweden. However, since the late 1800s, the feast day of Santa Lucia on December 13 is widely celebrated throughout the country. There is speculation that stories of Lucia's bravery were brought to Sweden by traders and even by Vikings after their journeys to Southern Italy. Another explanation has to do with the name Lucia, which is derived from the Latin word "lux", meaning light. It is believed that Lucia and her feast day were adopted as a way to let in some light at the beginning of the dark, cold Swedish winter.

Today's Lucia celebrations involve the oldest daughter of the family dressing in a long white robe with a red sash around the waist, along with a crown of fresh greens and lit candles worn upon her head. The young lady rises before the rest of her family and serves them traditional sweet bread called Lucia Buns and coffee. The buns are baked to resemble two eyes.