



Saint Lucy
283-304 AD

Tradition tells us that Saint Lucy was born of noble, wealthy, Christian parents in Syracuse, Italy. Lucy had few memories of her father, for he died when Lucy was an infant. As a young girl, Lucy took a secret vow to consecrate her virginity to Christ. Thus her mother was quite dismayed when Lucy, as a teen, refused marriage to a young pagan. When Lucy's mother developed a hemorrhage, Lucy persuaded her to visit the tomb of St. Agatha to pray for healing. When her mother was healed, Lucy revealed her vow of virginity and asked permission to bestow her fortune on the poor. Joyful at her cure, Lucy's mother agreed, but Lucy's pagan suitor was incensed. With the persecution of the emperor Diocletian at its height, the jilted young man accused Lucy, before a judge, of being a Christian. When Lucy refused to relinquish her faith, the judge ordered her to a brothel. However, guards who attempted to drag her to the

house of sin were unable to budge her. Similarly an attempt to burn Lucy to death failed so she was dispatched by thrusting a sword into her throat. The date of Lucy's martyrdom was December 13, 304.

As early as the sixth century, Lucy was honored in Rome as one of the most praiseworthy virgin martyrs, and her name was inserted into the canon of the Mass. Possibly because of her name, which means "light," Lucy was invoked by those who suffered from eye trouble or blindness. Due to this connection, various legends arose. One legend claimed that her eyes were put out by a tyrannical government official or by her jilted boyfriend. Another declared that Lucy tore them out herself to discourage her pagan suitor. In every story, however, the Lord restored her eyes to her, more beautiful than ever.

In Venice, people celebrate the Feast of St. Lucy by enjoying fried cheese. Elsewhere in Italy, Italians eat small cakes or biscotti shaped like eyes, light huge bonfires, and conduct evening candlelight processions, all in honor of Saint Lucy.

Sicilians pay tribute to a miracle performed by St Lucy during a famine in 1582. At that time, she brought a flotilla of grain-bearing ships to starving Sicily, whose citizens cooked and ate the wheat without taking time to grind it into flour. Thus, on St. Lucy's Day, Sicilians don't eat anything made with wheat flour. Instead they eat cooked wheat called *cuccia*.