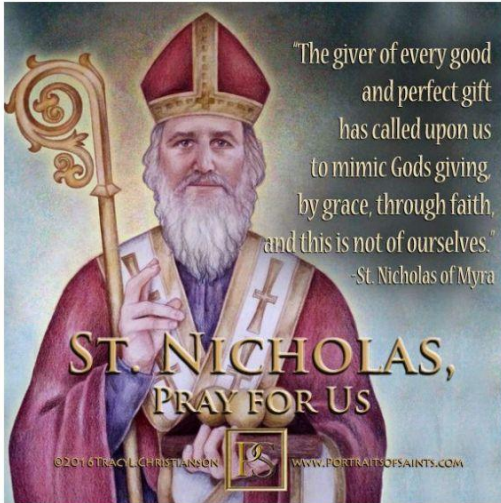


St. John's Newsletter



Saints of Kindness and Light

During the month of December, the Church celebrates two special saints – **St. Nicholas** and **St. Lucy**. The feast of St. Nicholas is December 6 and the feast of St. Lucy is December 13.

The **Feast of St. Nicholas** is celebrated in many areas with the surprise appearance of gifts left for children. In the United States, St. Nicholas is typically associated with Santa Claus. However, St. Nicholas and Santa Claus are not synonymous. Nicholas lived in the 4th century, therefore there is little that we can know with certainty about this legendary saint. He was Greek and was bishop of Myra, Lycia (modern Turkey). Based on the many legends and folklore, he was a generous man, especially to those who were innocent or wronged in some way. He was also a strong defender of the faith.

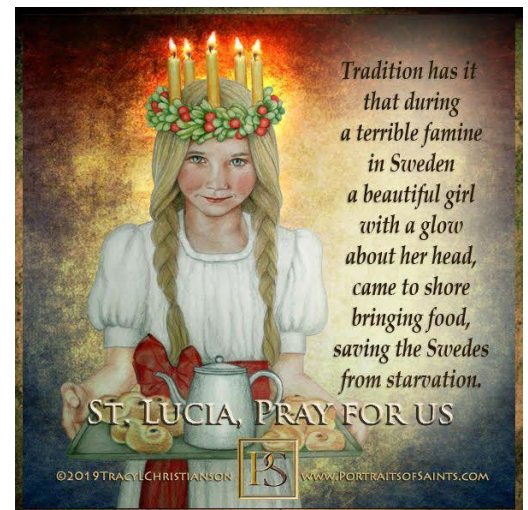
St. Nicholas is regarded as a patron of children due to a popular legend that has many versions. St. Nicholas met a man in Myra that had three daughters and he could not afford their dowry. St. Nicholas then decided, so as not to shame him, that he would throw three bags of gold through their window for each of the girls. Some versions of the story describe

three balls of gold, which is why oranges and chocolate coins are often given to children on the feast of St. Nicholas. Some versions also have Saint Nicholas throwing the bags down the chimney of the house in order to avoid discovery, landing in a stocking drying by the fire.

Nikolaustag (the Day of Nicholas) is celebrated in Germany and in many other countries in Europe. He is still the one who brings presents to the children if they have behaved. Many families now celebrate Christmas Day and exchange gifts then too. But Saint Nicholas is still very much part of traditions. On the Eve of the 6th of December, children clean their boots and leave them by the front door. They often also leave a little snack (carrot, biscuit) for Saint Nicholas and his donkey/horse. Saint Nicholas will then leave a little gift, fruit and chocolates for the children during the night. Sound familiar?

Lucia Day or Saint Lucy's Day is celebrated in many European countries, but is most popular in the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. It is also the national day on the Caribbean island of St. Lucia and festivities take place anywhere that there is a Scandinavian community. The name "Lucy" means "light." Many centuries ago, before the calendar was revised, December 13 was considered the shortest day of the year. During shorter days in the middle of Advent, we are reminded that Jesus is the light of the world as we prepare for celebrating his birth at Christmas.

Lucy lived on the island of Sicily around the year 300. The Roman Emperor Diocletian put her to death because of her faith. Saint Lucia was a devout Christian who was devoted to helping the poor, and so she is the patron saint of the poor. The legend is told that she was helping Christians who were hiding in catacombs. Wanting to have both hands free to carry supplies, she put candles into a crown so that she would still be able to see her way. This is why she is symbolized with a candle crown upon her head, and came to be associated with light. The traditional way to celebrate St. Lucia Day is to select one girl from each town or village who will represent St. Lucia in a procession around the town, wearing a white dress (signifying her purity) with a red sash (signifying her martyrdom) and a crown of candles. Boys also take part in the procession and celebrations dressed as "star boys" who represent Saint Stephen who was the first Christian martyr. They also wear white robes and a pointed hat covered in gold stars. "Lussekatter" or Lucia Buns which are a type of bun flavoured with saffron and containing raisins are eaten for breakfast. It is also traditional to eat gingerbread on St. Lucia Day, particularly in the form of gingerbread men.



Sources: https://sosf.org/feast-of-st-lucy/?fbclid=IwAR3UKyspeCBK7lj0vblNCNVqBywoiwmd4ZUeV-CTO_IBvuQSI24Kf0AMP00
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Volume 16 - December 2025- St. John's Newsletter is a once-a-month publication aimed at providing you with items of interest about our Catholic faith. If there is a topic you are interested in, please contact the parish office and we will try to address it in future issues. – Submitted by Mary Jo Peters