

Mission Tools:

Santa Lucia Festival

Description: This is an ancient Orthodox Christian festival from Sweden, which began before the Great Schism of 1054. This December feast day marks the martyrdom of "Santa Lucia" (Saint Lucy) as she is popularly known in Italy and other places today.

This is an ideal pre-Christmas celebration to bring together a parish family, and to promote the virtues of hospitality, almsgiving, respect for parents, and chastity, especially among girls in the parish.

Staff Needed: **Co-ordinator** - Oversees the other volunteers, to ensure families are informed, notices are displayed, and baking is completed. Song sheets, with the lyrics to "Santa Lucia" are a must.

Santa Lucia Outfit Makers - Usually each family does their own white dress and red sash for girls. Crowns are sometimes made by one volunteer, or as a youth project.

Bakers - Folks in the parish who are good enough to bake the Lenten version of traditional Santa Lucia Day breads.

Background: The Santa Lucia festival was inspired by several American parishes trying to revive ancient Western Orthodox celebrations. It provides an idea opportunity to invite friends and family to church during the pre-Christmas season, to enjoy sweets and music, and to honour one of the early martyrs of the Orthodox Church.

Overview: Notices for the event should be included in parish newsletters two months in advance, and shared around the parish. Families with daughters (and in some parishes, sons) can be approached to encourage their involvement.

Each family must prepare a white robe for their child, to symbolize the virginity of the martyr for Christ, Saint Lucia. A red sash is also prepared for girls, symbolizing her martyrdom. Each "Lucia" also wears a crown, traditionally made of lingonberries, but more usually made of cedar, or artificial greenery, festooned with battery-operated candles.

NOTE: Do not use real candles on the head of any child. While some parishes follow the ancient tradition of appointing the eldest girl to serve as the leading "Lucia" each year, and to lead the procession (and to wear a real, lit crown), this practice is generally discouraged.

Boys sometimes participate in this event, wearing pointed hats with stars, symbolizing the star of Bethlehem.

Following Liturgy and/or Coffee Hour, the lights of the parish hall are dimmed, and the

children are arranged in order, with the eldest girl leading the procession. The girls carry trays of Santa Lucia Day breads and cakes (see recipes), and/or candles. The faithful and guests join in the singing of the verses of the song "Santa Lucia", while the children distribute the breads and cakes to their parents and friends.

At the end of the distribution, one child who has prepared ahead of time will typically read a short summary presentation about the life of the martyr for Christ, Saint Lucia.

Feedback: This event is very popular, simple to organize, and has an authentic Orthodox Christian spiritual content. It is suitable for the holiday season (the feast day falls on December 13/26). Most parishes hold the event either on the Sunday immediately before, or immediately after the feast date, to maximize the opportunity for family and friends to attend. It is also an ideal day for a parish open house.

Attachments:

- Song Lyrics
- Pamphlet (2 pages - photocopy master)
- Recipe Cards

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Saint Lucia

From the earliest times of the Orthodox Church in Sweden and Italy, the feast day of Saint Lucia has been celebrated as a festival of light.

Saint Lucia was a martyr at Rome in the second century. The date of her martyrdom originally fell on the same day as the winter Yule festival. Because she was unwilling to sacrifice her purity, or her faith in Christ, she was first blinded, then martyred. Thus, Saint Lucia became the patron saint of purity and light, of blind people, and of all those who seek to see by the True Light, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many miracles are attribute to Saint Lucia, including the saving of both Sweden and Syracuse, her home in Italy, from famine. It is said that the saint provided the faithful with wheat, given in the name of Christ.

To this day, young women in Sweden go from one house to the next carrying torches or candles, with crown-shaped sweet breads representing Saint Lucia's crown as a martyr for Christ. Small cakes, wheat, or beans are served on her feast day to remind us of the eyes she lost for the sake of her love for Christ and her own virginity. In this way, Saint Lucia is an ideal patron for young women in modern society, an image of purity and chastity in an age of temptation.

Saint Lucia emulates true love and virtue in an age of false romance, and true Orthodox Christian faith in an age of spiritual blindness.

Holy Saint Lucia, pray for us!

Santa Lucia
(English Version)

Hark! through the darksome night
Sounds come a winging:
Lo! 'tis the Queen of Light
Joyfully singing. *(Repeat)*
 Welcome thou vision rare,
 Lights glowing in thy hair.
 Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia!*(Repeat)*

Santa Lucia, thy light is glowing
Through darkest winter night,
comfort bestowing. *(Repeat)*
 Dreams float on dreams tonight,
 Comes then the morning light,
 Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia. *(Repeat)*

Deep in the northern sky
Bright stars are beaming;
Christmas is drawing nigh
Candles are gleaming. *(Repeat)*
 Clad in her garment white,
 Wearing her crown of light,
 Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia. *(Repeat)*

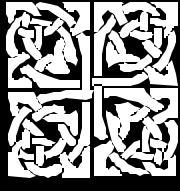
Festival Information

For Bakers Preparing Traditional Festival Treats

- Consult Recipes Provided (We'll also need mulled cider!)
- Contact Parish Organizer or Priest to confirm what you plan to bring
- Bring baked goods to Church Before the Liturgy on Sunday, December 16th

For Young Women Participating

- Prepare in advance a white dress, red silken sash, and crown with candles (speak with Parish Organizer or Priest for details); bring with you to Church (you can wear the dress and bring the rest)
- Attend Liturgy on the festival day (ideally, preparing for and partaking of Holy Communion, as appropriate)
- During the luncheon, gather with the other girls and prepare your sash, crown, candles, and platters of baked goods



Santa Lucia

Festival



It began in the darkest hours of the morning of December 13th, in the years before the Great Schism of 1054 divided Sweden from the Orthodox Church. A young woman wearing a white gown, a red sash and a crown of lingonberry twigs and blazing candles emerges out of the darkness carrying a tray of rich saffron buns and steaming coffee to wake the family. Throughout Sweden the feast day of Santa Lucia, or Saint Lucy, is celebrated as a festival of lights. The Lucia Queen, or Lussibuden (Lucy Bride) leads the processions. The tradition of honoring Saint Lucy came originally from Germany and speculates that the festival was originated in Sweden by Vikings who travelled south on expeditions to Italy and brought back the stories of the Christian martyr, Lucia.

As early as the sixth century, Saint Lucy was venerated in Rome as a virgin martyr; her life as it is known today was written by the western Orthodox Saint Adhelm of Sherborne at the end



Santa Lucia

(Talk Song - English Version)

Haik through the darksome night
Sounds came a winging:
Lo! 'tis the Queen of Light
Joyfully singing. (Repeat)
Welcome thou vis on rare,
Lights glowing in thy hair
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia! (Repeat)

Santa Lucia, thy light is glowing
Through darkest winter night,
Comfort bestowing. (Repeat)
Dreams float on dreams tonight,
Comes then the morning light,
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia. (Repeat)

Deep in the northern sky
Bright stars are beaming;
Christmas is dawning nigh
Candles are gleaming. (Repeat)
Clad in her garment white,
Wearing her crown of light,
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia. (Repeat)

The Symbolism of Santa Lucia

of the seventh century. Her original feast day (the day of her martyrdom) was on the solstice which was December 13 by the Julian calendar rather than December 21 which it became with the change to the Gregorian calendar in the 1300s, linking it with the far older Yule and Winter festivals of pre-Christian times.

There are two well-known legends attributed to Santa Lucia. At one time Sweden was in the grip of a terrible famine and at the height of winter when things were their worst a ship sailed across Lake Fannern with a beautiful young woman dressed all in white at its helm. She was so radiant that there was a glow of light about her head. It was Saint Lucia with a hipload of food. In Syracuse the people were in the midst of a famine and they gathered in the cathedral to implore God to help in the name of Saint Lucia. A ship loaded with wheat sailed into the harbor as they prayed. This is the explanation given for the **cuccidata**, or cooked wheat which is an ingredient in many festival foods in Italy. Similar porridges and puddings are also prepared for friends, family and visitors in Northern European and Scandinavian homes - likely in connection with the blessing of wheat (or **koliva**) for the feast day of a saint in Orthodox parishes today.

Young women in Sweden to this day go from one house to the next carrying torches or candles to light their way, bringing baked goods, stopping to visit a bit at each house and returning home by break of day. The young women wore candles in crowns bestowed with lingonberry leaves and candles, a custom that still persists (although the crowns are now often electric lights).

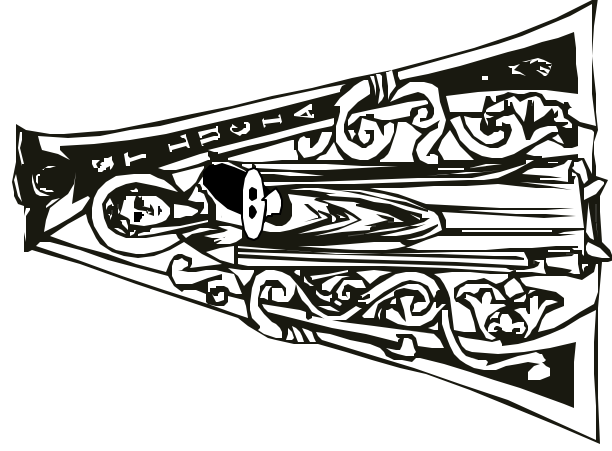
Saint Lucia's martyrdom reflects the common experience of numerous virgin martyrs of the early centuries of the Christian faith. Rejecting both impunity of life and lawful marriage from her youth, Saint Lucia chose a life totally dedicated to Our Lord and Saviour, a choice borne witness to in the white garment she wears. A victim of torture by pagans who put out her eyes, she also bears witness to true,

spiritual sight, and the True Light of Christ she continued to follow, even in her imposed physical blindness. (Her icon often bears an image of her carrying a plate of small cakes; these are euphemistic substitutions for the images of two eyes on a platter found in earlier icons).

In this way, Saint Lucia is an ideal patron for young women in modern society, an image of purity and chastity preserved amid an age of corruption and temptation, and an image of one who maintains an unwavering vision of Christ among those whose spiritual eyes are truly blind to God.

Just as Saint Catherine shows us the difference between worldly learning and heavenly wisdom, Saint Lucia emulates true love and virtue in an age dominated by romantic delusion, and true Orthodox Christian faith in an age dominated by spiritual blindness.

Holy Saint Lucia, pray for us!



LIGHTS, usually lit candles, symbolic of Saint Lucia's witness to the Light of Christ. Since the date of her martyrdom fell at the solstice, she was also seen as the saint whose celebration meant the beginning of longer hours of sunlight, making her feast day popular in the Orthodox Christian north, particularly Sweden.

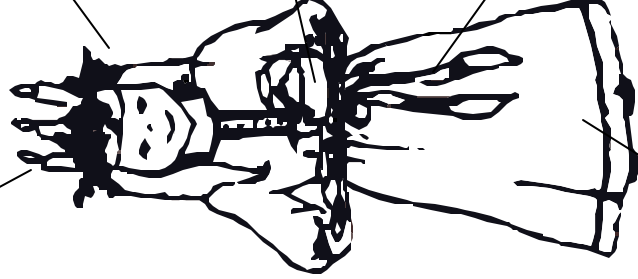
CROWN, usually made of lingonberries native to Sweden. Symbolic of the crown of martyrdom, seen also in the crowns given in the Orthodox marriage ceremony.

CAKES & HOT DRINKS, remembrances of the tortures Saint Lucia endured for Christ, and a practical gift of love to others during the wintry, pre-Christmas season.

RED SASH, symbolic of both Saint Lucia's martyrdom and her chastity for the sake of Jesus Christ.

WHITE GARMENT, essentially the white robe of Christian baptism, it is also the garment of the virginal life, and the white robes washed clean by the Blood of Christ. The white robe has in some areas been modernized to a white dress.

TRADITIONALLY, girls from the earliest age (four or five years old) up to the age of eligibility for marriage (seventeen or eighteen) have dressed in the white garment and sash for the celebration of the feast of Saint Lucia. The older girls lead the younger ones in the distribution of sweet cakes to their friends and family, while the songs of the festival are sung.



Saint Lucia Ginger Snaps (Luciapapperkakor)

1/2 cup dark corn syrup
 1/2 cups brown sugar
 1/4 cup molasses
 2 teaspoons ground ginger
 Grated rind of 1 lemon
 1 tablespoon baking soda
 1 cup heavy cream
 (or non-dairy Dream Whip)
 6-7 cups flour
 Icing (recipe below)



Heat the corn syrup in a saucepan. Stir in the sugar, molasses, ginger, lemon rind, and baking soda. In a large bowl, whip the cream until almost stiff. Stir the syrup mixture gradually into the

cream. Beat at low speed with an electric mixer for 4 to 5 minutes (about twice as long if you are beating by hand with a spoon or whisk). Add 2 cups of the flour, mixing well with a spoon. Then gradually add enough of the remaining flour to make a soft, pliable dough. Knead for 2 or 3 minutes.

Wrap the dough well in waxed paper or plastic wrap and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. (If you are in a hurry, you can start the chilling process in the freezer. Leave the dough in the freezer for about 20 minutes.)

On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out about 1/4 inch thick. Cut with fancy cutters, such as animals and people, heart and flowers. Try making some pretty young girls -- perhaps with crowns -- like Saint Lucia, croche scones or other Christmas motifs, such as stars and angels. (Even in our baking we can try to emphasize the Nativity of Christ and play down Santa Claus and full stockings.)

Place the cookies on a lightly buttered cookie sheet. Bake at 275 degrees F for about 12 minutes or until the cookies are golden brown. Freeze when cold. Yield: about 4 dozen cookies.

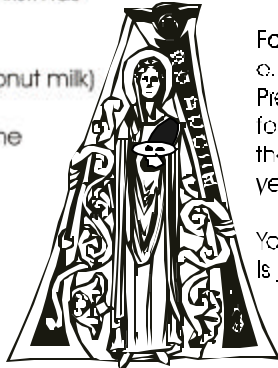
Icing:

Beat the white of an egg until frothy. Add 1 cup confectioners' sugar (and, optional, 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice). If the icing is too thick, add more lemon juice; too thin, more sugar. You can make several batches, adding food coloring as you wish. An even quicker icing is just a few drops of water mixed with confectioners' sugar and food coloring.

Saint Lucia buns - (Lussekatte)

One mandatory constituent in the Swedish celebrations is a saffron-flavoured bun, in Swedish called a *lussekatt*, a "Lucia cat". The shape of this bun might vary somewhat, but is always based on bread designs dating back to earlier Christmas celebrations in Sweden.

300 ml milk (or soy/coconut milk)
 50g baker's yeast
 125 g butter or margarine
 700 g all-purpose flour
 1 egg (optional)
 Raisins
 1g saffron
 150 g sugar
 salt
 (24 servings)



Melt butter or margarine in a pan and add the milk and the saffron. Warm the mixture to 37C (100F). Use a thermometer; the correct temperature is important.

Pour the mixture over the lively divided yeast; then add the remaining ingredients (except for the egg and the raisins), which should have a temperature of 21-23C (72-75F).

Mix into a smooth dough. Cover the dough with a piece of cloth and let it rise for 30 minutes. Knead the dough, divide it into 25-30 pieces and form each piece into a round bun. Let the buns rest for a few minutes, covered by a piece of cloth.

Form each bun into a string, 15-20 cm long, then arrange the string in a suitable shape, e.g. an "S" or "Double S". Regardless of the shape, the ends of the string should meet. Press a few raisins into the dough. Cover the buns with a piece of cloth and let them rise for 40 minutes. Whip the egg together with a few grains of salt, and paint the buns with the mixture. Bake them for 5-10 minutes in the oven at 250C (475F), until golden brownish yellow. Sugar.

You can make several batches, adding food coloring as you wish. An even quicker icing is just a few drops of water mixed with confectioners' sugar and food coloring.

Santa Lucia Crown

Makes one crown

1/2 cup warm water (100 to 110°F)
 3 eggs (optional)
 1 package active dry yeast
 1 cup powdered sugar
 1/2 cup warm milk (or soy) (100-110°F)
 2 tablespoons milk (or soy)
 1/2 cup granulated sugar
 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 1/4 cup butter or margarine, room temperature
 4 candied red cherries, cut in half
 1 teaspoon salt
 3 candied green cherries, cut in half
 1/8 teaspoon saffron powder
 3 small red candles, about 4" in length
 4 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
 4 small green candles, about 4" in length

Place 1/2 cup of warm water in large mixing bowl and stir until dissolved. Let the mixture rest for about 5 minutes. During this time the yeast will activate, foam, and bubble. Add the remaining 1/2 cup of water, warm milk, sugar, butter, salt, and saffron, and stir to combine. Attach the dough hook to the mixer and with the mixer running slowly add the flour, until it is well blended. Slowly add in 2 of the eggs.

Note: the dough will be soft. Turn out the dough on a lightly floured surface knead the dough until smooth and elastic, about 3 to 4 minutes. Place the dough in a greased bowl, turning once. Cover the bowl with plastic film and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 1 1/2 hours. Punch dough down and let rest 5 minutes. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface. Divide the dough into 3 equal pieces. Roll each portion of dough into a rope about 24 inches long. Braid the 3 ropes of dough together. Place the braided dough on a greased baking sheet. Form the braid in a circle that forms a conical shape, forming a "crown." Tuck the ends of the dough under. Cover the wreath of dough with a kitchen towel and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 1 1/2 hours.

Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Beat the remaining egg and brush on the dough. Bake the wreath until it is golden brown, about 20 minutes. Remove the wreath from the oven and carefully place it on a rack to cool. In a small bowl, add the powdered sugar, milk, vanilla, and whisk to combine. The mixture will have the consistency of a glaze. Spoon the glaze over the top of the wreath, allowing the glaze to run over the sides. Let the glaze set and harden for about 10 minutes, then stud the wreath with the red and green candied cherries. With the tip of a paring knife, poke small holes equally spaced on top of the dough. Place a candle in each hole. To serve, light the candles and bring the wreath to the table. Each guest should make a wish for the New Year and then all bow out the candles together. Remove the candles and serve a portion of the wreath to each guest.