13. December 2023

Saint Lucia: bearer of light

In the midst of Advent, a bright light shines forth: it is a wise virgin whose name alone - and even more her witness - proclaims the Lord. She is Saint Lucia, the "light bearer". She was one of those wonderful virgins who gave her life for Christ without hesitation. Like St. Agatha, St. Agnes, St. Catherine of Alexandria and so many others, Lucia was betrothed to only one man: Christ. This saint also has the honour of being mentioned every day in the canon of the Holy Mass.

Lucia was born and raised in a noble and wealthy family in Syracuse. Her father died when she was only 5 years old. Her mother wanted to marry her off to a young pagan. However, Lucia's love for Jesus was already so great that she wanted to belong to Him alone. Therefore she delayed the betrothal more and more. When her mother fell seriously ill, she made a pilgrimage with Lucia to the tomb of St. Agatha. And indeed, there she was cured of her illness. While standing at the tomb of the saint, Lucia had a dream in which she heard the voice of Agatha, who spoke the following words to her:

SAINT AGUEDA: My sister, pious virgin, why do you ask me for something that you yourself can obtain? Your faith has already helped your mother; she has been cured. But you must know that, just as the city of Catania was glorified by Christ through me, so the city of Syracuse will be honoured through you, for, by your vow of virginity, you have prepared a bridal dwelling in your heart for the Lord Jesus.

Overjoyed at her mother's healing, Lucia saw that the time had come for her to tell her mother the secret of her promise.

LUCIA: "Dear mother, I beg you no longer to speak to me of an earthly husband or to expect mortal fruit from my womb, for Christ is my betrothed. What you would give me as a dowry for an earthly husband, give me to betroth me to my Lord Jesus".

EUTHIQUIA: "All that your late father left you as an inheritance, I have guarded and even increased. You know what I possess. Wait until my death and then dispose of your inheritance as you see fit."

LUCIA: "O mother, do not speak thus. He is not pleasing to God who gives after his death that which he will no longer be able to take or enjoy. Therefore, give to God what

is yours as long as you live; give Him what you have promised to give me".

Her mother fulfilled her wish and Lucia gave her entire dowry to the poor. When the young man to whom she had been betrothed learned that he had lost both Lucia and her considerable fortune, he denounced her to the prefect Pascasius for being a Christian and for despising the gods. The prefect then demanded that she offer sacrifice to the gods.

LUCIA: "The pure and blameless sacrifice before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from this world" (Jas 1:27). For three years now I have done nothing but offer sacrifice to the living God. Since now I have nothing more to offer, I give myself as a sacrifice to God; may He do with this sacrifice what is pleasing to Him!

PASCASIAN PREFECT: "Obey the emperors and sacrifice to the gods!"

LUCIA: "You look to the command of the emperors; I, on the other hand, to the Law of God. You fear the Emperor; I fear God. You do not want to anger the Emperor; I do not want to anger my God. You want to please the Emperor; I want to please my God. Do, therefore, what seems good to you; I, for my part, will do what serves my salvation".

The interrogation went on for a good while, until Lucia spoke of the Holy Spirit and said to the prefect:

LUCIA: "Whoever lives chastely and purely, is a Temple of the Holy Spirit".

Then Pascasius threatened to take her to a brothel, so that the Holy Spirit would depart from her. But Lucia answered:

LUCIA: "The body does not become impure as long as it does not consent with the will. Therefore, even if you intend to take away my purity by force, you will not be able to coerce my will to consent. Thus, I shall be granted a double reward for my virginal purity".

The prefect Pascasius was furious, but his henchmen could not move Lucia from her place. According to the "Golden Legend", in his blind rage the prefect sent for a thousand men and oxen to move her to a brothel. But no one was able to move the maiden; neither were the sorcerers who had been called for this purpose.

Other miracles are also told of how Lucia overcame torture and strengthened the Christians, until finally a sword was thrust through her neck. But even then she did not

die immediately, but remained alive until a priest brought her holy communion, the Body of the Lord.

In our times, we also need the courage to remain faithful to the holy faith and not to deny Christ under any circumstances. The martyrs made no compromises, no retreats, no relativisations...Their example holds them up for ever, as those who, with God's grace, fought the noble fight and were victorious (cf. 2 Tim 4:7). It is impossible to pass by the example they have left us, for in them the Lord himself shines forth.

But they are not only a model for us to follow; they are also our brothers in heaven, who are always ready to lift up the weak. Certainly, bloody martyrdom is not foreseen for every person, but everyone who sincerely follows the Lord is called to remain faithful to him until death (Rev 2:10), each one in the place where God has placed him or her.

St. Lucia gave herself to the Lord while she was still very young, distributed her wealth to the poor and showed her love for Jesus even unto death.

Pray for us, St. Lucia, that the light of the Lord may also shine in our lives and that we may never deny Him.