

Homily for December 13, 2019

Very little is known about St. Lucy, other than a disappointed suitor accused Lucy of being a Christian, and she was executed in Syracuse, Sicily, in the year 304. Her name is mentioned in the First Eucharistic Prayer, geographical places are named after her, a popular song has her name as its title, and down through the centuries many thousands of little girls have been proud of the name *Lucy*.

One can easily imagine what a young Christian woman had to contend with in pagan Sicily in the year 300. If you have trouble imagining, just glance at today's pleasure-at-all-costs world and the barriers it presents against leading a good Christian life.

Her friends must have wondered aloud about this hero of Lucy's, an obscure itinerant preacher in a far-off captive nation that had been destroyed more than 200 years before. Once a carpenter, he had been crucified by the Romans after his own people turned him over to their authority. Lucy believed with her whole soul that this man had risen from the dead. Heaven had put a stamp on all he said and did. To give witness to her faith she had made a vow of virginity.

What a hubbub this caused among her pagan friends! The kindlier ones just thought her a little strange. To be pure before marriage was an ancient Roman ideal, rarely found, but not to be condemned. To exclude marriage altogether, however, was too much. She must have something sinister to hide, the tongues wagged.

Lucy knew of the heroism of earlier virgin martyrs. She remained faithful to their example and to the example of the carpenter, whom she knew to be the Son of God.

In the Collect for today's Mass we prayed for a new heart so that:

*we may celebrate her heavenly birthday
in this present age
and so behold things eternal.*¹

It is this singular vision of the saints to keep before them things eternal that allowed Lucy to live out the direction given to us in Psalm 1. She was blessed because she did not walk, stand or sit in the way of those who reviled Jesus but allowed herself to be renewed by the Law of the Lord.

Such is the theme of our reading from Isaiah where the Lord affirms he is the one who leads us in the way we should go, so different from the way of those who so opposed Lucy and thereby put her to death. As the Gospel so clearly points out, in a world like this there are always those

¹ [*The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II.*](#) (2011). (Third Typical Edition, p. 1020). Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

who will be dismissive or derisive of Jesus and the Gospel. But says Jesus: "Wisdom is justified by her deeds".

This obscure woman from Italy showed by her steadfast loyalty to Jesus the truth of his words. May we be so inspired to keep before us things eternal that we live in the present that bears lasting fruit for the Lord.