

Customs of Advent: St. Nicholas' & St. Lucy's Day

Particularly beloved to Lutherans of German and Scandinavian descent are the Feast of St. Nicholas and the Feast of St. Lucy. However, just because one is not of Northern European descent does not mean that we should leave them to have all the fun! One need not be from New Orleans to eat King Cake!

On the Eve of December 6th, St. Nicholas' day, children leave their shoes outside or just by the front door of the house, to find them in the morning miraculously filled with small toys and candies. This is in remembrance of Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra, who, when he was not striking heretics upon the head for denying the divinity of Christ during ecclesiastical conferences (which he was known to do), gave all he could spare to children, orphans, widows, and the poor. In honor of such a saint, Christians have ever since given to the least, that is, given to children, for *to such as these belong the kingdom of heaven*.

St. Lucy was a child martyr, murdered under the persecutions ordered by the Roman Emperor Diocletian. She was killed for having brought food to worshipping Christians in the catacombs of Rome in the early winter mornings, lighting her way with a wreath of candles she had made to wear upon her head. Lutheran families that remember St. Lucy's Day on the 13th of December celebrate generally by having the youngest member of the family bring all his or her kin breakfast in bed (what a great holiday!) oftentimes wearing a special crown of candles. Regardless of whether one wishes to have breakfast in bed, or risk lighting the hair of their youngest child aflame, Lutherans have always in some way celebrated this day to honor those children whose souls were made strong to face the direst of persecutions, even when the hearts of the mature so often failed. It is a perfect day to celebrate in the season leading up to Christmas, where we celebrate the birth of that Child who, through his persecution and death, would bring Light, Life, and Everlasting Food to the world.