

# Saint Lucy

*Passages from the book: Saint Lucy - written by Ines Belski Lagazzi*



Although very little information has been handed down to us, from the Grecian and Latin acts, about this saintly martyr who shines among the most luminous constellations of Heaven, the memories of Saint Gregory Magno, a Father of the western church, who lived in the VI century, have left us with ample information about her life and her martyrdom, and a poem in verse "De Laudibus Virginum", by Saint Adelmo who lived during the VII century.

If however, the historical news of Lucy, is little that which has reached us, immense is the fame of this young maiden, surrounded by the halo of saintliness, and adorned by the two glorious palms of martyrdom and purity.

Syracuse was her birthplace.

The city of Syracuse was founded by the Greek in the VIII century BC, it was first named Ortigia from the name of a small island on which, Siraka, later rose, Siraka, from the name of a nearby marsh

(A Phoenician name that seems to have meant "Eastern place").

It soon became a powerful and famous centre known for its refined civilisation, where literature and the arts flourished, and a place where poets and philosophers, such as Aeschylus and Pindar, stopped by with pleasure.

Athens watched this beautiful city with jealousy, until they moved war against it, but were defeated.

Syracuse dominated the Mediterranean, reaching its maximum splendour during the time of Don Dionysius IL Vecchio, who brought them a splendid period of peace. Later he fought a victorious battle against Carthage. Carthage was however stronger and Syracuse alone, could not resist. So Syracuse sided with Rome. The first Punic war brought about the defeat of Carthage.

In 214 BC, the roman counsellor Marcello attacked the beautiful Sicilian city, and in 212, conquered it.

## SIRACUSA - ORTIGIA



During the Roman domination, although remaining the capital of the island and birthplace of arts and beauty, Syracuse slowly declined.

So, here, in the great and splendid Syracuse, city of the antique world, Lucy was born towards the end of the 3rd century, it is taken to be in the year 280, to a wealthy patrician family.

We do not even know her father's name, we can only assume that his name was

Lucio, because in those days the custom was to impose the name of the father on the child, We only know

for sure, that her mother's name was Eutichia.

In the spring of the year 61, the Apostle Paul, (Acts: XXVIII/12) stopped in Syracuse and that the first Bishop of Syracuse was Saint Marciano.

It is unknown; however, the child's age when she was christened, or if her parents at the time of her birth were Christians, or if they converted afterwards. We know that, the moment, Lucy opened her eyes to the world, the pillars of Christianity were numerous. Without doubt, there certainly were some churches and numerous catacombs. It was not possible, nevertheless, to dare worship Jesus in public.

They were strange times for our religion, which was rapidly spreading, bringing hope, charity, love and peace into the darkness of heathenism.

The Roman Empire, having reached its maximum splendour, was slowly but inexorably, declining. Between, feasts and banquets – which often turned into orgies – the Romans, who had been powerful soldiers, stopped worrying about their military potency. Anarchy was sovereign in their armies; this is clear when you consider that the twenty seven Emperors who were the successors of the wise Mark Aureoles, were murdered by the soldiers, and that only three died natural deaths and two fell on the battlefield. All this, while the barbarians were pressing forward at their frontiers.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> September, 284, Diocletian rose to power. In order to restore unity and firmness to the empire, at least to bring back a little order to it, he fulfilled vigorous efforts in every field: he issued new coins, he tried to prevent the rising of prices and conceived the idea of the tetrarchy, resorting to the expedient of having some of his colleagues enter into partnership with him. Valerio Masimiano was given the title of Augustus. The two Augustus's called to their services two Caesar's: Galerio Gaio Valerio and Flavio Constanze Cloro, who was the father of the future emperor, Constantine.

Diocletian settled in Nicomedia, reserving the governorate of the East; Galerio took the Danubian provinces and Greece; Constantine went to Treviri to control Gallia and Brittany; Massimiano governed the remaining parts of the West from Milan.

In the heart of Sicily, Valerio Massimiano, had a sumptuous villa built for the imperial family (the splendid mosaics which were recently excavated, may be seen near Piazza Armenia).

As far as the position of the Christians was concerned, according to Roman law, a decree from the Emperor Traiano which declared: "The Christians must not be pursued, or reported to the authorities to be punished."

It was indeed a contradictory law, because it had to be either one of the two: that the Christians should not be pursued because they were innocent, or they had to be punished as being guilty and so they must be brought out of hiding. However, even if they were reported, seeing that they had to do with innocent people, they must be acquitted.

Which meant, in the long run, that this law was applied according to the humours and whims of the Emperors and their ministers.

In 262, when the Emperor Publio Luciano Gallieno, having published an edict of tolerance towards the new religion, the ecclesiastical organisation had grown: many magistrates and officers themselves had by then embraced the new faith.

Both the wife and daughter of Diocletian, Prisca and Valerie, had become Christians and Diocletian himself, at first, had no real hatred for the followers of Jesus.

Meanwhile, little Lucy, a beautiful and gentle child, was growing up under the good care of kind Eutichia, who educated her too noble and generous sentiments. The child was only a mere five years old, when her father died. This was the reason for an even closer relationship, between mother and daughter.

We can imagine Lucy, learning from her mother as a young child, then a young girl, to keep house, to give orders to the maids, and learning to sew. Perhaps she went to school and learned Greek, Latin and arithmetic. To study music and singing or perhaps she had a private tutor, even if in those days it was not customary for females to receive education.

We can picture the attentive mother and the lovely young girl, taking long walks together, under a clear sky, along the shores of a sapphire coloured sea, through fields of almond trees in flower, and perfumed orange blossoms. They certainly went to visit the Latomie, the quarries from which the whitish coloured limestone and madreporic Material were extracted, those of which all the monuments in Syracuse are made. Standing for a while in contemplation, before those quarries which had been completely exploited and turned into prisons, where the tyrant Dionysius now had his prisoners thrown:

these quarries had a peculiar characteristic, they made an echo which not only repeated the sounds of voices and noises, but these were amplified in such a manner to make a sheer whisper or word seem as if it had been shouted at the top of one's voice. The grotto had an opening at the end called 'Dionysius ear': from here the tyrant listened to every word and groin of pain made by the prisoners: even though barely uttered, they reached his ears very clearly.

Perhaps Lucy sometimes went, to the Aretusa spring, of which she knew the sweet legend: Aretusa was a nymph who lived in Greece. The nymph, having been pursued by Alfeo, son of the ocean, fled to Sicily, and in order not to be recognised she turned herself into a spring. When Alfeo learned of this, he turned himself into a river, and having crossed the sea, he reached Aretusa, mixing himself with the waters of the spring.

It is certain that she visited the roundabouts of her city; Ortega, a pleasant island adorned with green papyri, and populated by singing birds; Arcadia, with its thick vegetation; Nepalese, with her new houses; Tyche and Epipolis on the outskirts of the city.



For certain Lucy often went to the catacombs in the countryside north of Syracuse, and and in that underground city, excavated in the turf, she attended the religious functions, and in contemplation of the Divine Creator, her spirit rose and her faith was strengthened in the Crucified God.

These uncertain times invited the Christians to prudence, and the meetings of the faithful were held mostly at

nighttime, in the catacombs, in hidden places in the city and in countryside. Many dioceses had been formed, with Bishops in charge, who were assisted by deacons and clergy, especially dedicated themselves to the spreading of the faith by preaching, teaching in the catacombs, by their preparations for Christenings and the other Sacraments, and works of charity.

Lucy disliked the social life of the rich and patrician environment in which she lived:

and scorned the idle lives, of pleasure and thoughtlessness, which her friends lived. Having been educated, by her mother, to uprightness and honesty, to charity and pity, Lucy spent most of her time in prayer, studies of religion, in meditation and helping the poor with humble kindness.

Just then, Galerio, became aware of the fact that this new faith had become widespread among his soldiers. He thought, to his dismay, that the ideals of Christians would bring his soldiers to disdain from the use of arms, in a time when it would be more than necessary, impending the fact of the danger of barbarian invasions.

He was also capably spurred by his mother Romula, a fanatic peasant, who hated the Christians so much that she had the elderly Emperor, submit to her desire and so spread blood against his will.

A first strict edict, that of Nicomedia, was proclaimed on the 24<sup>th</sup> February, 303.

Meanwhile, Lucy, the dark brunette, was growing in beauty and virtue. Lucy's mother watched her splendid flower grow, with a mixture of anxiety and satisfaction. People admired her, the fearless youth of the city smiled at her. Eutichia's dream for her daughter was, a handsome and rich spouse, of noble background who would offer Lucy a comfortable life, who would love her and appreciate her admirable gifts of modesty, compassion, intelligence and culture.

But in the pure heart of the girl a different desire was taking shape and every day it was becoming more intense and overbearing; her wish and desire to resemble the Blessed Virgin more and more, her dream to consecrate herself, like the Virgin to the Lord, not to accept an earthly spouse, but to remain only His.

Having overheard Eutichia's plans for her eventual future marriage, Lucy did not dare confide in her mother. But in the secret of her heart, one day, she solemnly promised our Lord, that she would never belong to anyone but Him.

Just when Lucy was consecrating her life to her Heavenly Spouse, an attractive young man, of simple and gentle grace, enchanted by her kindness, asked Eutichia's permission to become Lucy's spouse.

We do not know the young man's name, only that he was handsome, of a noble background, and rich, he had all the qualities Eutichia had wished for. He was pagan, this was true, but the woman aware of his generous and humble patrician soul, was sure that eventually the young man would convert to the true faith.

Poor, kind Eutichia! She was worried about the future of her daughter because she had been suffering for years, from an incurable blood disease, which weakened her more day after day. So right and human it was that she did not want to leave her dear one alone, when her time came.

Lucy who loved her mother dearly, worried about her health, but fervidly prayed God for her. She knew that the doctors had given no hope for her recovery, but she also knew that God, if it was His will, could always work a miracle.

So, after long meditation, Lucy suggested a pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Agatha, in the nearby city of Catania. This saint had died a martyr during the persecution of the Emperor Decio in the year 251.

The miracles which were happening at her tomb, attracted crowds from every part of Sicily

So, Mother and daughter began the fifty-mile walk, which separated Syracuse from Catania.

They arrived in Catania on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, the feast day of the Saint.

They devoutly attended the sacred functions. When the celebrant read the passage from the Gospel, Eutichia and Lucy were astonished by the strange coincidence. It was the passage where Saint Mark tells of the curing of the woman with a haemorrhage.

“ Then suddenly from behind him came a woman, who had been suffering from a haemorrhage for twelve years, and she touched the fringe of His cloak, for she was thinking, ‘If only I can touch His cloak I shall be saved’. Jesus turned round and saw her; and he said to her, ‘Courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you.’ And from that moment the woman was saved. “(IX/20-22).

The two women, deeply touched, passionately prayed Saint Agata to asked God for the grace of healing.

*“Oh mother, this dear Saint who suffered and died for Jesus, will help us, she will intercede for you. Touch her tomb with your hand and you will be healed....”*,  
Lucy whispered her heart full of hope and faith.

When the mass was over, the worshippers left; while Lucy and her mother remained kneeling in prayer in the dim light of the temple, next to the venerated sepulchre.

The girl was tired, and emotionally touched; her eyes slowly closed and she went into a deep sleep. And then, right before her appeared Saint Agata. Shining in pure light, surrounded by a host of angels, smiling she came close to Lucy and said:

*“Lucy, my sister, spouse of Jesus, why do you ask me, that which yourself alone can obtain for your mother? Eutichia is healed; your vivid faith has saved her: She is well now, and the merit is yours; you who have made a sanctuary of your heart for God, and has offered your pure soul to the Lord.”*

Slowly the suave vision faded away and Lucy woke. She watched her mother still seep in prayer and smiling, softly called her:

*“Mother, Saint Agata has asked this grace from Jesus, and He has healed you.”*

Radiant with joy, Eutichia felt her strength returning, and fell, prostrate in adoration  
Her heart was full of love and gratitude. What would she not have done, at that wonderful moment for her God?

It struck the girl that she could finally reveal to her mother that she had consecrated her life to God and tell her that she could never accept an earthly spouse. Her Heavenly Spouse was, and would be forever, Jesus.

Eutichia was so happy that she did not regret her daughter’s decisions.

*“Be it as you wish”, she said.*

*“Mother, I implore you”, said Lucy, “speak no more of fiancé’s for me and I beg you to give the poor, all that which would have been mine as a nuptial dowry”.*

*“Lucy, my dear daughter, I have kept all my property and those of your farther, in fact I have added to the family property by buying other land, when it was convenient, but I would prefer if you should take possession of all this after my death. Then you may dispose of it as you wish.”*

*"Mother, this proposal you make, cannot return fully pleasing, to Jesus. He has given you back your health, if you wish to thank Him in a worthy manner, offer Him, immediately, all those properties and riches, which you must leave behind, after your death."*

Eutichia did not promise but neither did she refuse the proposal.

Mother and daughter left Catania to return to Syracuse, both were happy and cheerful, Eutichia having been strengthened in body and spirit, and Lucy was more than happy having confirmed her vote of purity.

Having returned home, Lucy resumed her ideal of perfect poverty, bringing up the subject and insisting on her desire to distributing all their riches and wealth to the poor. Had not Jesus said to the rich young man, "Go, sell all you own, give the proceeds to the poor and follow Me."?

Eutichia, in the end, was persuaded and decided to sell all her propriety, and lands.

But in the meantime... the situation had become even more difficult. After issuing the first edict, Diocletian had a second one issued and an even more severe one, was it, than the second, and then a third was issued, which surpassed the later two. The punishments threatened were severe, until a final edict, intimidated apostasy, or rather, public renouncement of the Christian religion.

Those who were in charge of having the law respected did so with more than sufficient zeal: whoever refused to offer public sacrifices to the gods and idols, were persuaded to do so by means which were judged more than efficient and brutal: cutting blows of the sword, torture's inflicted with iron hooks, racks for stretching limbs.. Wild and ferocious animals were always ready in the amphitheatres; piles of wood to make stakes were prepared in various points of the city.

Watchful spies were nested everywhere: at the slightest indication, the followers of Christianity, were reported to the ministers of the Emperor.

In the end the hatred of the new religion broke wild, no limits were known. They reached ridiculous extreme: in Galizia even the food could not be sold before it had been consecrated to the Gods; in Rome guards were posted at the public wells and no one could draw water before having made a gesture of homage to the idols.

Those who tried to resist were punished by fire, crucified or drowned... The so-called 'sweet death', as it was named, beheading, was reserved for those of noble origin.

A book was written by Lattanzio, "The death of the persecutors" a roman historical who had become a Christian around the year 303, in which, without compromises, he accused the persecutors of being vulgar delinquents and defined the persecutions as common crimes.

He wrote: "The persecutions distressed all the provinces of the Empire, from the east to the west, with the exception of Galliee, everything moaned under the fury of three beasts. If I were to have a hundred tongues and a hundred mouths and a iron voice, it would still be impossible for me to tell of the agonising torments which were inflected on the believers of Christ". The three beasts were Diocletion, Massimiano and Galerio.

Regards the Gallieations, governed by Constanzo Cloro, who showed more tolerance towards the Christians.

It was the hour of Martyrdom: so many martyrs, nameless and void of glory, those they achieved when they stood before the Throne of God.

In this over heated atmosphere, Eutichia was selling her property and giving the proceeds to the poor.

All Saints, of all times, had loved poverty and the poor. Christ's will was to be born from the noble stock of David, but in absolute poverty... Mary and Joseph had been poor as the Apostles and disciples had been poor.

But if, "the wish to be poor among the poor" was a common attitude and well understood by the Christian community of Syracuse, the pagans belief was that sole purpose of life and living was richness and well being.

Lucy's suitor, to his great surprise, became aware of the fact that her mother Eutichia was selling her lands, her precious gowns, and her jewellery. He was furthermore alarmed when he saw the two women distributing large sums of money to the poor of the city.

He went to Eutichia and demanded she tell him the reason for her careless behaviour.

The woman give him an evasive answer:

*"Lucy has found property, which is more rewarding and noble and which will never loose it's value. Therefore we are selling this property in order to obtain the other: it seems wise to us."*

The young man was reassured for the moment, promising himself, however to keep an eye on them.

Unfortunately, he soon came to hear from friends of his, that the girl he desired as his bride, was a Christian. Only then did he come to fully understand the 'rewarding property' which Eutichia had spoken of: he knew well that the Christians aspired to 'eternal award' and sought to be deserving of it by works of charity.

He decided to clear up the situation.

It was the 13<sup>th</sup> of December, 304, one of the few dates in Lucy's life of which we are certain.

The young man went to Euticha's palace, arriving in a moment when Eutichia, Lucy and their servants who had been converted to the Christian faith, were gathered in prayer, in a room which had been turned into a Chapel. These poor souls were living in a continuos state of anxiety and fear because of the news brought to them of the ferocious punishments that were being inflicted on the Christians who refused to apostatise. These, who refused to do so, went to their martyrdom singing and praising the Lord; their suffering reconfirmed the doubtful, whose faith was fortified and became even more fervent. Greater numbers of martyrs rose from the blood shed by these martyrs, for the glory of God.

Having arrived at Eutichia's palace, the young man was taken to a room where Lucy received him with dignity; and with the same dignity and gentleness she informed him that she could never become his bride, because she had already offered her heart to Jesus.

On hearing her words, he tried to persuade her to change her mind; promising her that they would be happy together, that he would be a caring and devote spouse...

Lucy's quite firmness, and above all the light of happiness which shone in her beautiful blue eyes, the realisation of the impossibility of his dream coming true, made him furious. His love for her turned to hatred and he fled from the palace with his heart full of spite and anger; his only thought being how to revenge. There was but one way.

He immediately went to the Proconsul Pascasio, where reports against the Christians were presented, and formally presented his accusation against the two women:

"I have asked a young women named Lucy, to be my bride. This young women, in agreement with her mother Eutichia, does not obey the powerful Emperor of Rome, but venerates Christ, contrary to the Roman law edited on the 24 February, 303.

Therefore, according to Diocletions law, they must be dealt with.

Pascasio did not loose time, he called his lictors and ordered that the young Christian woman named Lucy, be brought before him.

Lucy presented herself calmly and tranquilly: what was she to fear? To lose her life? If this was what she desired and continuously asked: to donate her life to her Creator, Jesus was in her heart; he would prompt her the answers to give to her persecutor when he questioned her. He would give her the strength to bear the suffering and pain to which she would be condemned. He would be waiting in Heaven for her: wasn't He her Spouse? And eternal happiness in Heavenly Glory would be granted to her.

Her beauty, her long dark hair, fascinated Pascasio, he looked deeply into her amazingly sublime eyes, and they were the same colour of the blue sky.

He began questioning her with respect, aware of her high social status.

As usual, the court was held in the open, in front of a large crowd of people, many of whom already knew of the generosity of the young girl towards the poor.

*"Do you profess the Christian religion?"* Asked Procasio.

*"Yes, I do",* Lucy replied.

At first, Procasio tried to persuade and advice her, using extortion's, gentleness and calmness.

In an almost fatherly tone, only to realise that this sweet and gentle looking girl had a determined mind and an even stronger character, and soon he left aside his gentle manner, and this seemingly gentle manner gave way to his anger.

*"Are you not aware of the injunctions of the Emperors Diocletian and Massimiano who have commanded that all who are subjects of the Empire must adore and offer sacrifice to our Gods.?"*

He called his soldiers and ordered them to drag Lucy before the statue of Jupiter.

*"We order you to strew incense over the tripod and honour the father of the Gods"*

Lucy proudly answered:

*"The only true sacrifice before God's eyes, is to visit, help, assist and comfort the widow and the orphan.*

*Since I, three years ago, decided to consecrate myself to the Lord, I made these sacrifices using my own personal riches: Now I have nothing left to offer my God but myself. Let it be done unto me as it pleases Him."*

*"This story can be told to the Christians; Caesar's orders must be carried out by me; I have more important things to do than listen to your nonsense",* Pascasio said furiously.



*"You obey Caesar's orders, " she answered with dignity, "I obey those of my God: you respect your superiors, I pay homage to my Lord; you do not wish to offend your Caesar, should I wish to offend my God? You go to trouble in order to please the Emperors, my wish is to please my God...Do so such as you consider proper for you; I do according to my soul's wish and my principles."*

*"You have lavished your riches", Pascasio angrily accused - "you have given them to unworthy people."*

*"I have stored my riches in a safe place, I have built a treasure in Heaven; I have promised to preserve my purity." Lucy replied.*

*"What you declare is pure and simple dishonesty..."* was Pascasio's furious answer

Lucy burst out, her eyes flaming: *"You are the dishonest and wicked ones. You are all corrupted men, who make men and women desert the path to God, you all serve Satan, and you shall be damned for all eternity."*

*"That is enough from you, stop your chattering!"* yelled Pascasio.

*"I cannot be silent. You cannot command that the word of the Lord be silent",* said Lucy.

*"You then are God?." - scorned Pascasio.*

Humbly, but with a light of joy in her eyes, Lucy replied: *" Oh, I am but a servant of the Eternal God, but I speak His words. He has said: "When they bring you before the King or principals, do not be worried about what how or what you answer, because it is not you that will speak, but the Holy Spirit who speaks for you."*

Boiling with anger, but not withstanding curious, Pascasio asked:

*"Then the Holy Spirit dwells in you?"*

Lucy answered using the words of Saint Paul: *Whoever lives in holiness and purity, is a temple of God: the Holy Spirit dwells in them."*

These were concepts which Pascasio's pleasure loving mentality could not understand or accept.

*"It should not be hard for me to find means to drive this, which you claim 'Holy', 'Spirit' from you .So you indeed intend and wish to remain faithful spouse of your God? Well, I shall force you by torture. You shall see how this 'Holy Spirit' will flee from you in horror, if it is true that you do carry Him in your heart."*

Fear took hold of Lucy, but she did not want it to be shown, and proudly answered:

*"In order to commit sin you must be willing to do so: Should you place incense in my hands and my hands should offer this incense to your Gods and idols, God Almighty would read my thoughts and yours. He judges by conscience and by will. You could force me to commit the action...But God will gift me with double reward...Here I am, do to me as you please...use whatever type of torture you wish, why wait further? Do as Satan has suggested you do...Satan is your true father."*

(Authors note) - Pascasio, fallen in prey to anger, continued his dialogue with Lucy, who was even more determined, did not give in, even after suffering the violence's inflicted on her in a tempt to humiliate her faith in God.

In a clear and loud voice she said: *"Poor Parcasio, why do you trouble yourself? Why are you so pale, why let fury destroy you? It has been proven you that I am a temple of God, of the one true God. What else can you do, only believe in the God of Christians."*

The hour of victory was close; Lucy was about to receive the crown of martyrdom. and to be united to her Creator, her Heavenly Spouse

Saint Agatha was close to her, smiling and inviting.

Her eyes fixed to the sky, Lucy uttered her last word, which were prophetic and memorable.

*"My hour has come. Strike me and I shall die. But I tell you that peace shall be restored to God's Church. Diocletian and Massimiano will not last forever but Christianity will continue to spread."*

She was silent then and offered her throat to the soldier's dagger. She fell backwards; her beautiful blue eyes were already contemplating glorious hosts of angels and saints.

It was the 13th December, 304, when Lucy's young life ended, to be reborn in the glory of heaven. The date of death is known as the true date of birth, for saints and martyrs: the "dies nautilus".

Kneeling, the people of Syracuse cried and prayed. Immediately after her martyrdom, the saint's body was pitifully lain in a burial niche in the catacombs. From the arcosolio's project, a dove was sculptured in memory of the Saints prophecy at the moment of her death, when she had announced the end of the persecutions and the Churches triumph.

Lucy's tomb became a place of pilgrimage, prayer and supplication for the people of Syracuse, who implored and obtained abundant graces by the Saints intercession, who was immediately elected patron Saint of the city.

The last prophetic words of the girl-martyr soon came true. In May, 305, Diocletian and Massimiano abdicated and the persecutions extenuated. In the East the persecutions lasted longer until an edict of tolerance was signed by Galerio, Lincinio and Costanzo, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 311.

Furthermore: Costanzo (who was to be know as the "The Great"), son of Costanzo and Saint Helen, proclaimed emperor of the army after Diocletian's abdication, made public the Milan Edict, in 313, which allowed the Christians full freedom to profess their religion.

On the site where the martyrdom of Lucy had taken place, a temple was erected in honour of the Saint.

Christians contested every palm of this ground in order to be buried in "iuxta martyrem".



The Church erected on the site of St. Lucys Martyrdom (to the left the Sepulchre)

On the walls of the catacombs, the dear Saint was remembered by loving words, in many Grecian inscriptions: "our Saint Lucy"... "Euskias inscription is the most famous, (this was discovered during archaeological excavations in 1894). The inscription reads:

"Euskia, the irreproachable, lived a good and pure life for about 25 years, died on my Saint Lucy's feast day, she for whom I cannot find appropriate words of praise: she was a Christian, faithful, perfection itself,

full of thankfulness and gratitude to her husband. " Who was this Euskia? We unfortunately do not know, but it is certain she must have been very devoted to Saint Lucy, if her husband thought it to be a happy presentiment, the death of his wife on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December.

Another fact is, that the Grecian name Euskia can be translated in Latin, and means Umbrosa (shady). Lucy was called 'Luminosa', 'full of light', this Grecian inscription, the most antique and precious document that proves the cult offered to Lucy, back from distant ages, as patron saint of eyesight. Perhaps Euskia was blind or however suffered some imperfection of her eyesight.

A legends tells (it is a legend not a story, so we do not know where the truth ends and the fable begins), that shortly before her death, Pascasio asks Lucy the reason for her forsaking of the world, the reason for her determined refusal of the young mans proposal of marriage.

Lucy in turn asked:

*"May I asked what beauty does that young man find in me?"*

To which the tyrant replied: *"He was deeply touched by the beauty of your eyes".*

On hearing these words, Lucy tore her beautiful eyes out, without showing any evident sign of pain, and having placed them on a dish, said to the tyrant: *"Go take them to him that loves them."*

The legend wants to emphasis the fact that Saints do not take into any consideration, human beauty or charm when these are not means by which to serve God and achieve eternal life; it wants also to explain that when love limits itself to the beauty of a face and does not take into consideration or ignores purity in the spirit of a person, then this love has or is of little or no value.

This legend spread: those who suffer from eye imperfections or deceases of eyesight invoke Saint Lucy. Hospitals and clinics were dedicated to her name.

Many artists have portrayed the dear Saint with eyes placed in a silver basin or strung on a stiletto.

## FROM THE YEAR 304 UP TO TODAY

The years went by, one after the other, as the centuries. The veneration of our Saint was not confined only to Sicily, but from the century subsequent to her death, spread rapidly, becoming almost universal among the Christians. On the 21st of May, 879 (or perhaps 800), Syracuse fell into the hands of the Moslems. The body of the Saint was hidden in a secluded place of the catacombs in order to prevent it being profaned by the infidel. There it remained until the Byzantine came to free Sicily from the Arabian dominion, in the spring (or perhaps the summer) of 1040.

An elderly Christian revealed the place where St. Lucy's body had been hidden, to George Maniace, the Byzantine general, who thought well in transferring to Costantinople, such a precious relic, to pay homage to the pious Empress Theodora. In 1204 Costantinoples was conquered by the Venetian Crusades. The doge Henry Dandolo took the body of the Saint to Venice, where it finally was laid in peace in a magnificent temple on the island of San Giorgio.

Syracuse, which had been the birthplace of Lucy, was gifted by remaining precious relics of the Saint, fragments of ribs, her left arm and the vestments which had been taken off the holy relic when it had been transferred to Constantinoples: the fine white silk veil striped in saffron colour; the purple tunic of fine silk, entwined with flowers and leaves of the same colour, and

the delicate leather cothurnus laced with strings of leather and lined with red satin. The people of Syracuse arranged the sacred fragments in a precious reliquary and the vestments in a valuable silver urn.

In Venice, in Syracuse and in every part of Italy, Saint Lucy received solemn honour and she continued to perform her gentle miracles scattering heavenly graces afar.

Unfortunately in 1860 the Church of St. Lucy in Venice was destined to demolition, as sadly so were many other Venetian Churches. Sites were needed for the railway station. Perhaps the question of the need of the ground could have been resolved in another manner, however the Ecclesiastic Authorities decided on transferring the remains of the Saint to the nearby parish of St. Geremia.

The transferment took place on the 11th of July 1860; the Patriarch Ramazzotti was present at the ceremony. with the clergy and citizens of the city.

The sacred body remained exposed for seven days on the high altar, and then it was placed on a side altar awaiting the completion of the works on the new chapel. This chapel was built with the presbytery salvage of the demolished church of St. Lucy. On a paladin model, and was inaugurated three years later on the 11th of July 1863.

In 1935 the patriarch Angelo Roncalli, who was to become the future Pope John XXIII, voiced his wish that the value of the sacred relic be more worthily emphasised.

The condition of the sacred body is beautiful, notwithstanding Pope John XXIII suggested that a silver mask should cover the face. The result was really amazing: Lucy seems to be sleeping, her eyes closed her hair flowing.

Dressed in purple and gold, the right hand showing from the large sleeve of the tunic. The head lies on a damask cushion, the body on a mattress of yellow silk. The chapel is often adorned with flowers, brocades, and drapes; hundreds of candles burn in a light of gold.

On the large frame the collection of the number of ex-votes increase, these which are offered to the Saint in thanksgiving for graces received from the Lord through her intercession.

The pilgrims reverently contemplate the saintly body of the young martyr; their hearts listen to its message of love. It seems as if one can still hear Lucy's quite voice saying to Pascasio, and to all who have ears to hear: "Those who live in purity, are said by the Apostle to be Gods children and in them the Holy Spirit lives"...And again: " God judges ones conscience and will power".