



December 10

## Advent Wreath

On the second Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of peace, a reminder that the Light of the World is our Prince of Peace, and comes this season bringing peace of earth. As you go throughout your days during this second week of Advent, ask yourself "How can I be a peacemaker? How can I live in Christ's peace?"

### *Week Two: Peace*

**Candle:** Two purple

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a ; Mark 1:1-8

**Prayer:** God of peace, during this Advent season, keep us from getting caught up in the busyness and chaos of the world around us. Help us to slow down, so that we may find rest in the Prince of Peace, your son, Jesus Christ. As we prepare for his coming, make us instruments of your peace in our homes, in our schools, in our work and in our world. *Amen.*

**Hymn:** O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



# O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive  
 2. O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes, on  
 3. O come, thou rod of Jes - se, free thine own from Sa - tan's  
 4. O come, thou Day - spring from on high, and cheer us by thy  
 5. O come, thou Key of Da - vid, come and o - pen wide our

Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here,  
 Si - nai's height, in an - cient times didst give the law  
 • tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell thy peo - ple save,  
 draw - ing nigh; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,  
 heav'n - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high,

Refrain

un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
 in cloud and maj - es - ty and awe.  
 • and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!  
 and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.  
 and close the path to mis - er - y.

Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.

Latin antiphons, 12th cent.  
 Latin hymn, 1710  
 Tr. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt. 1961

VENI EMMANUEL L.M.ref.  
 Plainsong, 13th cent.  
 Arr. Thomas Helmore, 1856



December 11

## The Nativity: Animals

This week we add the animals to the stable and marvel at what kind of scene it must have been to have the Son of God born among donkeys and cows. Notice there is no accompanying scripture reading because the Bible never mentions animals at the scene--only that Jesus was placed in a manger, so we assume there were animals present. Fun fact: Saint Francis, who is known for his love of animals, is credited with adding animals to the first nativity scene.

### Reflection

I wonder what that stable smelled like?  
I wonder what it sounded like?  
I wonder why God chose to include  
animals in the story of Christ's birth?

### Hymn

O Little Town of Bethlehem

### Recommended Reading

*The Animals Christmas Carol* by Helen Ward

*The Friendly Beast* by Tomie DePaola

*Who is Coming to Our House?* by Joseph Slate



# O Little Town Of Bethlehem

1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, How still we see thee lie!  
 2. For Christ is born of Mar - y, And gath - ered all a - bove,  
 3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly The won - drous gift is giv'n!  
 4. O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem! De - scend to us, we pray;

A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep The si - lent stars go by.  
 While mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep Their watch of won - d'ring love.  
 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts The bless - ings of His heav'n.  
 Cast out our sin, and en - ter in; Be born in us to - day.

Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth The ev - er - last - ing Light;  
 O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er, Pro - claim the ho - ly birth!  
 No ear may hear His com - ing, But in this world of sin,  
 We hear the heav'n - ly an - gels The great glad tid - ings tell;

The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in Thee to - night.  
 And prais - es sing to God the King, And peace to men on earth.  
 Where meek souls will re - ceive Him still The dear Christ en - ters in.  
 O come to us, a - bide with us, Our Lord Em - ma - nu - el. A - men.



December 12

## Read Under the Tree

Advent need not be flashy and exciting to be memorable or meaningful for your family. This evening, pick your favorite children's Advent book and read it under the lights of the Christmas tree or snuggled up by the fire. This is a simple and quiet activity, and that is just the point: Advent is a season of reflection, of quiet moments, and of simplifying our lives to create space for the coming of the King.

### Reflection

- I wonder which part of the story you liked best?
- I wonder which part of the story you liked least?
- I wonder which part of the story is most important?
- I wonder which part of the story is about Jesus?
- I wonder which part of the story is about you?



### Recommended Reading

*Mortimer's Christmas Manger* by Karma Wilson (Ages 3-7)

*The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey* by Susan Wojciechowski (Ages 5-10)

*The Three Trees* by Angela Elwell (Ages 3-10)



December 13

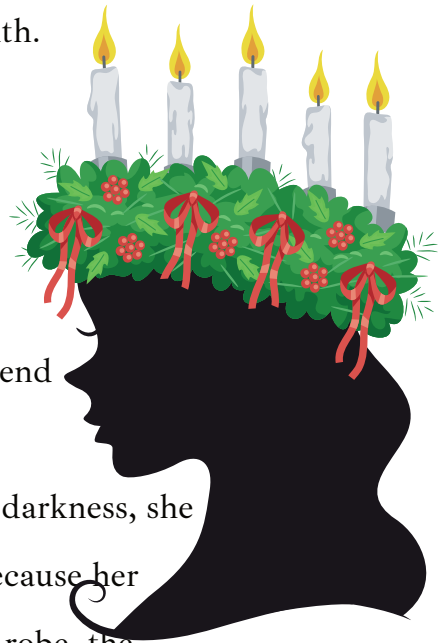
## St. Lucia Day

### *Historical Background*

St. Lucia, or Lucy, was born around 283 CE in Syracuse, Sicily. When she was a young woman, the Roman Emperor Diocletian launched a violent persecution of Christians all across the Empire. She was born into a devout noble family and from a young age pledged herself to God, choosing to remain unmarried so that she could instead give her dowry—and her life—to the poor and suffering.

Lucy's mother, however, had different plans for her and arranged for her to marry a wealthy pagan man. When Lucy refused, he reported her as a Christian to the authorities. She was martyred for refusing to recant her faith.

Even if you don't know of St. Lucy, you can likely picture how she is often depicted: a young blonde girl dressed in white robes, a red sash around her waist, and a wreath of candles adorning her head. This image comes from the legend that she took food and aid to the Christians living in the catacombs to escape their persecutors. Under the cover of darkness, she wore a wreath of candles on her head to light the way—because her hands were full of supplies. Her white dress is a baptismal robe, the red sash, symbolic of the blood of her martyrdom, and the candles signal the light of Christ as well as the name Lucia, which means “light” in Latin.



With a name that means light, it's fitting that Lucy's feast day falls during Advent, a season when the Light of the World is born amid the darkest and longest days of the year. Lucy's feast day, December 13, was set to align with what used to be the Winter Solstice, and still falls very close to it today.



St. Lucy Day is thought to mark a turn from the penitence and solemnity of Advent toward the light and joy of Christmastide.

St. Lucy Day is celebrated around the world, but is particularly popular in Scandinavian countries. Early on the morning of December 13th, the oldest daughter, dressed in a white robe, red sash and wreath crown, rises early and delivers sweet rolls made with saffron ("Lucy buns" or *lussekatt*) to family members in bed. This is intended to be an enactment of Lucy bringing food to the hungry.



In Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, there are processions throughout cities and churches of girls dressed as Lucy, carrying *lussekatt* and singing Christmas carols. Boys participate as "star boys"—wearing white cone hats decorated with golden stars. Sometimes these processions visit malls, schools, and assisted living facilities as well.

To celebrate St. Lucy Day, bake *lussekatt* or another type of spiced sweet bread (cinnamon quick bread, for example) for your "St. Lucy(s)" and/or "Star Boys" to deliver in the morning. The children may deliver them to the family in bed, or perhaps they might deliver them to neighbors—a tradition which seems in keeping with the spirit of St. Lucy who brought food to others as a ministry.

# Cheater St. Lucy Buns

If you'd like to try your hand at traditional *lussekatt*, [SimplyRecipes.com](http://SimplyRecipes.com), has a great recipe. Otherwise, here's a quick and easy recipe for “cheater” St. Lucy Buns made from canned cinnamon rolls. The two raisins represent eyes, because St. Lucia is the patron saint of the blind. One story says her eyes were gauged out, but of course you needn't share that information with sensitive children.

## Ingredients

- 1 can of cinnamon rolls with icing
- Raisins, dates or dried cranberries (optional)
- Cinnamon (preferably saffron if you have it)

## Directions

- Unroll cinnamon rolls
- Shape them into an “S”
- Insert raisin or other dried fruit into the two crooks at the bottom and top of the “S”
- Lightly sprinkle with cinnamon (or saffron)
- Bake according to directions on package
- Drizzle with icing





# Cinnamon Roll Wreath Crown Recipe

A “Cinnamon Roll Wreath Crown” is another fun and easy breakfast treat that is reminiscent of the crown of candles Lucy wore on her head. You'll find another cheater recipe for this made from canned cinnamon rolls below. During breakfast, your family can pray the St. Lucy Day liturgy provided on the next page and read the lesson or another book about the life of St. Lucy.

## Ingredients

1 can of cinnamon rolls with icing

Birthday candles

## Directions

Unroll cinnamon rolls and make three strands

Braid or twist the strands

Shape the braid into a circle

(now it should look like a wreath crown)

Bake according to directions on package

Drizzle with icing

Place candles in the wreath (now it looks like St. Lucy's wreath crown!)



# St. Lucia Lesson & Liturgy

## Blessing

Light wreath crown candles or Advent candles and say:

“May the light of Jesus shine in our hearts.”

## Song

(to the tune of “Are You Sleeping (*Frère Jacques*)”)

O Saint Lucy, O Saint Lucy

Dressed in white, dressed in white

Lighting up the darkness, lighting up the darkness

Shining bright, shining bright!

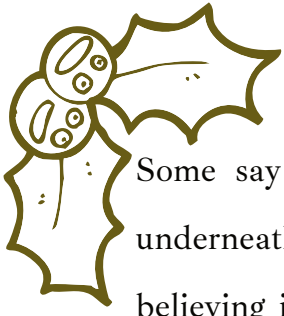
[Blow out candles]

## Prayer

Dear God, we thank you for this food, and for your servant, Lucy, who brought food to the hungry. May we, too, always be willing to love and serve you. *Amen.*

## Lesson

There once was a girl named Lucy, not much older than yourself. She lived long time ago—around the same time as St. Nicholas—in a place called Sicily, which is very close to Italy. Lucy lived in a time when it was not easy to be a Christian. In fact, sometimes it was downright dangerous. It was against the law to believe in Jesus. Sometimes Christians were punished or even put to death by the Roman governor. But Lucy loved Jesus very much, and she loved people just like Jesus did. She loved to spend her days helping people who were sick and poor and hungry.



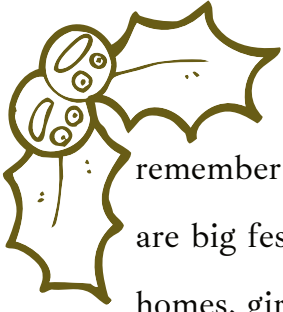
Some say that Lucy even brought food to the Christians hiding in dark tunnels underneath the ground. They hid there so no one would find them and punish them for believing in God. Lucy's hands were so full carrying food to them that she could not carry a candle or lantern to see her way through the dark underground tunnels. Instead, she wore a crown of candles on her head.

Lucy loved helping people so much that she decided rather than getting married and having a family, she would give her money away and devote her whole life to God, and then the church would be her family.

This made Lucy's mother very worried. She knew how dangerous it was to be a Christian. And she was scared that Lucy would not have enough money if she didn't get married. So Lucy's mother arranged for her to marry a man who was very wealthy, but did not love God. Lucy refused to marry him, and this made the man very angry. So angry that he accused her of being a Christian, which he knew would put her in danger.

When the Roman governor demanded that she give up her faith in God, Lucy was very brave. She loved Jesus, and would never turn her back on him. Lucy was put to death, and now she gets to be in Heaven with God always. Saints who died because they loved God are called martyrs, and they wear a special red sash so we know who they are. I wonder why the martyrs sash is red? Red is for the blood they shed.

We remember these saints for the sacrifice they made on special days throughout the year. Saint Lucy is celebrated today, December 13. All around the world, people



remember her with light because her name, Lucia, means light. In Scandinavia, there are big festivals where people light candles and sing songs about St. Lucy. In people's homes, girls get up early in the morning, and they put on a white gown with a red sash. Then they put a wreath of candles on their head, and bring rolls to their family in bed. This reminds everyone that Saint Lucy fed the hungry.

We celebrate Saint Lucy's special day in Advent. The candles on her head remind us of the Advent wreath, and they remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World. Let the light of Christ shine bright in us like Lucy.

### Song

This Little Light of Mine

### Prayer

God our Father, we thank you for sending your Son to be the Light of the World, and for your servant, Lucy, who was a faithful witness to his light. Help us to follow in St. Lucy's footsteps and be a light for you always. Amen.

### Recommended Reading

*Kirsten's Surprise (American Girl Doll Series)* by Janet Shaw

*Lucia Morning in Sweden* by Ewa Rydaker

*Lucia: Saint of Light* by Katherine Bolger Hyde (this book speaks straightforwardly about her martyrdom and is recommended for ages 8+)



## December 14

# Secret Santa

Just as St. Nicholas did kind things for people in secret, do something for a family member or friend today without them knowing. It may be helpful to put each family member's name into a hat and choose randomly. At dinner, reflect on why we give in secret using the scripture below.

### *Scripture*

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” -Matt 6:1-4

### *Reflection*

I wonder how you felt after doing something kind for someone today?

Was it difficult to keep it a secret?

I wonder why St. Nicholas didn't want people to know that he was the one giving them gifts and doing kind things?

I wonder why Jesus says to give in secret?

I wonder what happens if you give so others can see?

I wonder why Jesus says it is better to give than to receive?

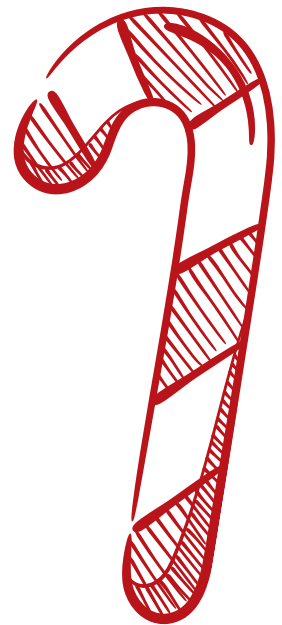


December 15

## Candy Canes

### *The Legend of the Candy Cane*

Candy canes have long been touted for their symbolism. Christians from liturgical backgrounds note that candy canes are made in the shape of a shepherd's staff (think Jesus as the Good Shepherd) or bishop's crozier (think St. Nicholas) and in the liturgical colors of martyrdom (red) and Christmastide (white). Christians from evangelical or free-church backgrounds offer a different but equally theologically-significant explanation: when flipped upside down, candy canes make a "J" for Jesus, and are the colors of white to symbolize purity and red to symbolize Jesus' blood.



### *Candy Cane Hunt*

The night before or during nap time, hide candy canes around the house for the kids to find--you might even let them use their Christmas stockings to collect (another fun way to connect the candy cane to St. Nicholas' crozier). Once they are all found and gathered, collect them in a pile and explain the symbolism or read one of the optional books below. Pray the "Candy Cane Blessing" listed on the next page over the pile, and then distribute them to friends and neighbors (gift cards provided on next page) or hang them on the tree.


## *Blessing of the Candy Canes*

Gracious God, In the spirit of Saint Nicholas we ask for your blessing on these candy canes. May their flavor sweeten our hearts with compassion and kindness. May their shape remind us to be shepherds of grace and generosity. May their bright colors attune us to the delightful sights and sounds of this sacred season. Inspire us to be like Saint Nicholas, who brought comfort and joy to children and their families. We ask this in the name of the Holy Child, Jesus whose coming we await with anticipation and love.


*Amen.* (by William Sadlier)

## *Recommended Reading*


*The Legend of the Candy Cane* by Lori Walburg




*Wishing you joy  
and peace!  
Love,*



*Wishing you joy  
and peace!  
Love,*



*Wishing you joy  
and peace!  
Love,*



*Wishing you joy  
and peace!  
Love,*



December 16

## Las Posadas

*Las Posadas* means "the inns" in Spanish, and is a commemoration of Mary and Joseph's painstaking journey to find lodging, and a celebration of the holy hospitality they received. It is a nine day festival observed mostly in Latin America, where one family hosts, and the "pilgrims" dressed as Mary and Joseph go door to door (planned in advance) in search of lodging. At each door they are turned away with a traditional song, until at the final home they are invited in, where a nativity scene and party awaits.



It is important to appreciate this tradition without appropriating it. Tonight, sit down with a cup of Mexican Hot Chocolate and Tomie DePaola's lovely book, *The Night of Las Posadas*. Discuss how Las Posadas invites us to consider how in opening up our lives and doors to the stranger, the neighbor, and the refugee, we welcome Christ himself to come in and take up residence. Also give thanks for the people who have cultivated this tradition and kept it alive.

### *Mexican Hot Chocolate*

Mexican hot chocolate is a dark hot cocoa with a secret ingredient: cinnamon. Both the *Abuelita* and *Ibarra* brands are great and available at most grocery stores, but you can also make this yourself by adding cinnamon to your hot chocolate mix--and a dash of cayenne if you're feeling spicy!

### *Recommended Reading*

*The Night of Las Posadas* by Tomie DePaola