

FaithBIT



Pondering the “why” of Advent

Reflection by Kim Rathjen

On December 13 we celebrated St Lucia Day. The Swedish version of St. Lucia became part of my life in high school when I sang in the Svenskarnas Dag Girls Choir and St Lucia pageants were part of the season. Several years later my friend started inviting people to her home to celebrate St. Lucia Day. Today was the 23rd year we have gathered.

The early morning ritual begins around 6am and involves a processional of children (now all young adults who, sometimes reluctantly, continue the tradition.) They dress in white gowns and carry candles in the dark. They are led by St. Lucia who also wears a wreath of light on her head and reads the St. Lucia legend to the gathered group. This is followed by breakfast with yummy Swedish treats.

“We gather in the dark and
focus on the light of the candles
and the light in our lives,
Jesus.”
- Kim Rathjen

One legend says that St. Lucia came from a wealthy family, and against their wishes, she decided to serve the poor as an act of faith and devotion to her Christian beliefs. After she was martyred, legend has it that she appeared wearing a wreath of light guiding a boat full of food across a lake to feed the poor.

While I cherish the gathering of friends over the years and the tradition in which my children still participate, St. Lucia Day has become an important faith ritual as well. December 13 has become the turning point in the season of Advent for me. The first weeks of December are busy decorating, organizing donations and opportunities to help those who have need, and running around. But by December 13 most of that is finished and I am reminded by our ritual gathering to stop and take time to ponder the “why”.

There is also great focus on light in our tradition – the 13th of December being the longest day of the year by the Julian calendar. The name Lucia means “light.” We gather in the dark and focus on the light of the candles and the light in our lives, Jesus. The remaining days leading to Christmas give me time to reflect on Jesus, the Light of the World, who comes into the darkness to save us. Come, Lord Jesus, come.