



Memorial of St Lucy, virgin and martyr



Date: Saturday, December 13, 2025 | **Season:** Advent | **Year:** A

First Reading: Sirach 48:1–4, 9–11

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 80:2ac, 3b, 15–16, 18–19 | **Response:** Psalm 80:4

Gospel Acclamation: Luke 3:4, 6

Gospel Reading: Matthew 17:9a, 10–13

Preached at: The Jesuit Institute in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa.

This homily is about a small light that keeps going, even when the night feels long.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear friends, Advent teaches us how to wait without giving up. Each week we light another candle on the Advent wreath. The darkness does not disappear at once, but it does not win either. Today, as we keep the Saturday of the second week of Advent and honour Saint Lucy, virgin and martyr, we are reminded that God often works through small, steady light.

Our first reading is from the Book of Sirach, chapter 48, verses 1 to 4 and 9 to 11. It speaks about the prophet Elijah. Sirach says Elijah was like fire, and his words burned like a torch. Elijah lived at a time when people in power were comfortable with lies and injustice. The poor were forgotten, and faith had grown thin. Elijah spoke the truth clearly. He did not soften it. Jewish tradition says Elijah did not die but was taken up, so that he could return. This kept alive the hope that God had not abandoned the people, that hearts could still change, and that what was broken could still be repaired. Advent lives on that same hope.

The psalm today, Psalm 80, gives us a very honest prayer. Restore us, O God. Let your face shine, and we shall be saved. This prayer is repeated again and again, as if the people are holding onto it when they have nothing else left. In the Bible, when God's face shines, it means God is near and paying attention. It means life, safety, and mercy. Many people in our own time understand this prayer well. In South Africa today, families sit in the dark because of load-shedding, jobs are scarce, and the gap between rich and poor keeps growing. Restore us, O God, is not a distant religious phrase. It is what people say when they feel worn down and unseen.

The Gospel comes from Matthew, chapter 17, verses 9 to 13. The disciples ask Jesus about Elijah. They have been taught that Elijah must come before God's great day. Jesus tells them that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him. He is speaking about John the Baptist. John lived simply, spoke plainly, and called people to change their ways. He prepared the way for the Messiah, just as the prophet Malachi had promised. But John was rejected and killed. The light came, and many turned away from it.

Saint Lucy fits naturally into this story. She lived in Sicily during a time of persecution under the Roman emperor Diocletian. She was young and had no power to protect herself. She chose to remain faithful to Christ, even when it cost her life. Her name comes from the Latin word for light. The Church remembers her during Advent because her life shows us what faithful light looks like. It is not loud. It is not dramatic. It simply does not go out.

Ignatian prayer asks us to imagine these scenes. Picture the Advent wreath in a dark church. Picture Lucy standing firm, John speaking by the river, Elijah standing alone before a king. Notice their fear and their courage. None of them knew how things would turn out. They trusted God anyway. Advent is not about having everything clear. It is about staying faithful one day at a time.

This has real meaning for us. Light shows things as they are. It helps us see who is struggling and who is being ignored. Preparing the way for the Lord today means paying attention. It means noticing the neighbour who is tired, the student who is hungry, the worker who is treated unfairly. It means choosing not to look away.

So let us make this practical. As we light the candles on our Advent wreath, let us also make a simple promise together. This week, let each of us notice one person who is usually overlooked, and do one small act of kindness or justice for them.

We return at the end to the psalm's prayer. Restore us, O God. Let your face shine, and we shall be saved. God answers this prayer in Jesus, who comes quietly and stays close.

Saint Lucy, faithful bearer of light, pray for us. Restore us, O God of the shining face. Amen.

As we go into the week ahead, let us reflect on the following questions:

- Where is God asking me to keep a small light burning, even when it feels hard?
- Who around me needs to be noticed and taken seriously this week?
- What one simple action can I take to help prepare the way for the Lord in my daily life?

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.