

The Eyes of Saint Lucia

(Los ojos de Santa Lucía)

Christian tradition from Central America

Jorge Arturo Colorado

Lucia was a young Christian girl who lived in Italy at the time of the Roman Empire. When she was about to get married, her would-be husband denounced her for her religion, because in return for her mother's good health she made a promise to God to keep her virginity and had to cancel their wedding.

The Roman emperor, who persecuted Christians, ordered her arrest and finally condemned her to death because she would not abandon her faith. It is said that her eyes were poked out during her martyrdom, but Lucia miraculously continued seeing. Finally, her throat was slashed with a sword and she died.

In the Christian tradition she is the patron saint of eye doctors and the blind. But the tradition goes further and there are two stars in the constellation of Taurus known as Lucia's eyes. They form the Theta Tauri system, a system made up of two stars that can be easily distinguished from each other with the naked eye.

The feast day of Saint Lucia is on December 13th. Around this time Theta Tauri reaches its maximum height above the horizon. In Central America, Saint Lucia's eyes are almost above our heads at midnight. From there comes the oral



tradition so suggestively expressed in a prayer to Saint Lucia: "Saint Lucia, high in the sky, please ask God to send us his light so that we can always see what we must do, say and avoid."

Binary Systems

Within the constellation of Taurus there is a binary system, a system of two stars that revolve around each other. Both stars, Theta 1 and Theta 2, are at a distance of about 150 light years from our solar system. They belong to the Hyades open cluster. Theta Tauri 1 is an orange K-type supergiant, not as hot as our Sun. Theta Tauri 2 is a pulsating star (type Delta Scuti) and so its brightness varies constantly.

Rosa M^a Ros

