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SAINT MERCURIUS: A CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

The military played a major role in the life of people of the first century. Armies affected every person and every aspect of life in those years. It is no wonder, then, that Saint Paul in writing to the faithful of Ephesus speaks in military terms and bids them to fight evil as in a battle.

St. Paul writes: “My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His Might . . . Take unto yourselves the whole armor of God . . . Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness . . . Above all, taking the shield of faith . . . and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God . . .” The great Apostle points to the foes of salvation, Satan and his wiles, endlessly attacking the believer. Certainly his words have relevance in our day as well. We are confronted each day by the secular forces of our materialistic culture. We, too, must arm ourselves as if in battle!

A number of soldiers of the early centuries of the Church, upon hearing the Gospel of Christ and seeing the virtuous lives of believers, embraced the Christian faith. Some did so secretly. One such soldier is the saint and martyr MERCURIUS. He was a warrior in the mighty Roman Army of the third century, who successfully fought the barbarians and became a great hero of the day. In fact, he is said to have been named a general by the Emperor Decius. But some envious officers found out that he was a Christian and betrayed him to the emperor. Mercurius refused to deny his faith in Christ and to pray to the pagan gods of the Romans. He was martyred around the year 253.