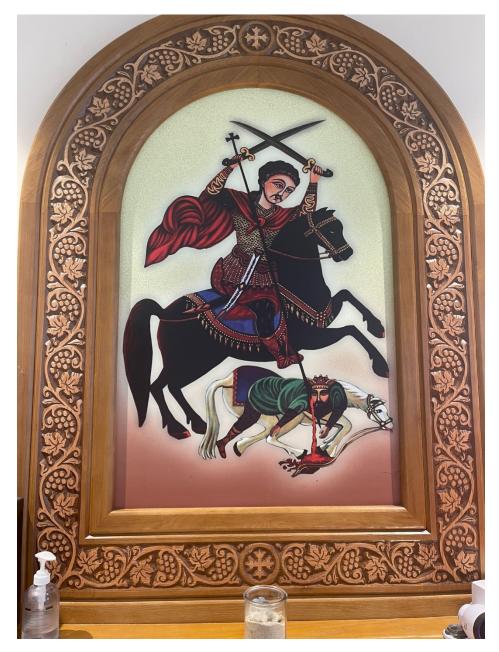# Philopatir Mercurius

Philopatir Mercurius (225 – 250 AD), a soldier who became a [Christian](#) saint and [martyr](#). He was born in the city of [Eskentos](#) in [Cappadocia](#), in Eastern [Asia Minor](#) (modern-day [Turkey](#)). His parents were converts to Christianity and they called him "Philopater" or "Philopatyr" (a [Greek](#) name which means 'Lover of the Father'). They raised him in a Christian manner. When he grew to adulthood (at the age of 17), he enlisted in the Roman army in the reign of [Emperor Decius](#). He gained a great reputation among his superiors as a swordsman and a tactician in many battles. During this period, it is said that the Emperor grew very close to him.

Military career of Saint Mercurius:

After the death of Mercurius' father Noah, the pagan Roman Emperor Decius (ruled 249–251) chose him to replace his father. Described as very strong and courageous, Mercurius earned the respect of his fellow soldiers and gained renown as a swordsman. When the Barbarians attacked Rome, Decius went out to fight them but became afraid when he saw how many there were. Mercurius then came to him and said, "Do not be afraid, because God will kill our enemies and will bring us victory."

After several days of fighting, the Archangel Michael appeared to Mercurius holding a shining sword. The saint took the sword from the archangel, hence the name *Abu Sayfain* - "the father of two swords" a military sword and a divine sword.   He conquered the Barbarians. When Decius heard news of the triumphant victory, he named Mercurius as a prince.

Martyrdom of Saint Mercurius:

Nonetheless, in 249, Decius began his persecution of Christians, compelling everyone to offer sacrifices to his pagan gods. The Archangel Michael appeared to Mercurius and told him to remember God and not be fearful of persecution. The saint was encouraged and spent the whole night praying fervently, confessing his weakness to God.

The Emperor sent messengers to summon Mercurius to the palace, saying: "Dear Mercurius, let us go offer incense to the gods who helped us attain victory in the war." As they were leaving, Mercurius slipped through the crowd and went away. However, one of the guards reported his absence, and the Emperor called Mercurius and asked him: "Is it true that you refused to worship the idols who helped us during the war?" Mercurius declared himself a Christian, saying, "I do not worship anyone except my Lord and my God, Jesus Christ."

The Emperor tried to persuade him to give up his faith but failed. He then ordered Mercurius to be stripped of his rank and tortured. Fearing a revolt because the people loved Mercurius, the emperor had him bound in iron fetters and sent him to Caesarea. Mercurius was beheaded on 4 December 250 AD. He was only 25 years old.