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THE THIRD MONTH
HEDAR 25
(December 04)

**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT,
ONE GOD. AMEN.**

On this day became a martyr Philopator (which is being interpreted “lover of the Father”) Mercurius, and this name also being interpreted is “servant of Jesus Christ.” This holy man was a native of the city of ‘Asletes, which was also the city of his father, and his grandfather who were born therein, and he was brought up in the city of Rome. Now the occupation of his father, and grandfather, and his kinsmen was that of hunters of wild beasts. One day they went out hunting, according to their custom, and they found two men with the faces of dogs, and they ate his grandfather, and they also wanted to eat his father, but the angel of the Lord prevented them from doing so. And the angel said unto them, “Touch him not, for from him shall go forth good fruit.” Then the angel of the Lord surrounded them with fire, and being in tribulation, the two Dog-faces came to the father of Saint Mercurius, and they bowed low before him. And straightway God changed their [savage] nature to one of gentleness, and they became like sheep and went with him to the city. And after he had begotten the holy man Mercurius, and called his name “Philopator,” the Dog-faces lived with them for many days, and then they became Christians; now the ancestors of the holy man had been in days of old pagans. And when they received the gift of Christian baptism, they called the father of the holy man “Noah,” and his mother “Tabot,” and Philopator “Mercurius.” And the Dog-faces, according to what the angel of the Lord said unto them when he appeared unto them, were in subjection to the holy man Mercurius, and his father. And when the king heard the story of the Dog-faces and how God had changed their savage natures, [he ordered his soldiers to bring in wild beasts] before the king, and the Dog-faces destroyed all the wild beasts, which the king brought before them. When the king saw this he was afraid of them exceedingly, and he asked the father of Saint Mercurius to entreat God to remove from them their savage nature, and to make them to possess the nature of men; and he asked God, and God changed their nature and they became like men. Then the king took the holy father Mercurius and appointed him governor and captain of the army, and these Dog-faces were subject unto him, and all the people were afraid of them. After this a certain wicked king rose up and he wished to make war upon another king, and the king sent his soldiers to entice those Dog-faces and to bring them to him. And that wicked king, who wished to make war on the king of the city wherein the father of Saint Mercurius lived, enticed them. And straightway he was angry at the Dog-faces, and he punished one of them, who became a martyr thereby, and the other fled. When the father of Saint Mercurius returned to the city he sought for his son and his mother and found them not. Now the king, having heard that the father of Saint Mercurius was killed in battle, decided to take the mother of Saint Mercurius and marry her. And one of the soldiers of the king knowing what the king intended to do, went and told the mother of Saint Mercurius what the king had decided concerning her. When she heard this she asked him to take [her] out secretly, and she went out with her son the blessed Mercurius. And his father having sought for his wife and his son, and found them not, knew not in the least what had become of them. And the king was afraid because he thought that the Dog-faces lived with him, and that he would become angry and would turn them loose, and they would destroy all the city. And the king commanded his servants not to tell him that he intended to marry his wife. After this war broke out against the king, and the father of Saint Mercurius went out to fight, and the king took him prisoner. Now by the Will of God the king of Rome was a Christian. And when he knew that the father of Saint Mercurius was a Christian, he spared him and did not kill him, and he made him governor of all the city of the Mardosaweyan. And by the Will of God Saint Mercurius and his mother were in the city of Rome, and when his father came into the church the mother of Saint Mercurius saw him and knew that he was her husband. One

day when they were sitting in the guest house the father of Mercurius and his soldiers rode out, and the mother of the blessed Mercurius dressed her son in the fine raiment which he used to wear in the royal city, and commanded him to go and mount the horse of the governor, that is to say of his father. And having mounted the governor's horse, the soldiers seized him and brought him before the governor, that is to say his father, who did not know that he was his son, and he was angry with him. And the mother of Mercurius came to her husband, now he did not know that she was his wife, and she said unto him, "We are strangers, and when I knew that thou was a stranger I thought that my son might be with thee"; and when he asked her questions and enquired concerning her journey she told him that she was his wife. And straightway he knew her and he knew his son Mercurius, and he placed [him] in the church, and they lived there together. When the father and mother of Saint Mercurius died, the king took him and made him governor of the city of the Mardosaweyan in his father's stead; and the one Dog-face that had remained with him up to the time he was appointed governor, used to go forth with Mercurius in battle. When they wanted to fight God used to restore to the Dog-face his original savage nature, and there was none who could stand before him. And there were given to this Saint Mercurius power, and great strength, and he was more renowned and more exalted than all the other officers of the kingdom. Now the Emperor of Rome in those days was called Decius and he worshipped idols. And his enemies the Barbarians rose up against him, and he assembled his armies and went forth to fight against them; and they were as many as the sand of the sea, and the emperor was dismayed and was afraid. And Saint Mercurius said unto him, "Fear not, for God shall assuredly destroy our enemies and bring them into our hand." Now Mercurius saw before him in the battle the angel of the Lord, and he had a drawn sword in his hand, and he said unto them, "Conquer and fear not, O Mercurius." And after this a shining man in white apparel appeared unto him, and he had in his hand a drawn sword, which he gave to Mercurius, saying, "When thou hast overcome thine enemies remember the Lord thy God." And straightway Mercurius conquered his enemies and returned in great joy. Then the angel of the Lord appeared, and said unto him, "Why hast thou forgotten and hast not remembered the Name of the Lord thy God?" And the period of the war being ended the Emperor Decius wanted to offer up incense to the gods on behalf of himself and his army. And Saint Mercurius tarried behind, and did not go forth with the emperor to the festival in the temple. And a certain man informed the Emperor Decius and said unto him, "Saint Mercurius hath not come with thy army, and he hath not associated himself with the offering of incense to the gods." And the emperor sent straightway and had Mercurius brought to him, and he marveled at him, the love for him having forsaken his heart. And the emperor said unto him, "Why hast thou forgotten thy love for me and hast not come with me to offer incense to the gods?" And straightway Saint Mercurius cast his girdle and his military attire down before the Emperor Decius, and he said unto him, "I will not deny my Lord Jesus Christ, and I will not bow down to filthy idols." And when the Emperor Decius heard this he was exceedingly wroth, and he commanded his soldiers to beat him with rods made of green palm wood, and with ox-hide whips; and they did as the emperor commanded. And straightway the emperor was afraid lest the people of the city should rise up against him, and he bound him in irons and sent him to Caesarea in Cappadocia, and he commanded the soldiers there to torture him severely and to cut off his head with the sword. And they tortured him there, even as the emperor commanded, and they cut off his head with the sword, and he finished his fight and received the crown of martyrdom in the kingdom of heaven. And after he had received an incorruptible and heavenly crown, and had entered into life everlasting, churches were built to him in all the ends of the earth, and God made manifest in them signs and great wonders. And some of his miracles took place when Julian, who denied our Lord Jesus Christ, was reigning, and in the days of Saint Basil, Bishop of the country of Caesarea and Cappadocia, even as it is written in one of the works of Saint Basil. Now Julian the infidel had inflicted very great tribulation upon those who believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, and he was wroth with Saint Basil and shut him up in prison, and he multiplied his works against the believers. And Saint Basil gathered together the believers and he prayed and made entreaty unto God concerning Julian the infidel, and he made intercession with Saint Mercurius. And God heard his prayer and sent His great and holy martyr Mercurius, and he came riding upon a

horse and he speared Julian the infidel with his spear in his head, and the emperor died an evil death during the war in the land of Persia. And when Saint Basil had seen this vision in the picture of Saint Mercurius he rejoiced with very great joy. And he came into the place wherein was the body of the great martyr Saint Mercurius, and whilst he was sitting down there and thinking about what he had seen, straightway the sword and the spear of Saint Mercurius returned to their places, and from them there dropped so much blood that the whole space beneath the picture of Saint Mercurius was full of it. And straightway Saint Basil cried out and said, "O martyr of Christ, to Whom be glory! Hast thou indeed killed Julian the enemy of righteousness?" And Saint Mercurius in the picture bowed his head before the face of Saint Basil as much as to say, "Yea, I have killed him." And Saint Basil multiplied his praises to God, and he paid Him honor and gave thanks unto Him. And Saint Mercurius wrought very many signs and wonders. And there was a certain young Muslim who was a son of one of the officers of the city of Mesr (Cairo), and he was learned in the Law of the Muslims but had since been baptized with Christian baptism. Then one of the king's guards seized him, and he made ready a deep pit and lighted a great fire therein in order that he might burn him in it; and many men gathered together to see him [burnt]. And that young Muslim drew nigh unto the martyr whom the royal guard had seized, and he said unto him, "O infidel, why dost thou run to enter into Sheol? At thine end thou wilt sit in the fire of Gahannam, because thou dost attribute a Son to God, and dost confess Three Persons. Hearken unto me and abandon thy blasphemy and thine abominable words." And the Christian answered and said unto him, "We Christians are not infidels, but we worship One God, and He is Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost. The Son is not alien to God His Father, for He is His Word. Likewise the Holy Spirit, the mystery of our Faith, is wonderful, and is hidden from you, because your heart is not able to bear Him, and thy heart at this moment is dark and the light of the Faith illumineth it not. But I can see that after a few days the light shall draw nigh unto thee, and that the light of Christ shall shine in thine heart. And thou shalt fight spiritually even as do I for His Name, and thou shalt feel the same pain which I am now suffering." When the Muslim heard his words he was exceedingly worth with him, and he put off his sandals from his feet and buffeted the face and mouth and head of the Christian and punished him severely, and he said unto him, "What thou sayest shall never happen to me, O thou infidel." And the blessed man answered and said unto him, "Needs must that thou remember what I say unto thee." And straightway they cut off his head with the sword, and they threw his body into the pit of fire, and the flames of that fire mounted upwards and became like a great wall. And the body of the Christian remained in that fire three days and three nights, and the royal guard watched him by day and by night, and afterwards they found the body and it was tried like gold and the fire had not touched it all; and they told this to the king, and he commanded the soldiers to bury the body. And the young Muslim went into his house being sorrowful, and he neither ate nor drank. And his father, and mother, and brethren gathered about him, and they said unto him, "What hath happened to thee? Why dost thou neither eat nor drink?" And he told them what the martyr of our Lord Jesus Christ had said unto him, and they comforted him, and they said unto him, "Put aside the word which this erring man spoke unto thee, and dismiss his prediction from thy heart"; but he was in no wise comforted. And in those days that young Muslim saw many Muslims, and they were wishing to go to the tomb of their lying prophet, and he said unto his father, "I should like to go with them"; and his father rejoiced exceedingly at these words, and he gave him one hundred dinars, and committed him to the care of his friend, and the young man departed. And as the young man was journeying with his friend, he saw a vision one night, and it seemed that an aged monk, shining with light, stood up by his side, and that he said unto him, "Come, follow me that thou mayest be saved"; and the monk appeared again on the second night, and again on the third night, and each time he spoke unto him as above. When they had finished their business, having arrived at their destination, they turned back, and journeyed for a period of six days in the desert. And as they were traveling by night the young man got down from his camel because of a bodily need, and his companions left him and departed; and he remained by himself lost in the desert, and he wept, being afraid lest the wild beasts should eat him. Then he remembered the church of Saint Mercurius the martyr in the city of Mesr (Cairo), which was near his father's house, and he said in his heart, "Every man

makes vows to him, and he fulfils for them everything which they ask him." And straightway the young man said, as he wept, "O Mercurius, martyr of Christ, if thou wilt deliver me from the wild beasts of the desert, and wilt bring me out safe from the desert, I will become a Christian." And having said this, behold there came unto him a young man riding upon a horse, and his appearance was exceedingly goodly, and he was wearing glorious apparel, and his loins were girt with a girdle of gold, and he stood before him and said unto him, "Whence comest thou? Why art thou alone and lost in this desert?" And he said unto him, "I got down [from my camel] because of a bodily need, and they left me and departed." And the man on the horse said unto him, "Come, get up behind me on this horse," and he mounted the horse with him, and the horse flew through the air, and brought them quickly to the church of Mercurius the martyr in the city of Mesr (Cairo). And the doors of the church flew open to him, and he went in with him on the horse, and he brought him to the martyrium of the sanctuary, and then disappeared from him and was no more seen. And the young Muslim stood up in the church frightened, and he said in his heart, "Is this one of the churches of the Christians?" And he saw the lamps burning before the picture [of the saint], and this seemed to him to be a dream, and he said, "Am I not still sitting down in the desert?" And he remained in the sanctuary until the dawn. And the steward of the church came and found him standing in the sanctuary, and he thought that he was a thief, and the steward wanted to cry out, but the young Muslim made a sign to him with his hand, and he said unto him, "Come to me"; and the steward went to him. And the young man said unto him, "What is this place?" And the steward said unto him, "This is the church of Saint Mercurius of Mesr (Cairo)." And the young man said unto him, "Is this the city of Mesr (Cairo)?" And the steward said unto him, "Yea," and he added, "It seems that thou art too stupefied to talk to me; but now, O my brother, make me to know what hath happened to thee." Then straightway courage returned to the young man, and he said unto him, "How can I help being stupefied? Seeing that during the past night I was in such and such a desert. And I have no knowledge whatsoever of how I came here; only God knows." When the steward heard the name of that desert he marveled, and said unto the young man, "Did I not say rightly that thou art stupefied, and that thou dost not know what thou art saying? The journey from that desert to this place occupies twelve days. Verily thou art a thief, and it is the might of the blessed martyr Mercurius that hath seized thee and bound thee here without ropes and fettering irons. This Mercurius the blessed martyr forsook the glory of this world and thrust it away, and the infidels tortured him with severe tortures for the Name of Christ, and the martyr died and God received him into His kingdom, and churches are built in his name everywhere; and in them the saint praises God, and makes intercession for all men. And for all those who commit themselves to him in prayer he makes intercession, and he makes manifest miracles." And the young man said unto the steward, "What are his form and features like?" and the steward said unto him, "He resembles thee in stature"; and then he showed him the picture of the saint. When the young man saw the picture of Saint Mercurius the martyr, he said unto the steward, "Verily this is the holy man who appeared unto me in the desert, and who bore me on his horse, and brought me hither. And behold, this is the girdle of gold wherewith I saw his loins girt." And he said unto the steward, "Behold, I tell thee that I am a Muslim, I belong to this city, and the name of my father is Raga, the judge; this miracle is sufficient to make me become a Christian. And now hide me, and do not reveal my business to any man. And also bring me a aged priest that he may teach me the way of God, and may strengthen me in the True Faith, and may bring me . . ." And the steward put him in a place by himself, and brought to him a priest, even as he said, and the priest baptized him with Christian baptism, and brought to him the Books of the Church and the Gospel; and he remained thus. And about one month after this those men who had journeyed to Mecca arrived, and all the Muslims who were their kinsmen went out to meet them. And the judge, the father of the young man, met the friend, who wept bitterly, and he told the judge how his son had stayed behind in the desert, and how they had left him and come on. When his father heard this he rent his garments, and his brethren and the young men also rent their garments, and they sat down and mourned for three days. After this a certain Muslim woman saw the young man who had become a Christian coming out of the church of Saint Mercurius. And a Muslim (sic) went and told his father and his brethren [this], and said unto them, "If it were not that

your son died in the desert on the Mecca road, I should be inclined to say that the young man whom I saw this day by the church of Saint Mercurius the martyr was he; he was wearing the white apparel which the monks wear, and in truth he was like your son.” When the father and mother and brethren of the young man heard this they rose up, and went [there] and found him, and they seized him, and said unto him, “What hast thou done? And why hast thou put me to shame among the Muslim nobles?” And he said unto them, “I am a Christian, and I believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, the Most High; blessed be His Name!” Immediately he had said this they punished him very severely, and they cast him into a dark pit, and he remained there for seven days and seven nights without food and drink, and they poured urine upon him and cast the filth from their houses on him. And his mother wept over him day and night, and by reason of her excessive weeping they drove away the young man, and he departed to the desert of Scete, and he dwelt in the desert of Abba Macarius for a period of two years, and he fought a strenuous fight, and devoted himself to the ascetic life. After this a certain monk said unto him, “Would it not be profitable to thee without [delay] to go to the city of Mesr (Cairo) and proclaim thy Faith openly?” And he rose up and went to Mesr (Cairo), and his father seized him and took him to King Hakem, who is called “Governor” (i.e. Khalifah), and he said unto him, “Our son hath forsaken the Muslim faith, and hath entered the Christian Faith.” And the Khalifah said unto the young man, “Is this true what they say about thee?” And he told the Khalifah what had happened to him in Mecca, and how Saint Mercurius had appeared unto him, and how he had seated him with himself on his horse, and how he had brought him into his shrine in the twinkling of an eye and had taken him into the church of Mesr (Cairo), and how he had seen the picture of the saint in the church, and how he knew that it was he who had appeared unto him in the desert. And when Hakem the Khalifa, the infidel, heard this he spoke many words and he feared with a great fear. And he said unto the young man, “What dost thou want?” And he said unto him, “I ask thee to give me authority to build a church in the name of Saint Mercurius the martyr”; and the Khalifah gave him authority to build a church there in the name of Michael the archangel, and he built a second church--in the name of Mercurius the martyr, and great signs and wonders took place therein. And he composed two books, one on the Grace of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the other on the True Faith. And he vanquished in debate the wicked, and the pagans, and the Muslims, and he pleased God and died in peace. Now the name of this young man was “John,” which was given to him when they baptized him. All this took place through the prayer of Saint Mercurius the martyr, and the multitude of his miracles. Salutation to Mercurius of Rome, who rode a black horse.

And on this day also are commemorated Acarius and Romanus.

And on this day died Sabla Wangel, Queen of Ethiopia.

Glory be to God Who is glorified in His Saints. Amen.