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the prayers of **St. Basil the Great**, sent St. Mercurius to kill Julian the Apostate, who was mortally wounded by the spear of an unknown soldier, who immediately disappeared.

### 1. Martyr Mercurius of Caesarea, Asia Minor (3<sup>rd</sup> c.)

A Scythian by descent, he served as a soldier in the Roman army during the reigns of the impious Emperors Decius (249-251) and Valerian (253-259). At that time barbarians were attacking the Roman empire, and the Emperor Decius went on campaign with a large army. In one of the battles an Angel of the Lord appeared to Mercurius and presented him a sword. With this sword the Holy Warrior cut through the ranks of the barbarians, winning victory for the Romans. The grateful Emperor Decius rewarded him for his bravery and made him high commander of the entire army.

He was martyred during the reign of Valerian, being cast into prison and put to cruel torments. He was hung over a brazier, his body cut by swords, and finally he was beheaded at Caesarea, Cappadocia. According to tradition, in 363 the Most Holy Theotokos, through

### 2. Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria

The daughter of Cestus, the Governor of Alexandria during the reign of the Emperor Maximian (305-313). Living in the center of Hellenistic knowledge and possessed of a rare beauty and intellect, she received an excellent education, studying the works of the greatest philosophers and teachers of antiquity. She was baptized after a vision of the Most Holy Theotokos. She was martyred when the Emperor Maximian was in Alexandria for a pagan festival. The Saint confessed her faith in the One True God and with wisdom exposed the errors of the pagans. As a result, **150 Philosophers** confessed the Christian Faith and were condemned to be burnt alive. Finally the Saint was tortured and beheaded. According to tradition, milk and blood flowed from the wound! Having beheld this wonder, the **Empress Basilissa** and the Imperial Courtier **Porphyrius** with **200 soldiers** confessed their faith in Christ and were beheaded.

The body of the Martyr was taken by Angels to Mt. Sinai. In the 8<sup>th</sup> c. it was discovered **incorrupt** by monks and transferred to the Monastery, which the Emperor Justinian had founded in the 6<sup>th</sup> c. It is there to this day, giving forth a heavenly scent and working countless miracles.

### St. Peter the Hesychast (5<sup>th</sup> c.)

He was born on the shores of the Black Sea and at the age of 7 he left his father's house and spent 90 years in the contests of asceticism. He lived in Galatia, Palestine and finally in Antioch. He reposed in peace, graced with the gift of working miracles (even his clothing, like that of the Apostles, worked miracles).