

NEEDLESS REPETITION OR A NEEDFUL REQUEST

Anyone who has ever attended a service in the Orthodox Church knows our most repeated prayer: LORD HAVE MERCY! It is a singular response to some petitions. At other times, it may be sung or changed three, twelve, forty or even one hundred times. We hear these three words so much that the question is often raised: It is really necessary to repeat this plea over and over?

To give the proper answer to this question we must carefully examine what we are actually asking for with this humble prayer. True, we are petitioning God to overlook our faults and sinfulness and be merciful to us. Seeking forgiveness (or mercy) from our Heavenly Father must always be in our hearts and on our lips. Yet constantly praying LORD HAVE MERCY means much more than that. Some translations of Sacred Scripture do not exclusively use the word MERCY for the Hebrew term HESED. It is also translated as: compassion gracious, generous, and, yes, LOVING. In essence, then, when we pray LORD HAVE MERCY, we are asking Him to shower us with His love, and His goodness. We are requesting His care and His guidance. We are praying that He will bestow upon us all of the things that are necessary for our salvation.

A constant prayer of LORD HAVE MERCY must encompass our entire being. MERCY must encompass our entire being. It is not a WAST OF BREATH. On the contrary, it is a beautiful way of reminding ourselves of how dependent we are on our Creator, and that EVERY GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE.