

DO YOU KNOW THIS HYMN?



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+Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, Have mercy on us! x3

This is one of the best loved hymns of Byzantine children all over the world! We commemorate its origin on September 25th each year. Do you know where it came from? In the year 447AD, the city of Constantinople was ravaged by a series of very strong earthquakes for a span of about four months time. People were becoming emotionally drained, not only because the earthquakes themselves were difficult to endure, and they made the conditions ideal for a predatory attack by none other than Attila the Hun, one of the most fierce and dreaded warrior invaders of the time.

Out of desperation, the Emperor Theodocius, the Church Patriarch Proclus, and all of the people of Constantinople took part in a solemn, barefoot, procession to beg God for mercy and protection. As they began to pray, the earthquakes suddenly became more violent, and a little boy was taken up into the heavens in the sight of the crowd. They all watched him, suspended in mid-air and understandably,

began to cry out, "Lord, have mercy!" When the boy came down to earth, he told the crowd that while he was up in the heavens, he heard the angels singing, "Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One!" And then he heard the people shouting, "Lord have mercy!". He told the Emperor that he heard God tell him that he must tell the people to pray to God using these words. As soon as the people began to repeat the words the boy had taught them, the earthquakes stopped. Empress Pulcharia, sister of Theodocius, asked the Patriarch to include this powerful angelic prayer in our Divine Liturgy, and it remains a beloved liturgical hymn to this day.

It is no wonder that we begin our prayers in this very same way, begging God to stop the earthly movement of our minds and hearts so that, slowly and surely, we may pray in stillness and in peace.

-Written by Lynne Wardach

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