

On Easter night, 463, whilst the people were assembled in the Church with their holy Bishop, the Town House, an immense building, situated on an eminence in the midst of the city, was reported to be on fire. The alarm instantly spread, it was feared that the whole city would be reduced to ashes, and the entire multitude rushed out of the Church, leaving the Bishop alone before the altar. Deeply moved by the calamities which weighed so heavily on his beloved flock, he burst into tears, and earnestly besought the Almighty to stay his avenging arm: To appease the divine anger he made a vow to establish public prayers accompanied by processions and fasting. His mediation was effectual. The conflagration instantly ceased. The people returned to the Church, and were informed by the Bishop of his vow. He exhorted them to penance, and the three days before Ascension were appointed for its fulfilment, and to be celebrated by Processions, public Litanies, and a fast similar to that of Lent. Such were the fruits, both spiritual and temporal, derived from this holy exercise, that the good custom speedily passed into other Dioceses.

Finally it was adopted by Pop

Leo. III. in the eighth century, and has been since observed by the Universal Church.

The Litanies of the Saints are sung in Procession on these days. The word Litany is of Greek origin, and signifies Supplication or Prayer. Those Litanies open with an address to the Holy Trinity, to the Mother of God, and to all the angels and saints of his glorious kingdom. When each is named, thousands of voices cry out *Miserere nobis*, Have mercy on us; or *Ora pro nobis*, Pray for us. To each of the three Divine Persons and to them alone, we say *Have mercy on us* because in God alone do we recognise the power to shew us mercy. To the Queen of Heaven and to all the Blessed Spirits and Friends of God we say *Pray for us*, because we look up to them as charitable mediators of intercession before the throne of Grace. Jesus is our great and only Mediator of atonement, and he has fully paid our ransom in his blood. But we know that his angels and saints are not unmindful of us poor pilgrims in this place of exile. We know the angels of our Father rejoice over the conversion even of one sinner amongst us; and that those heavenly spirits present the