

Price, 3 Cents

The present rite of the Church of signing the foreheads of her children with blessed ashes in the beginning of the Lenten fast is a remnant of the ancient penitential discipline. In the good old times, when the faithful were more fervent, when they understood better the malice of sin, and had a deeper horror of it, public penance for certain crimes was ordained by the Church, and, for the most part, willingly accepted and faithfully performed. The course of penance for those who were to be reconciled on Holy Thursday began on Ash Wednesday. The penitents, having confessed their sins, came to the church on that day with bare feet and in habits of mourning, and humbly begged from the Bishop canonical punishment. The prelate clothed them in sackcloth and scattered ashes on their heads, and sprinkled them with holy water, and recited the Seven Penitential Psalms over them, while the attendant clergy lay prostrate on the ground. During this touching ceremony the clergy chanted the words which God addressed to fallen man when driving him from the earthly paradise: "Remember man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return."