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Pious Market Days

The Religious Origins of the Fair

Fairs originate from a religious tradition: since the Middle Ages, parish fairs (Kirchmesse, Kirchweih) have been celebrated on the consecration days of churches. Places of pilgrimage also attract traders and minstrels on these occasions.

One example is the annual *Pützchens Markt* in Bonn. It is named after the so-called *Adelheidis-Pützchen*, a Rhenish dialect term for "small fountain". It still marks the spot where St Adelheid of Vilich is said to have tapped a healing spring during a period of drought around the year 1000. This developed into a popular destination for pilgrims over the following centuries. The place soon flourished as a trading centre for goods which attracted artists, minstrels and jugglers.

For a long time, the folk festival and pilgrimage were closely linked. Until 1935, the end of the pilgrimage week and the main market day took place on the second Sunday in September. Today, the church service for the exhibitors and visitors of the fair as well as community members is held in the festival tent on the Sunday of the fair.

Fun Fact

Even today, many believers, pilgrims and fairground visitors wash their eyes at the *Adelheidis-Pützchen*. They wish to use the healing water to improve their eyesight, prevent or even cure eye diseases.