What is a Litany?

When we pray a litany, we are expressing our praise to God, or Mary, or the saints (depending on to whom the litany is addressed), as we list their deeds or attributes which are admirable and to which we aspire. The oldest Litany is the *Litany of the Saints*, which can be traced back to the 4th century.

How is a litany constructed?

Litanies usually follow a similar pattern:

1. First, we ask each person of the Trinity for mercy: '*Lord have mercy*'

2. This is followed by the main body of invocations, or praises

3. Each invocation is answered with a response.
Litanies to God are usually responded to by, 'Lord have mercy';
litanies to Our Lady or the saints by 'Pray for us'

4. Often the invocations are followed by a prayer of petition to God

5. The Litany closes with three invocations to the lamb of God,
a versicle (marked V.), and response (R.) from the people,
and a short prayer to end.