



Prayer Knocks, Fasting Obtains, Mercy Receives

St. Peter Chrysologus, Archbishop of Ravenna (+450)

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There are three things, my brethren, by which Faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are prayer, fasting, and mercy. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, mercy receives. Prayer, mercy, and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other.

Fasting is the soul of prayer; mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated. If you have only one of them or not all together, you have nothing. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others you open God's ear to yourself....Therefore, let prayer, mercy, and fasting be one single plea to God on our behalf, one speech in our defense, a threefold united prayer in our favor.

...Fasting bears no fruit unless it is watered by mercy. Fasting dries up when mercy dries up. Mercy is to fasting as rain is to the earth....When you fast, if your mercy is thin your harvest will be thin; when you fast, what you pour out in mercy overflows into your barn....Give to the poor and you give to yourself. You will not be allowed to keep what you have refused to give to others.

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