

DON'T JUST GIVE UP FOR LENT GIVE!

By TAYLOR CALDWELL

Author of the best-selling novel,
"Dear and Glorious Physician"

*A distinguished novelist describes how
this season of sacrifice can take on new meaning for all of us*



Taylor Caldwell is Mrs. Marcus Reback in home life.

LENT CALLS FOR earnest sacrifice. Many of us give up candy (especially if we eat candy very rarely), and some give up smoking (except the heavy smokers, who'd rather give up eating), and some don't read books, particularly if they don't like books anyway.

Most of us—I'm guilty, too—give up things that aren't absolutely essential to our happiness, and we feel virtuous about it. So, while "giving up" something that isn't a strain on our characters, our appetites, and our pleasures, why not give something for Lent?

I know a very shy lady, almost a recluse, who is doing just that. She has had a very unhappy life and is terrified by people, for very excellent reasons. She rarely, if ever, entertains. Her last dinner party was some six years ago, and she hasn't really recovered yet. This year she is going to search for lonely and unhappy people like herself and invite them to her home for dinner at least once a week. She may even decide to "give" such dinners for the rest of her life.

And then there is a very fashionable minister in our town. He has to be a community director, a young people's pal, a good fellow, a fine hand at bridge, a sportsman (most of his parishioners are sportsmen), a businessman, politician, member of the PTA, lecturer, party-giver in the parish hall, and speaker at local clubs. In short, he is expected to be everything but the shepherd of his flock—except in his spare time.

For Lent, he is not going to do a single one of these things demanded of him by his congregation.

He is going to make house-to-house calls on people he doesn't know, who don't belong to any church, who have no interest in religious things,

who are unhappy and drifting, who go about with sullen, challenging faces, who have no friends; who are, in the true meaning of the word, Godless. Many of them are rich; some are poor. He has been insulted by them many times. Now, for Lent, he is going to give himself. He will go to each of their houses and say, "Let me help you!" If they offend him by indifference or insult, he is just going to sit there and talk to them.

I predict he will bring back many of these lost sheep to the fold. I also predict that, from Lent on, he will be a real shepherd to his people, not just a "pal to them."

AMOTHER I know told me that her 16-year-old boy is not going to ask for his allowance during Lent. He is going to find odd jobs to do after school and, after his minimum expenses, he is going to give the balance to the collection plate in church. A rather spoiled and pampered boy, he will become a man from this experience, I think.

A young girl I have heard of has decided to stop her endless telephone calls during Lent. She has found that there are many harassed young mothers in her neighborhood who could use some help, so she is going to give her services, free, in baby-sitting and other chores. I am sure she will learn from this that, as St. Francis believed, it is in giving that we are given.

A gossip columnist I know is going to try to write nice things about people he meets instead of "amusing" anecdotes which cause embarrassment, sadness, and ill-will. He is going to "give" his column to help others rather than to injure and ridicule them. He will relate stories of various personalities who, without encouragement and in obscurity,

reached for the stars instead of the nearest lollipop. He will tell of men and women who have never whined, "I didn't have a chance," but who made their own chances and never gave up.

How refreshing in these days when everybody wants something for nothing!

I've heard of a whole class of young people who are going to help their exhausted teacher for Lent. They are not going to demand that she amuse them or supervise their "play" after school hours. They will offer to help her correct papers, clean up the classroom, and perform other chores. Several of the boys have cars of their own. The teacher can't afford one. So the boys, in turn, are going to call for her in the morning and take her home after school. They may decide, I hope, to continue this thoughtfulness after Lent.

They may see, for the first time, that their teacher is not their servant, but that she is there to educate them and prepare them for the fierce world beyond the schoolroom.

A small and weary businessman received a letter from his 10 employees the other day. They wrote him that for Lent they are going to give him a full day's work for a full day's pay. He was stupefied, and I don't think he quite believes it, even now.

Christ spent His Lent in the wilderness, preparing to give His life for us. There was never a sacrifice in the world to compare with this, and never again will there be. What are any of our sacrifices beside Christ's?

What are we going to "give" for Lent, as well as "give up" for it?

We may find that the "giving" is of lifelong importance to us, and that the "giving up" was not a 10th as valuable, either for ourselves or for others.

COVER:

The cheer is the thing in Ozzie Sweet's action-packed shot of America's No. 1 spectator sport. For a picture feature of unusual basketball doings, see p. 18.

Family Weekly

March 6, 1960

LEONARD S. DAVIDOW President and Publisher
WALTER C. DREYFUS Vice President
PATRICK E. O'ROURKE Advertising Director

Send all advertising communications to
Family Weekly, 133 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.

Address all communications about editorial features to
Family Weekly, 60 E. 58th St., New York 22, N. Y.

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