Lent: Some Suggestions

To the Readers of THE SIGN.

My Dear Friends:

We Catholics cannot but be pleased at the growing observance of Lent among non-Catholics. Many of them keep it in a very Catholic spirit, making it a season of special prayer, of strict self-denial, of deeper piety.

Personally, we are glad to note that Lenten devotion to our Lord's Sacred Passion—particularly the devotion of The Three Hours' Agony—is not limited to High-Church Episcopalians, but is being held in many Evangelical Churches.

But to the vast majority of those outside the Church, Lent is an unknown word or, at least, a word with no practical meaning.

If these believe in any religion at all, it is a very comfortable religion that has nothing to do with penance or mortification. It is a religion founded on the Gospel of a Good time. It is expressed in various forms, ranging all the way from the insanity of Christian Science, which denies the very existence of pain, to the shamelessness of Mormonism that would make sensuality a virtue.

We Catholics should remember that our religion is a hard religion; that Christ's Gospel is the stern Gospel of the Cross; that we are to make ourselves conformable to Christ in <u>suffering.</u>

The Church emphasizes these truths by setting aside the Lenten season as a time of prayer, fasting and penance. Some suggestions may help you to keep Lent better:

Keep the Lenten regulations of fast and abstinence as well as you can. Don't dispense yourselves from them unless justified.

Be present at as many as possible of the Lenten sermons and services in your parish church.

Assist on week-days at Holy Mass, which is the Memorial of our Lord's Passion. Receive the Sacraments as often as you can.

Think frequently on the Sacred Passion. Read about it. Say the Stations of the Cross.

Deny yourselves something in the line of food, drink, amusement. Do some acts of charity that really inconvenience you. Make a sacrifice for the Chinese Missions or other good work.

Your individual circumstances will suggest other means of sanctifying this holy season. Don't let it pass without doing something, however small, that will remind you of Christ's love for you, of the sufferings He endured for your sins, of the personal penance you owe for your own sins.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Father Harold Purcell, C.P.