

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



Department of Parish Vitality and Mission

Cardinal Meyer Center
3525 S. Lake Park Avenue
Chicago, IL 60653-1402

A Guide to *Silence*: Reflection Questions on the Film for Individuals or Groups

Martin Scorsese's film *Silence* is an adaptation of Shūsaku Endō's 1966 novel. This film adaptation tells the story of Jesuit missionaries in 17th Century Japan who accompany the Catholic Japanese population amidst their persecution. The movie invokes of deeper reflection on faith that most moviegoers may be unaccustomed to. The Archdiocese of Chicago has created this simple, topical guide that can be used for discussions on faith inspired by the movie. Although this has been written with the Catholic audience in mind, we welcome all individuals to use this guide to better explore themes in the film. In light of events around the world in which Christians have been persecuted, the Archdiocese of Chicago offers our prayers for the poor and suffering in all places.

Suffering/Theodicy

In *Silence*, we see many acts of courage and cowardice which Fr. Rodrigues perceives as 'God's Silence' amidst Christian suffering. The question of theodicy, or why a Good God permits evil, is a frequent question explored by theologians, philosophers, and all people. But Catholicism teaches that God is with us, even in times of suffering. How does Fr. Rodrigues's relationship with the Face of Jesus develop as the film goes on? In what ways is God present to him? What do you make of the film's ending?

Prayer

In the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, urges a form of prayer called Colloquy, in which a person speaks familiarly with God, as "one friend to another, or a servant to a master." How do Fr. Rodrigues and others exercise this form of prayer? Have you tried it in your own life?

Silence also portrays other forms of prayer, including song, sacrament, and the Rosary. What are the similarities between modern day Catholics and the Faithful of the 17th Century? What sustains prayer, even in difficulty? When Fr. Rodrigues asks, "What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What will I do for Christ?" how are his actions in the film an answer to those questions?

Pride

Elsewhere in his Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius Loyola writes that it is a tactic of Satan to tempt people driving them from, "riches to honors, to pride, to every other vice." In brief, pride becomes a refusal to give praise and reverence to God. In what ways does Fr. Rodrigues struggle with a subtle form of arrogant pride? How does his path compare with Kichijiro, whom he initially looks down upon? How might you compare the two men's relationships to God? How do you deal with pride in your own life?

Missionary Work

How would you answer some non-believers' questions about the film, such as, "Just what were the missionaries doing in Japan in the first place?" At one point, Fr. Rodrigues quotes the end of Matthew's Gospel: "Our Lord said to them, 'Go, ye, into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every living creature.'" What are the best ways to heed this commandment, in our day and age? In what ways is our Faith a privilege and gift we seek to pass on? How should we do this in 2017? In what ways is 2017 similar or different to the 17th Century? How might being Catholic or non-Catholic affect your viewing of this film?

Solidarity

When talking about the majority of Japanese Catholics, Inquisitor Inoue despises them for being peasant farmers. He also mentions not wanting to permit Christianity due to the competing claims of other European countries on Japan. How is the life and suffering of the missionaries an act of Christian solidarity with the peasants? What would motivate them to do this? How might we be called to reflect on current persecutions of Christians around the world? How can we practice solidarity with those suffering violence in Chicago?