

Yes or No

In 2016, Martin Scorsese directed a film called 'Silence' and it is an adaptation of a book written by Shusaku Endo. Andrew Garfield acting as Rodrigues was in search of his missing mentor Ferreira who was played by Liam Neeson. Rodrigues was looking for his mentor because the rumor had spread that his mentor Ferreira had apostatised. Determined to prove this rumor wrong, the Jesuit priest, Rodrigues, sets out from Portugal to Japan to find his role model and mentor. Throughout the whole movie, there is a constant theme which asks: will you deny Christ?

As the movie develops, Rodrigues is eventually captured and placed in the most horrible moral dilemma: if you don't deny Jesus not only will you suffer, but other people will suffer because of you. The way they made these Christians suffer was that they would hang them upside down and put their head in a pit full of putrid, horrible, rotting things. To prevent you from dying from all the blood pressure flowing into your head, they would cut slits behind your ear to relieve the pressure. In a moment of pressure and presented with the image, the fumie, Rodrigues 'hears' the voice of Jesus 'saying step on it!' and so he did.

At the end of the movie, he is no longer dressed as a priest but lives like a Japanese Buddhist. Regret and sadness is written all over his face yet in the final scene after Rodrigues dies, Scorsese shows him having a traditional Buddhist cremation and in his hand he is holding a small wooden cross.

While it is a very interesting movie, this last scene has disturbed many people and it seems to imply that it is ok to deny Jesus externally as long as internally we hold fast to our beliefs. Would Jesus ever tell us to deny him? What does the Word of God teach us, the Word of Truth which enlightens the whole world?

"Whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:33).

Jesus has called us to be the light of the world, to allow our words and actions to convey the truth of our identity with boldness: I AM A CHRISTIAN. As enfleshed spiritual beings, our words and our actions convey the truth about our inner reality. Either we say: NO! I am not sure if he is worth it, even in this most difficult situation I am not sure if I can trust him. Or we say: YES! He is worth giving up

everything for and even in death I am victorious in him. So do not let your No mean Yes, but let your Yes mean Yes.

Consider the example of the martyrs we celebrate today: St Paul Miki and companions.

In 1596, the Buddhist, Japanese emperor felt threatened by Christianity's growth in his land and so he unleashed a wave of persecution. The 26 Christians who refused to deny Christ were forced to traverse for over 1000 km from Kyoto through the freezing cold with bloodied feet until they had reached the city of Nagasaki. On top of the hill could be seen 26 crosses awaiting those 26 victims.

Once fastened to the cross, Paul Miki preached from his new pulpit stating: "As I come to this supreme moment of my life...I tell you plainly: there is no way to be saved except the Christian way. My religion teaches me to pardon my enemies and all who have offended me. I do gladly pardon the emperor and all who have sought my death. I beg them to seek baptism and be Christians themselves."

And with those final words, St. Paul Miki and his companions were each pierced with spears and Brother Martin could be heard saying: into your hands Lord I entrust my life.

My brothers and sisters let us ask the grace to be faithful—even if he asks us to be faithful to point of shedding our blood—let us begin today to be faithful in the small things so as to be faithful in the greater things and to keep in our hearts fixed on the words of the Eternal Word:

"Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32).