

# Faith



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Silence is an impressive novel by famous Japanese Shusaku Endo. The plot is based on the persecutions of the Kakure Kirishitan and Hanre Kirishitan communities in Japan during the 17th century. The main character is a young Jesuit priest named Sebastiao Rodriguez is sent to Japan to conduct an investigation on Fr. Cristovao Ferreira , who allegedly committed apostasy ( abandonment of one's religious faith ). It was a harrowing experience for Rodriguez since it was his first time to see how the Christians were heavily persecuted causing them to go underground. During that time, Christians who were caught and refused to commit fumie were imprisoned and subject a painful death known as “ Anazuri” ( hung and bled to death over a pit ). It is through the harrowing experience of Rodriguez during his stay in Japan that he discovers the trials that his mentor has undergone. Unfortunately, even his own mentor was swallowed by pessimism. He was bitter in the end, swallowed by his own shame and guilt. In the end, he was betrayed by Kichiji-ro and Rodriguez commits the act of fumie.

Being a historical fiction, the novel also relates the ties between Japan and the west because it recalls how the shoguns converted the people into Buddhism and launched a drive to expel missionaries. Apparently, the west had already begun its missions through St. Francis Xavier in 1549.

The author always portrayed Rodriguez as Christ-like. His struggles of being the only Japanese in the university made him a reject, he was neither a Japanese nor French. He also contracted tuberculosis that resulted to one of his lungs removed that seemed to warn him how difficult it would be to pursue the search of his faith (Reinseima 2004 ) This was his main crisis in faith was only resolved when he met his former mentor in prison. Although it seems that every turn of his life was a block to his faith, it was only in the

end that he recognized that these were not blocks at all. In fact, those struggles strengthened Rodriguez character and illuminated him in finding his faith. Moreover, his struggles like rejection, incarceration, persecution are the real manifestations of having solid faith because despite the tribulations, Rodriguez searched for Christ. It was this unsettling silence of God that deeply troubled the main character ( Jones 2006 ).

Even at the beginning of the story, Rodriguez is already fascinated by the face of Christ. He would always wonder how Christ would look like in many situations such as kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane. He always see image of Christ as very much alive, God-like, and free from suffering or pain. Ironically, it was only during the fumie that Rodriguez fully recognized what Christ's expression was : suffering like a man, suffering like him. The image beckoned him to trample so and he did because Rodriguez need to understand that Christ suffers with his believers, he was not a detached god that watched over the humiliation of his people ( Matsuoka 1982 ). Thus, " Silence" is not about a silent God who lets his followers suffer while he watches them bleeding or dying, on the opposite, " Silence" is about a compassionate God who was there all the time with his believers.

Technically, Rodriguez act is an act of apostasy since he also committed the fumie. He will have the stigma on him for the rest of his life like all apostates. Ironically, for Rodriguez, it was only through this culminating act that he had come to terms with his faith. The stepping on Christ's face is symbolic. It has to be broken, trampled upon like a seed that must crack for it to grow. It is similar to the crucifixion of Christ, where he fulfilled his mission after his death.

### Works Cited

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