



THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

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會協禪一第國美

Film Series

Silence

Directed by Martin Scorsese

Paramount © 2017

Friday, September 8, 2017 7:30 – 10:10 PM

113 East 30th Street New York, NY 10016

Christianity was introduced to Japan with the arrival of the Jesuit priest St. Francis Xavier from Spain in 1549. The religion gradually became quite popular and at one time claimed around 200,000 adherents, including 86 Daimyo converted between 1553 and 1620, with many converts centered on the island of Kyushu near Nagasaki. However, the shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi became alarmed by the growing influence of the Christian Daimyo, some of whom forced conversions on their subjects and also received direct military support from the Spanish and Portuguese in the form of muskets and gunpowder. In 1615, a Franciscan emissary of the Viceroy of New Spain asked the Shogun for land to build a Spanish fortress and this deepened Japan's suspicion against Catholicism. The statement on the "Expulsion of all missionaries from Japan" was drafted by Zen monk Konchiin Suden and issued in 1614 under the name of the shogun Tokugawa Hidetada. In the same year, the bakufu required all subjects of all domains to register at their local Buddhist temple; this would become an annual requirement in 1666, cementing Buddhist temples as instruments of state control. The Tokagawa Shogunate, Japan's military government, used *fumi-e* to reveal practicing Catholics and sympathizers. *Fumi-e* were pictures of the Virgin Mary or Christ. People reluctant to step on the pictures were identified as Christians and taken to Nagasaki. If they refused to renounce their religion, they were tortured; those who still refused were executed. *Silence* is set during the period when the heavy persecution of Christians is well underway. It is a disturbing film centered on the activities of three Jesuit missionaries. 160 minutes.

Admission is free.

