

# Closing Exhortation

**H. L. Richard:**

Thank you all. We have a few minutes left, so unprompted and unprepared we will give an opportunity for a last word from our three speakers. We still have a significant group of people faithfully with us to the end of this event, and we have so much enjoyed all you have presented to us. So what last word would you leave with us? What do we take away from this event, from these nine and a half hours as we've listened, as we've reflected, as we had a little bit of time to talk to each other and to interact in online discussions. Do you have an exhortation, a word of wisdom, something you want to leave us with as we go on our separate ways. Dr. Mackenzie, you look ready to speak, so I'll call on you first.

**Rory Mackenzie:**

I think in my own practice I keep coming back to the words I read at the end of my story, words from a missionary from Latin America. If Christ's love is in our hearts, then the people we are called to will be in our hearts, and if they are in our hearts, then we will be in their hearts. I feel that is so challenging; it raises issues of how I can re-enchant my walk with the Lord so that his love is there; how I can have a sense of expectancy that somehow God is at work in the networks I'm involved in even though it doesn't seem like much is happening. So I'm very grateful for that quote from him and I find it an ongoing challenge.

**Terry Muck:**

The overall impact for me has been a reaffirmation that dialogue opens up big areas of discussion; it does not close things down. If you have a willingness to say what you really believe, that does not discourage other people, it doesn't narrow the conversation, in fact it broadens it. I see too much dialogue based on this idea that you cannot have firm beliefs going into a dialogue. Well, that's silly. It becomes a dialogue and it becomes open and it becomes free simply because you really say who you are and how God is working in your life, and then worlds open up. Our interaction has reaffirmed that to me in a very positive way.

**H. L. Richard:**

Thank you very much. Dr. Thelle, again, we have all appreciated your input these days. We'll give you the last word.

**Notto Thelle:**

Thank you. I really appreciate this and not only what we have said but also the relationships. I think two words remain as my concluding thoughts. They are friendship and generosity. Let me share a story which has meant a lot to me. It has been disturbing to me to see that in Buddhism there seems often to be more generosity than in the Christian tradition, which should be there. One of my great experiences in Japan was to participate in a pilgrimage to one of the sacred mountains of Japan with so-called mountaineer priests. To the sacred mountain, you start the three-day pilgrimage from the secular world down below, and you go through many initiation rituals on the way up the mountain. It ends up at the top of the mountain, but before you can go to the top, which is supposed to be the place of the Buddhas and the gods, there is a ritual where every participant is held by their legs hanging over a cliff. The leader asks, "Are you willing to sacrifice your life in order to follow the Buddha and follow the way to nirvana and salvation?" So I asked myself, can I do this? The leader knew I was a Christian and theologian and so on, and I trusted him. So there I was, hanging off a cliff, over a 200-meter drop.

**Hanging by my legs, over a cliff,  
the Buddhist master asked me,  
a Christian, "Are you willing to sacrifice  
your life for Christ?" That was  
generous—the way Jesus was. (Thelle)**

But he did not ask me the same questions. He asked me, "are you willing to sacrifice your life for serving humanity and for peace? Are you willing to sacrifice your life for Christ?" That was a tremendous experience, a Buddhist master asking me as a Christian, not whether I would follow Buddha, but whether I would follow Jesus. To me, that was a tremendous initiation. And then I could go to the top with them. To me, that was generous, a way of generosity. I thought, well, that is the way Jesus was. The church is not always generous. I could not imagine a Christian pastor asking a Buddhist, "Are you willing to sacrifice your life to follow Buddha?" Some might do it. I think of the way Jesus crossed all boundaries and met people exactly where they were. So that type of generosity and friendship I think should be a great ideal for all of us. **IJFM**