

**Personal Integration of Prayer  
2013 Personalities - New Pope and a 16 Year-old Muslim Girl  
Different Faith Perspectives, Same Life Priority**

Malala Yousafzai, lived in the Swat Valley, a region in the north-west of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan, and heavily controlled by Islamic militant Taliban. Her mother had no formal education and her father was a school principal. Both parents were devout Muslims.

While Malala was yet but a young teenager she was passionate and vocal about the rights of girls to have access to education. In this cause, she spoke at rallies and blogged on the internet. The Taliban were strongly opposed to education for girls, branding it as Western and un-Islamic.

On 9 October 2012, Malala almost paid the ultimate price as she sat in the bus on the way home from school. The Taliban stopped the bus and a would-be assassin shot Malala point blank in the head. The bullet fractured her skull, narrowly missing her brain and lodging in her shoulder. Miraculously she did not die, hovering for weeks between life and death. She was transported to a hospital in Birmingham, England where, with the help of advanced medical technology and expert professional care, she made a remarkable recovery. She has since forgiven the man who tried to kill her. She has lost none of her passion however and received world coverage of her inspirational address at the United Nations on her 16th birthday, just a year after the tragic shooting.

Throughout her story<sup>1</sup>, Malala frequently reflects her deep faith in God/Allah and her habit of acknowledging God's presence in many of the events of her life. Here are some short samples taken from her book, *I AM MALALA*.

- I woke up on 16 October, a week after the shooting. The first thing I thought of when I came round was: Thank God I am not dead. (p. 231)
- I know that God stopped me from going to the grave. It feels like this life is a second life. People prayed to God to spare me, and I was spared for a reason. (p. 255)
- We human beings don't realise how great God is. He has given us an extraordinary brain and a sensitive loving heart. He has blessed us with two lips to talk and express our feelings, two eyes with which to see a world of colour and beauty, two feet with which to walk on the road of life, two hands to work for us, a nose which smells the beauty of fragrance, and two ears to hear the words of love. As I found with my ear, no one knows how much power they have in their each and every organ until they lose one. (p. 254)
- I love my God, I thank my Allah. I talk to him all day. He is the greatest. By giving me this height to reach people, he has also given me great responsibilities. (p. 265)

In the celebrated interview of Jesuit editor, Fr Antonio Spadaro<sup>2</sup> with Pope Francis in August 2013, Fr Antonio asked the Pope about his preferred way to pray.

Response: I pray the breviary every morning. I like to pray with the Psalms. I celebrate Mass. I pray the Rosary. What I really prefer is adoration in the evening, even when I get distracted and think of other things, or even fall asleep praying. In the evening then, between seven and eight o'clock, I stay in front of the Blessed Sacrament for an hour in adoration. But I pray mentally even when I am waiting at the dentist or at other times of the day. Prayer for me is always a prayer full of memory, of recollection, even of my own history. (p. 20)

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1 *I AM MALALA*, Malala Yousafzai, with help from Christina Lamb. Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 2013.

2 *AMERICA*, National Journal of USA Jesuits, 30 September 2013. English translation from La Civiltà Cattolica, Editor Fr. Spadaro SJ