



*Read the transcript:*

"It's been a surreal week. Last Wednesday and Thursday I met the Pope, first for a big service then for a conversation. The service was beautiful, full of a sense of the presence of God. Towards the end the Pope gave a gift, for me and my successors, a beautifully carved wooden Bishop's staff, modelled on one given to St Augustine by Pope Gregory the Great in 597 – over 1,400 years ago.

"In turn I gave him the cross I was wearing; it is called a Coventry Cross, and is the shape of three nails, modelled on the ones made at Coventry Cathedral after it was bombed in 1940. In the past 70 years they have become a global symbol of peacemaking and reconciliation.

"At that deeply emotional moment, triggered by the cross of nails, I remembered Aleppo, and those driven from homes all round the world as refugees. And then yesterday evening I met Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani 19-year-old shot for campaigning for education for girls, and still doing so. An extraordinary evening.

"Who was most important to God in all those meetings in Rome? Or in all the meetings I have had in this wonderful area in the last two days? Everyone and no-one. Everyone because through the life and death of Jesus Christ – God Himself – we know that every human being is loved and given dignity by God. No one because all status and position counts for nothing before God. What counts is love: His for us, ours for Him, and our sharing of His love and mercy in the world. And both the Pope and I know that!

"It's a huge security and foundation for life. If we are loved not because we are good or lovable, but because God loves, and if we can respond to that love, we have security in good times and bad. And we are freed to love others."

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2 min read

