

## MEDIA RELEASE

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*For immediate release:*

### **Pope Francis praises Catholic Mission in Myanmar mass**

Statement from Father Brian Lucas, National Director, Catholic Mission:

At the height of his historic visit to Myanmar, Pope Francis acknowledged the support of Pontifical Mission Societies (as Catholic Mission is known internationally) during his homily at a public mass in Yangon yesterday.

***“Through the daily ministrations of its bishops, priests, religious and catechists, and particularly through the praiseworthy work of Catholic Karuna Myanmar and the generous assistance provided by the Pontifical Mission Societies, the Church in this country is helping great numbers of men, women and children, regardless of religion or ethnic background.”***

As an organisation dedicated to supporting local Churches to continue the mission of Jesus in their communities, we are pleased that Pope Francis has acknowledged the contribution of Catholic Mission and its international counterparts towards healing Myanmar through our various programs there.

Catholic Mission, as the Australian arm of the Pontifical Mission Societies, has for many years been active in supporting the local Churches in the region of Southeast Asia, and in recent years, Myanmar has become a focus for our organisation.

Especially in remote parts of the country, we support projects which foster child-centred education for children, build crucial community and Church infrastructure, and equip future Church leaders, including seminarians, novices and catechists with high quality formation and training.

It is fitting that a powerful homily preaching healing, mercy and reconciliation, included a nod to the work of Pope Francis’ own mission organisation. These were expected to be the central tenets of the first apostolic visit to Myanmar, especially given the current climate in the country.

Pope Francis spoke of the Church’s work in Myanmar “doing much to bring the healing balm of God’s mercy to others, especially those most in need”. During what is a very troubling period in Myanmar, with conflict and humanitarian crises occurring around the country, Pope Francis’ presence, underlined by his meeting with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, will do much to bridge the distance between disparate groups in the diverse nation.

In his homily, Pope Francis also stated that “from the Cross comes healing”. Where anger and revenge might be instinctive reactions to injury and injustice, forgiveness and mercy are infinitely more powerful responses. This is what the Gospel teaches us; and through the



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projects we support, we can see the direct benefit of this teaching for the people of Myanmar.

At Catholic Mission, we are proud to be a part of this reconciliation and healing effort. As Cardinal Charles Bo, the Archbishop of Yangon, and others have testified, education is considered to be among the most important means of achieving peace in Myanmar.

Meeting with Catholic Mission staff last month who were preparing for our program delivery in 2018, Cardinal Bo said, 'The top priority for the Church is education, and I am happy that the education system is changing. With no education, there is no future for the country.'

'I am very grateful for the support of Catholic Mission. Please continue to support us, especially in the provision of education, so that we can stand on our own feet as a nation.'

Over the coming 12 months, we will be sharing with our supporters this crucial work in Myanmar, and I very much look forward to bringing this good news to Australians.

ENDS

*Father Brian Lucas is available for comment.*

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