

## MEDIA RELEASE

*For immediate release:*

### **Pope Francis Myanmar visit important for reconciliation**

Catholic Mission has welcomed the announcement made this week that Pope Francis will visit Myanmar in November.

National Director Father Brian Lucas says the visit will help to reinforce the work of the Church in Myanmar and strengthen reconciliation efforts.

'We are very pleased to hear confirmation that Pope Francis will be visiting Myanmar,' Father Lucas said. 'It is especially encouraging for Cardinal Maung Bo who has been a strong advocate for his people and for peace. We hope this visit provides an impetus for reconciliation.'

The Catholic Church has been increasingly active in its contributions to healthcare and education in Myanmar, as the country struggles to deal with the impacts of six decades of civil unrest and the troubling situation of the Rohingya people.

Father Lucas said the Pope's visit will raise the profile of the Church's work in Myanmar. 'The Church has an important role in delivering holistic education and training programs and in ensuring the health and wellbeing of the marginalised in Myanmar,' he said.

'The Church's work in training teachers, opening schools and providing critical health services will benefit from the profile that Pope Francis' presence will bring.

'It is a pivotal time for Francis to visit, as he has consistently called for the Church to go out to those on the margins.'

Rumours of a possible trip emerged three weeks ago, but the historic visit, which will include also Bangladesh, was officially confirmed by the Vatican on Monday. Father Lucas said it will send a powerful message.

'Cardinal Bo has been outspoken on a lot of the serious issues facing Myanmar today. A papal visit says loud and clear that Myanmar's first cardinal is not alone in speaking out on these issues.'

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Father Brian Lucas is available to comment further on the Church's work in Myanmar.

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