

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

First Burmese Cardinal to make historic Australian visit

Myanmar's most senior Catholic, outspoken human rights advocate Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, will next week become the first Burmese Cardinal to visit Australia when he tours Sydney, Melbourne and Perth from June 9.

Visiting as a guest of Catholic Mission, whose major Church Appeal in 2018 is raising funds for innovative education programs backed by the Cardinal in the Southeast Asian nation, Cardinal Bo will speak at several events on issues of faith, peace, education and his country's recent shift towards democracy.

A fearless campaigner for peace and reconciliation in his homeland, Cardinal Bo has most notably decried human rights abuses in Rakhine State and elsewhere, while defending State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi against stinging international criticism.

He will celebrate a public mass at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney at 10:30am on June 10, in addition to speaking engagements and special masses for the Burmese communities in Sydney and Melbourne. In Perth, he will visit the Redemptoris Mater Missionary Seminary before spending some quality time with family and friends.

'Cardinal Bo is a remarkable leader who has toiled relentlessly for peace and reconciliation in Myanmar,' said Catholic Mission National Director Father Brian Lucas. 'Often, he has battled invisible forces and risked a great deal to do so. It is a rare privilege to welcome him to Australian shores.'

'For the past year, much of the mainstream media coverage of Myanmar has focused on issues in the Rakhine State. Cardinal Bo has been one of the strongest advocates for peaceful resolution to all conflict in his country, primarily through interreligious dialogue, and I am certain his unique perspective will be truly enlightening.'

Cardinal Bo has never shied away from speaking his mind on matters of importance to the Church and the people in Myanmar. 'Millions are now in poverty, millions in unsafe migration, forced into modern forms of slavery,' he said in a 2017 message. 'The sad and the pestering suffering of the people in Rakhine State has been one of my great concerns.'

In a keynote address in April this year, the cardinal highlighted the importance of faith leaders in building peace. 'The role of religions in building a nation of peace and development: Peace is possible, peace is the only way.'

The Myanmar Church's efforts in advancing peace and reconciliation will be a key talking point for the nation's first cardinal during his visit, as will nation-building through education, a powerful initiative which Catholic Mission is supporting.

For more information about Cardinal Bo's visit to Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, or to learn more about the work of the Catholic Church in Myanmar, please contact Catholic Mission on 02 9919 7833.

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Cardinal Charles Maung Bo is available for interviews while in Australia. For all media enquiries, or to arrange an interview, please contact Matthew Poynting on 02 9919 7833.