
Myanmar. Card. Charles Bo (Yangon): “Let no more blood be shed.” “We are ready to mediate dialogue”

She is Sr. Ann Nu Thawng, a Sister of St. Francis Xavier missionaries in Myitkyina, capital of Kachin State. The photographs depicting her kneeling before riot police are the iconic image of the most violent and dramatic day in Myanmar. Cardinal Charles Bo, President of the Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, who has been following the protests with concern, posted the photos on Twitter. “Today, the riot has been severe nationwide”, wrote the archbishop. “The police are arresting, beating and even shooting at the people. Full of tears, Sr. Ann Nu Thawng begs and halts the police to stop arresting the protestors.” Yesterday saw the most violent crackdown by security forces on people protesting against the military coup on 1 February. The UN Human Rights Committee estimated no less than 18 people killed and dozens injured.

<https://twitter.com/CardinalMaungBo/status/1366061735602511872> Yesterday, in several parts of the country, in Yangon, Dawei and Mandalay, police and the army fired tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters. “Myanmar is a battlefield”, writes Cardinal Bo, assuring that “Catholics in Myanmar have a clear national plan for cooperation at local levels with authorities at every level. We are ready at all times to encourage and mediate new and timely dialogue among diverse parties.” **While the country was ravaged by violence, Cardinal Bo delivered a passionate homily at Mass in Yangon on the second Sunday of Lent.** “Let no more blood be shed in this land”, he said. “We are all sons and daughters of the same land, same mother, Myanmar. We offer this Mass for peace to this country. I have repeated many times: Hatred never drives away hatred: only love. Darkness never expels darkness; only light can dispel darkness. An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. Let us all believe in the power of love and reconciliation.” From the altar, the Cardinal spoke of the riots in Myanmar. He warned: “hatred wins nothing.” *“Peace is the only way; peace is possible. Pope Francis has called for the resolution of all differences through dialogue. Those who call for confrontation do not wish good for this nation.”* Commenting on yesterday’s passages from the Gospel that narrated “Jesus’ Transfiguration” before the Apostles, the cardinal called for the emergence of a “new Myanmar” through five transformation processes. “I wish to urge each one of you to pray for five transfigurations of this nation and in each one of us. From hatred and violence, let this nation transfigure into a paradise of peace and tranquility. From mutual distrust, let this nation transfigure into a nation of love and solidarity. From being a poor nation despite great resources, let it be transfigured into a nation of prosperity sharing the wealth with all. From conflicts over power, prestige and status, let this nation be transfigured into a nation of democracy, fraternity and equality. From all kinds of exploitation, let this nation transfigure into a nation of environmental justice and ecological justice.” <https://twitter.com/CardinalMaungBo/status/1365912347055824896> **Meanwhile, Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's civilian leader who was ousted by the military in the coup, appeared via video conferencing before the judge** who is to try her on charges of “illegally importing walkie-talkie radios” and “organising a protest during the pandemic”, as made known by her attorney. San Suu Kyi, 75, had not appeared in public since the coup on February 1. “She is fine”, her lawyer said. In a message released on February 3, the Cardinal called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners, and last week, in a statement, all Myanmar’s Catholic bishops pleaded for an end to the violence and the resumption of the democratic process. “With heartfelt prayers we call on all to return to dialogue and invest their energies in reconciliation. Healing must begin with the release of the detained leaders.”

M. Chiara Biagioni