

Pastor Says Recession Can Bring Revival

Argentine revival leader Claudio Freidzon says a three-year recession in his nation brought spiritual renewal ❌

An Argentine revival leader whose church doubled in size after a financial collapse in his nation believes the American church could see revival in the midst of the current economic recession.

Claudio Freidzon, pastor of Rey de Reyes church in Buenos Aires, says a three-year recession in Argentina brought an unparalleled time of spiritual renewal as believers learned to trust God, not money.

He believes that despite the financial turmoil in the U.S.—or perhaps because of it—the American church has an opportunity to see a similar renewal. “We’ve seen here that after every crisis we have a great breakthrough in the spiritual realm,” Freidzon told *Charisma*.

During the Argentine recession from 1999 to 2002, the peso plummeted in value, resulting in runs on banks as anxious citizens tried to withdraw their money before the decline grew worse. When the government imposed stringent rules to save the banks in 2001, violent protests broke out in the streets.

Freidzon, who was a leader in a 1990s revival that saw thousands come to Christ at evangelistic events held across Argentina, said his church saw declines in church giving because of the crisis, but ramped up its outreach efforts nonetheless. Rey de Reyes offered medical and dental clinics throughout Buenos Aires, and assisted with job searches and construction projects, among other efforts.

Before the economic collapse, Freidzon's church drew roughly 12,000 people each week. But today, he said, Rey de Reyes has more than 25,000 members and hosts seven worship services every Saturday and Sunday—"all of them packed."

Now, seven years since the economy began to stabilize, Freidzon's church is seeking to transfer its influence into politics. The church hopes to open a Christian university that will train youth for both secular and ministry work.

"I realize the importance of having born-again people in high levels," Freidzon said. "I believe we are going to prepare the next Christian president of Argentina."

He said the government used to block the church's evangelism efforts, but as it began doing more to help the poor, relations improved.

He said lawmakers have pledged to help as plans for the university unfold, and the government has begun classifying their ministry work as being "of interest to the province," a stamp of approval that gives the church broad access.

"That means that they open the province," he said. "They say: 'You are welcome. Do whatever you want. Preach wherever you want. Go to the schools, go to the jails, go to the streets.' That is new for us."

Argentina's economy continues to struggle, with the global recession taking its toll and a severe drought worsening unemployment. But Freidzon is optimistic about his nation's future. He said more and more government officials are contacting the church for prayer, adding that he has met Vice President Julio Cobos and is hopeful he will one day pray with President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner.

Freidzon said the 1990s revival that was marked by large-scale prayer meetings never completely ended. "In our church, 18 years since the Holy Spirit visited us, the people are still

looking for more," Freidzon said. "They are excited. ... Here, they are still hungry for more of God."

—Richard Daigle in Buenos Aires, Argentina