

You Won't Believe What This Pentecostal Megachurch Pastor Is About to Do

A Venezuelan evangelical pastor who is running for president said on Wednesday that religious leaders have earned the right to enter politics in Latin America due to the failure of politicians in the region, where Protestant candidates are on the rise.

Javier Bertucci said in an interview on Wednesday that his promise to restore "values" lost during the OPEC country's economic crisis would be enough to defeat President Nicolas Maduro in the April 22 vote, which the opposition coalition is boycotting on accusations that the election is rigged.

"If anyone deserves it, it's us, because we've been there for many years, we've been there with the poor, with the needy," said Bertucci, founder of the Maranatha Church in the central state of Carabobo. Maranatha Church is a Pentecostal megachurch in Valencia, Venezuela.

"The politicians (arrive) at election time, they ask for votes, they give out a few things and they disappear, That's a perception throughout Latin America."

His candidacy follows the success of evangelical singer Fabricio Alvarado in Costa Rica, who is favored to win the presidency of the Central American country in an April runoff.

Evangelical Christianity, with its charismatic preachers and lively ceremonies, has grown rapidly in Latin America, which has been predominantly Catholic for centuries.

His followers see him as a divine emissary sent to bring a change in the country, which has been under socialist rule

since the late president Hugo Chavez was elected in 1998.

“I do not intend to make myself look like a messiah because I already believe in one: Jesus Christ,” he said.

His candidacy is still seen as having little chance of success. He has no known political experience and little name recognition in Venezuela.

Still, he insists he will capitalize on the social work of his church, which he said has served millions of bowls of soup to the poor during Venezuela’s crippling economic crisis that has made food and medicine unaffordable and scarce.

Married for 25 years and with three children plus a recently-adopted child, Bertucci, like many Latin American Evangelicals, ardently opposes abortion and insists adoption should not be available for same-sex couples.

“I respect and love any person who has a different sexual orientation, but in a legal sense, I would have to tell them categorically that I would never support this (adoption),” he said. {eo}

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