

Socialist Party Changes 'Lord's Prayer' to Exalt False God

A member of Venezuela's Socialist Party has rolled out a variation of the classic Christian "Lord's Prayer" to implore beloved late leader Hugo Chavez for protection from the evils of capitalism.

"Our Chavez who art in heaven, the earth, the sea and we delegates," red-shirted delegate Maria Estrella Uribe recited on Monday at the PSUV party Congress.

"Hallowed be your name, may your legacy come to us so we can spread it to people here and elsewhere. Give us your light to guide us every day," she said in front of an image of Chavez.

"Lead us not into the temptation of capitalism, deliver us from the evil of the oligarchy, like the crime of contraband, because ours is the homeland, the peace and life forever and ever. Amen. Viva Chavez!" she exclaimed to applause.

Though Chavez died of cancer in March 2013, he remains omnipresent in Venezuela. His photo is plastered all over capital Caracas, state TV frequently airs excerpts of his famously lengthy speeches and supporters sometimes don earrings or pendants with an artistic black-and-white rendition of his eyes.

Chavez won over many poor in oil-rich Venezuela with his massive social programs and frequent attacks of what he deemed a "squalid" business elite. Many feel a spiritual connection with the gregarious former soldier, who also hails from a humble background.

Opponents blast what they see as a detrimental personality

cult. They also accuse current President Nicolas Maduro of piggy-backing off his predecessor's popularity to distract supporters from shortages of basic goods, an annual inflation of around 60 percent, and sky-high crime rates.

Reporting by Alexandra Ulmer; editing by Lisa Shumaker

© 2014 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.