

News and Current Events :: Protestants march in Catholic Brazil

Protestants march in Catholic Brazil - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/6/27 18:36

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SAO PAULO, Brazil (AP) -- Hundreds of thousands of evangelical Protestants marched Saturday in South America's largest city, illustrating their growing power in the world's largest Roman Catholic country.

Evangelical leaders who organized Brazil's 12th annual "March for Jesus" said it attracted 2 million people, but initial estimates by authorities put the crowd count at about 700,000.

Singing, smiling and dancing amid floats featuring gospel stars and preachers, the marchers walked kilometers to a park for an open air concert with 29 bands, shutting down traffic in a wide swath of northern Sao Paulo. Some wore orange-and-blue face paint, giving the event an atmosphere similar to Brazil's world famous Carnival.

"This is to declare our love of Jesus, and how he's changed our lives," said Vera Elias, a 49-year-old business event organizer who converted from Catholicism 22 years ago after feeling something was missing from her faith.

Brazil, with 178 million people, is the world's largest Catholic country. But the percentage of Brazilian Catholics fell from 84 percent of the population in 1991 to 74 percent in 2000, according to the government's census bureau. Evangelical Protestants increased their ranks from 9 percent to 15 percent during the same period.