News



Portuguese Fr. Guilherme Peixoto, a DJ, performs during a concert in Beirut, Lebanon, Jan. 11 after a Lebanese court rejected a request by a group of Christian religious figures who filed a petition seeking a ban to the concert saying it violates the church's teachings. (AP/Hussein Malla)

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Beirut — January 18, 2026
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Ravers danced and swayed to the loud bass at a popular night club in the heart of the city of Beirut. It was another sold-out Saturday in the party capital of the Middle East.

What was different was the DJ at the helm. Before putting on his headphones, he had been leading a Mass at a Lebanese Catholic university.

Guilherme Peixoto, better known as Padre Guilherme, is a priest from a village in northern Portugal who preaches by day and parties at night.

To the 52-year-old, DJing is a way to express his faith, send a message of peace and coexistence, and connect with the youth.

"The Psalm asks us to praise the lord with all instruments, so now you have this new instrument that came that is electronic music," he said before celebrating Mass at the St. Joseph University of Kaslik.

Padre Guilherme has been a global sensation for months, performing around the world to large audiences and amassing a following of 2.7 million on Instagram.

The priest broke onto the global stage after his performances at World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2023 before Pope Francis' open-air Mass, and another featuring Pope Leo in 2025. What started as a way to fundraise for local churches has become a vital new way to evangelize.



People at a crowded concert watch Fr. Guilherme Peixoto DJ a show in Beirut, Lebanon, Jan. 11. Reactions to his visit to Beirut were split on social media. (AP/Hussein Malla)

Lebanon was in many ways a natural stop on his tour.

Christians make up about a third of Lebanon's 5 million people, giving the small nation on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean the largest percentage of Christians in the Middle East. Maronite Catholics are the largest Christian group.

Pope Leo XIV visited Lebanon as part of his first official trip abroad in November.

The priest's first show in the tiny Mediterranean country was not without controversy, however. Eighteen people, including Christian religious officials, sent a petition to the country's judiciary calling for his show to be canceled, calling it an insult to the faith. The petition was rejected by a judge, and the club where he performed said the venue will have security presence and no religious symbols would be displayed, to avoid offending anyone.

"For those that are objecting, if I, for them, I'm kind of scandal for them, I (am) sorry of course. And I only can ask (them) to pray for me," Peixoto said.

Before his performance, Padre Guilherme donned the traditional white robe of a priest and delivered a sermon alongside a Lebanese priest at the university in a jam-packed auditorium filled with youth and older people.



Fr. Guilherme Peixoto, left, leads a Mass ahead of his concert at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Lebanon Jan. 10. A Lebanese court rejected a petition to ban his concert. (AP/Hussein Malla)

The reactions to Peixoto's visit were split on social media.

"We who were raised to respect the word of God and the sanctity of the message in all its forms cannot accept turning faith into an entertainment show presented on a table of alcohol," said one Lebanese X user. "I do not believe that God intended for His message to be … reduced to a musical show with scenes of alcohol and smoke."

Others praised the priest for finding modern ways to get the youth closer to religion

"The people attacking him just don't understand how powerful and needed his work is," said another X user.

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By night time, Padre Guilherme walked onto the stage at AHM nightclub to the cheers and applause of hundreds of people. As he played his music and swayed to the beats, images of the late Pope Francis, Pope John Paul II, and white doves were projected onto huge screens behind him.

The DJ also played a song for Lebanon and waved a Lebanese flag to the cheering crowd. Unlike his usual DJing garb, the priest did not wear a cassock, as part of the agreement with organizers after complaints about his performance.

Lebanon for years has faced crisis and conflict, both among its quarreling political groups and sects, and externally in the region. Many fear a new escalation between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group. Pope Leo, during his visit in November, called for peace and dialogue in the country and the Mideast, a message largely welcomed by the country's youth.

In his recent show, Padre Guilherme sent a similar message but in his own way

"The message is always: Look to the dance floor, you see respect, you see something always beautiful … if this is possible for people with different race (and) clothes dancing together, why we cannot live like that in the world?" Peixoto said.