

Saturday, April 10, 2010

Text: Luke 24: 36-49

Empowered Heirs

Key Verse: "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven." Luke 24:49 NLT

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Like first century Christians in Palestine, contemporary Colombian followers of Christ are heirs to a hierarchical society. The primitive church suffered under the Roman Empire and today's Latin American believers hold the legacy of the Spanish conquest and colonization, accompanied by an equally hierarchical Catholic church. This same expression of power is present today in political leaders, and even in many Christian pastors, *caciques* lording over their local congregations.

Because of the cultural pressure of this hierarchical inheritance, many first century believers didn't highly value the testimony of women. They looked to their apostles as *caciques* to order around their followers, and hoped for a Messiah that would politically and spiritually redeem Israel, a warring lord to overthrow the Roman Empire and the established religious leadership—clear signs of a hierarchical mentality.

But God gave us a different model for power, evidenced in Christ's appearance to his followers after his death and resurrection. God saw fit that women should receive his divine revelation and therefore be faithful and legitimate witnesses of the Good News. Christ appeared to a large group of believers, in order to give them the responsibility of living the message of repentance and forgiveness from sins in word and in action. Not just the apostles, but rather all his disciples, women and men were blessed and empowered with the Holy Spirit's authority.

This inclusive model is an expression of what I call participatory consensual power. In the churches where I work, instead of *cacique* pastors we have pastoral teams. They are made up of women and men of God who fully participate in leadership: voicing their concerns, taking into consideration the needs of others, and together discerning God's will. In my local church we have both a female and male pastor, who along with church elders testify repentance and forgiveness in their sermons and

pastoral care. How beautiful that we are heirs of another legacy, a divine inheritance of equality in the family of Christ.

In a country plagued by political violence and social polarization, we can choose to activate our divine forgiveness and participatory consensual power. This enables us to bear witness and seek redemption for all, including citizens, State, armed groups, victims and victimizers. And you, reader, are also heir to this “power from on high” for the blessing of the whole world.