It has never been more clear that the political, civil, and economic world we built in the 20th century is over and far from “resurrection”. It’s Saturday, and the new world has not yet been fully realized. Actually, it is not here at all. There are plenty of Holy Saturdays in History, and many of them have marked profound change. European humanism flourished under Christianity, which is rooted in the Holy Saturday, the time between death and resurrection. As a matter of fact, Salvation History repeats itself throughout the history of humanity. One should consider Holy Saturday something more than just an interval or a period of emptiness, absence, hibernation, and expectation.

Indeed, it is the beginning of a new era, and as such it is a period of activity, vigil, and presence. While the fearful and disillusioned apostles hide themselves, unable to react to the great crisis, some other people, particularly a group of women, don’t flee. In fact, as Carlo Maria Martini wrote in 2000, on Saturday we can rely on the presence of Mary, the mother of Jesus. While the men run away, the women stay and don’t leave; they’re active on Saturday as they work and watch. Given their culture, the way those women acted revealed three messages. First of all, they highlighted the importance of life and our bodies, even when wounded, or dead; in fact, in spite of the stone that blocked it’s opening, they still went to the tomb to anoint the body. The second message is regarding the precious role of the poor: Women had no say and, as fragile and vulnerable beings, were considered to be among the dregs of society. However, these women didn’t flee from the great trial as they persevered and continued to work full of hope.

Mary and the women represented the charisms in those circumstances (this is the third message). Such spiritual approach was naturally familiar to them, resulting in the prayer ‘Hail Mary full of grace (charis), or full of ‘charis-ma’ (of graciousness). In fact, the notorious theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar often took the “Charismatic principle” to be synonymous with the “Marian principle”. We know that charism is a gift that allows people to look further ahead, to see things that others - in this case the apostles - don’t see. And those who see differently act differently. If we learn how to live well on “Saturday” time, our society and the economy may rise again from the dark.

Today, like the apostles, people also run away from the crisis (living in fiscal paradises, immaterial virtual communities, or in cynical and apathetic social circles). We are in need of people who are “active on Saturday”, such as the many women who are forgotten by our society. We cry out for charisms. During history’s “Saturday” periods, institutions have decayed and fallen apart. However, humanity has been saved thanks to the charisms and to those, particularly women, who managed to stand still under the cross or next to the tombs of their times; they hoped and worked for a new world. There was more than merely an empty gap between the fall of the Roman Empire and the rebirth of the Italian and European civil society. Monastic charisms discretely watched over Europe during this transition, replacing the old institutions and creating new ones, reinventing Europe.

Furthermore, between the decline of the ancien régime and the rise of modern social states, thousands of charismatic institutions flourished. Inspired by grace’s (charis/charitas) creativity, these institutions implemented new ways of healing traditional and modern kinds of misery and social exclusion, while also educating women and men throughout the generations. The same occurred between the Industrial Revolution and the advent of the Social State, and in the gap between fascism and democracy. In India, Gandhi, Mother Theresa, and Nancy Pereira’s systems of microcredit are further examples of this progress. The charisms are the first to be aware of a difficult situation and, just as Mary did in the wedding at Cana, they cry out: “They have no more wine!” The charisms played a major role in
history’s “Holy Saturdays”; they are the light which guides humanity through the dark passage between Friday and Sunday. We now live in a “Saturday” period, which suffers from the lack of charismatic eyes. Charisms don’t exist or, if they do, are rejected from the public, economic, and political spheres.

In addition, it’s disappointing to see that experts, professors, and intellectuals are called on to help us out of the shameful political-economic swamp we are in. For a long while their moral resources have shown to be insufficient to move the stone blocking the tomb... We don’t need technical knowledge to remove the stone, but rather mystics, charisms, and prophets. They see things from the resurrection’s perspective, i.e. they notice when the wine is missing and are able to quickly solve the problem. Moreover, these people, men and mainly women, aren’t trained to be what they are. Nevertheless, although small in quantity, the charisms are still alive and fruitful. Their voice is the voice of the poor to the poor and they should make it heard. These charisms are gifts to benefit the common good. Thus, the lay, civil, and political institutions they create should develop political plans.

When there aren’t charisms or their voices go unheard, an institution can neither see nor promote the common good, particularly in times of “Saturday”. Our crisis is above all a spiritual one. The fall of ideologies has stopped the motor of the symbolic factory that produced our civil and economic systems. When a true paradise decays, artificial and limited paradises take over, soon creating a true hell.

Let us look at this “Saturday” through the eyes of the charisms.

Translated by Cristian Sebok