

**An abbreviated version of Hugh Owen's masterful  
[15 page] paper entitled "Crossroads".  
See: <http://www.contemplativerudder.com/1Crossroads.pdf>**

***Oriente Lumen: "Light from the East"***

Pope John Paul II [focused] on the richness of Eastern Christian Spirituality with its emphasis on "divinization," the process whereby a Christian is transformed into a sharer in the divinity of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Father pointed out that this emphasis on divinization reflects a conviction that every Christian is called to the heights of intimate mystical union with God. In the words of St. John Chrysostom, "Everyone is called to be a monk, because a monk is supposed to be a perfect Christian."

In the Eastern tradition, Christians answer this call to holiness by contemplating Christ more in his divinity than in his humanity. In the words of Melkite Catholic Archbishop Joseph M. Raya:

**Byzantine piety** dwells on the divine aspect of the mystery of Christ. The **Latin piety** tends to emphasize the humanity. The latter has for its object Jesus, the Son of Mary. The former goes directly to the Eternal Son of the Father. On Christmas Day, the East reads the Gospel of Adoration (Matthew 2:1-12). The West dwells more on the newborn Babe.

These are the two aspects of one and the same incomprehensible reality. **The Western attitude engenders a piety marked with tender familiarity. The Eastern attitude inspires awesome adoration.** Together they form a beautifully-balanced attitude of reverential fear and awe before God's majesty, combined with a humble and child-like love.

The Eastern Christian also strives more to **participate in** than to **imitate** the activity of Christ.

**Differences Between Eastern and Western Christian Spirituality**

In the Eastern Tradition, God is viewed as incomprehensible in his Essence, but knowable in his "energies," which could be roughly, translated as "divine activity".

The Essence and energies of God are not "parts" of God but two ways by which we human beings can contemplate God's essence.

The Eastern Fathers' distinction between the essence and energy of God went hand in hand with their focus on **divinization as a participation in the divine activity of Christ.** In the words of Greek Orthodox Bishop Hierotheos:

We cannot participate in God's essence, but **we can know and participate in His energies.** As the great dogmatic Theologian St. John of Damascus teaches, we can see His three unions: union in essence, of the Persons of the Holy Trinity; union in substance, in the Person of Christ between the divine and human natures; and union in energy, between God and man . . . God, with His uncreated energy, which is called providence, continues to direct the whole creation for the fulfillment of His purpose. God directs creation by His providence.

A further, related difference between Eastern Christian spirituality and the predominant form of spirituality in Latin Christianity lies in their different understandings of the human soul. The **Latin tradition** conceives of the human person as body and soul made to the image and likeness of God, with the three soul faculties of memory, understanding, and will. The **Eastern tradition** conceives of the human person as body, soul (*Nous*), **and Spirit**, and conceives of the soul as Heart (or essence of the *Nous*) and *Nous* (energy of the soul - thought-life) – and of **the Spirit as the energy of the Holy Spirit which unites man's soul with God.**

**According to the Eastern Christian view of the soul, the center of attention, the *nous*, or eye of the soul, is located in the heart.** The disciple strives to withdraw the eye of his soul into the heart away from the constant current of reasoning and restless thoughts so that he can offer his whole heart to God in a continuous act of undivided love, under the unceasing inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To arrive at this state of *hesychia*, or resting in the Lord, the disciple must pass through the stages of purification and illumination, to arrive at the state of union with God. The great mystics of the Latin tradition, like St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, also recognized the need to pass through these stages. **However, the rationalistic culture of the Latin Church has tended to identify the mind, or *nous*, with the reasoning powers, and thus to think that when the mind knows and assents to the truth intellectually and the will conforms to what the mind has assented to, that this constitutes sanctification. The Wisdom of the Eastern Fathers and Doctors of the Church exposes the shallowness of this position which is compatible with a very low level of spiritual development.** The knowledge of God prized in the Eastern tradition is not intellectual knowledge or information but experiential knowledge in a heart so purified of distractions and desires that it can rest in God.

In the Latin Tradition, saints usually appear in icons with haloes around their heads. In Eastern iconography, an aureole completely envelops the bodies of the saints.

For the Eastern Christian there is no real Christianity without a transformation in Christ through the Holy Spirit, who inspires every member of Christ to do those **“good works, which He has prepared for us beforehand that we might walk in them”** (*Ephesians 2:10*).

### **Original Holiness of Man and Cosmos**

Eastern Christianity holds fast to the knowledge that there was a qualitative difference between the first created world and the present world .

According to Archbishop Raya:

The Christian embraces the whole world, even though disordered by sin, that it may be transfigured in him by grace. The rays of Divinity penetrate the whole created universe and through creation man comes to unite with God and unite the universe to God.

Within the Eastern Christian tradition, every baptized Believer is called to undergo purification and illumination, leading to *hesychia* and the offering of the heart to God in divine union. **In this state of *hesychia*, the divinized Christian participates in the divine activity and allows the Holy Spirit to animate his thoughts, words, and actions.**

## Light from the Crossroads of East and West

It is remarkable that during the past 100 years, the Holy Spirit has seen fit to affirm and exalt the principles of the Eastern Christian spiritual tradition through the lives and writings of several Western saints, blessed, venerables and servants of God.

Through these mystical writings the Holy Spirit has actually given Latin Christians the gift of an unprecedented understanding of the interior life of Jesus, ... a gift that they in turn can present to their Eastern Christian brothers.

The Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta was a Third Order Dominican mystic and victim soul from Apulia in southern Italy who lived from 1865-1947. Apulia has been a spiritual crossroads since early Christian times. In the first centuries before Christ, Greeks colonized the region. With the introduction of Christianity, the Catholics of Apulia came under the spiritual care of the Patriarch of Constantinople and worshipped according to the Byzantine Rite. In the rugged countryside, dozens of Byzantine monasteries sprang up, dedicated to the Eastern monastic ideal of "divinization."

### The Life of Luisa Piccarreta

At the age of 23, Luisa was espoused in Mystical Marriage to Jesus who told her that He wanted to **restore in her the interior life of Adam before the Fall**, the same kind of interior life that Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary had possessed during their lives on earth. In 1899, Luisa's confessor commanded her to write down all that passed between her and Jesus, including Our Lord's instructions on his interior life. For the next 39 years, Luisa obeyed this command, producing 36 volumes of a spiritual diary as well as several other works on the interior life of Jesus and Mary.

In 1910 she made the acquaintance of St. Hannibal Di Francia who was appointed Luisa's extraordinary confessor by her local bishop. Renowned for his work as a founder of religious congregations and for his spiritual wisdom, St. Hannibal was eventually appointed diocesan censor and editor of Luisa's writings by her local bishop, a charge that he carried out zealously until his death in 1927. Before his death, St. Hannibal published the first nineteen volumes of Luisa's *Spiritual Diary*, as well as several editions of her meditations on the Passion of Christ, all with his *nihil obstat* and the *imprimatur* of Luisa's Ordinary. In regard to the significance of Luisa's writings, St. Hannibal wrote:

It seems Our Lord wishes to form a most fit instrument for a mission so sublime that it cannot be compared to any other, that is, for the triumph of the Divine Will on earth as it is stated in the "Our Father": *Fiat Voluntas Tua, sicut in coelo et in terra.*

The prophetic writings of the Servant of God Luisa can be divided into three parts. The **first part** describes her passage through the purgative and illuminative stages of the mystical life to union with Christ in the Mystical Marriage. The **second part** focuses on the humanity of Christ and Luisa's union with Him in her ordinary life, and the **third part** focuses on the Divine activity in Christ, how Jesus' human will operated in the Divine Will.

The following pages show how Luisa followed the pattern of the Eastern Christian Fathers to achieve *hesychia* and how in that state she beheld the Uncreated Light and received profound insights into the interior life of Jesus which enabled her to achieve a remarkable degree of

participation in the divine energies, or divine activity, of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Path to *Hesychia***

In the spiritual instruction that Luisa recorded in her *Spiritual Diary*, Jesus taught her to do everything in Him and with Him for the Father and **identified peace as the infallible sign that she had maintained this “divine attitude.”** In the pages of her *Spiritual Diary*, Jesus named ten virtues necessary to maintaining this “divine attitude”: obedience, abandonment, humility, purity of intention, trust, mortification, detachment, interior recollection (or continuous prayer), correspondence to grace, and perseverance. By practicing these virtues under the constant inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luisa succeeded in bringing her *nous*, that is, “the eye of her soul,” into her heart where Jesus dwelt. In this state of interior recollection, when Jesus appeared to her He always came out of her heart.

Like the great saints of the Eastern Church, in this state of *hesychia*, Luisa beheld the Light of God. . . . Jesus told her:

*Our Divine Essence is the purest light . . . Now whoever lives [continuously] in Our Will shall find himself under a rain of light from Our sovereign and creative Word—and O how Our Word transforms him!*

[On another occasion, she wrote that] *The soul, while living in this Divine Volition, is clothed with a light all similar to the One in whom she lives, so much so, that also in Heaven she will shine more than all the others, so as to be an occasion of greater glory for the very saints.*

### **Restoring the Original Order of Creation**

According to the Eastern Christian Fathers and the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “Christ’s purpose was to restore to us what Adam lost so that what we had lost in Adam we might recover in Christ (CCC, 518) . . . Jesus in his Hidden Life restored what Adam’s sin destroyed (CCC, 532).” In his private revelations to Luisa Piccarreta, between 1899 and 1938, Jesus gave what appears to have been the most extensive account of the original holiness of our First Parents in the history of the Catholic Church. In one of many passages in her spiritual diary on this subject, Jesus told Luisa:

*My daughter, in creating man, We infused his soul with our Breath, wanting to place in him **the most intimate part of our being, which is our Will.** Our Will gave him at the same time all of the Divinity that man could contain as creature so as to make him our image. But ungrateful man wanted to break his union with our Will; and, although his soul remained, his human will took the place of the Divine, darkened his soul, infected it and frustrated the work of the Divinity, so much so as to disorder and disfigure it completely. That is why—since I long once more to dispose him to receive my Will—I need to return once more and breathe my Breath in him to scatter the darkness and disease and to make the divine life that we gave him at his creation effective once again.*

*O how I want to see him beautiful, and whole, as I created him! And only my Will can work this great prodigy. **That is why I want to breathe in you so that you will receive this great good—that my Will reign in you and give you all the goods and rights that it gave man at his creation.***

The Fathers of the Church also understood the original holiness of Adam as the reign of the Divine Will in him. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa:

“Now the health of the soul is the accomplishment of the Divine Will ...”

Jesus taught Luisa that ... He lived each moment of his earthly life in time and “in eternity,” present to all creatures, past, present, and future .... He told Luisa that when she abandoned herself to the Will of the Father through the Holy Spirit and shared in the eternally-present sufferings of Jesus, she participated in his interior life.

Jesus told her:

*My life is composed of sanctity, love, wisdom, power. And **the driving force of all this is my Will.***

In his revelations to Luisa, Jesus referred to the original holiness of Adam as “the reign of the Divine Will in the soul” and as “living in the Divine Will.” This holiness had two aspects: **in the first place**, it entailed the divinization of all of Luisa’s thoughts, words, and actions, both voluntary and involuntary, by the Holy Spirit who united her to Christ in every one of her actions, the natural and ordinary, as well as the spiritual. Jesus told her:

*If the creature had to give us only spiritual things, he could give Us very little. But **in giving Us his little natural acts, he can always keep giving them to Us, and We remain in a continuous relationship.** The union between Us and the creature is never broken. Indeed, the smallest things are always at one’s fingertips, within reach of the little and the great, the unlettered and the learned . . . breathing, moving, attending to one’s personal needs are things that everyone does—and they never cease. If they are done out of love for Me—to let the Divine Will form our life in them—they constitute our Triumph, Our Victory, and the end for which We created them.*

**In its second aspect**, living in the Divine Will entailed entering into the heart of the Trinity and participating in the divine activity—or “the divine energies”—by willing with God all that He wills in Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification. **Jesus described the spiritual life of Adam as one of full participation in the divine energies, or divine activity.** As the “new Adam,” in his Incarnation Jesus restored this manner of living. The Word made flesh lived in the perfect unity of the Holy Trinity, abandoning Himself completely to the Will of his Father and participating in all of the divine activity in Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification. He told Luisa:

*If you want to retrace the paths of the Eternal Will, enter the door of my Humanity; there you will find my Divinity, and the Divine Will shall make present to you, as in act, all that I did, do, and will do, as much in Creation, as in Redemption, and Sanctification. And you will know the joy of being able to kiss those acts and **to put your little act of love, adoration, and recognition on each one.** There you will find all my acts—all in the act of giving themselves to you. You will love them and you will receive them as gifts from your Heavenly Father.*

In many passages of Luisa’s *Spiritual Diary*, Jesus elaborated on his “**double life**”—**a life in which the Divine Will of the Father animated all of his tiniest human actions while his human will entered into the heart of the Trinity and participated in the divine activity of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification.** Once Luisa asked Jesus how it was possible that He worked in her hands while she did her humble tasks. He replied:

*It is really I; it is my fingers that work in yours. My daughter, when I was on earth, didn’t I humble Myself, working with wood, hammering nails, helping my foster father, Joseph,*

*in his carpentry labors? And while I was doing that, with those same hands and fingers, I was creating souls, while calling others to another life.*

### **Participation in the Divine Activity**

In regard to Creation, Jesus taught Luisa to enter, as He did, into the divine activity in Creation, to give God the love, adoration, and gratitude that He ought to receive from all creatures—from Adam and Eve to the last soul. Luisa described how she did this.

While fusing myself in the Supreme Volition, that immense void [of the Divine Will, empty of divine acts performed by the human will] becomes present in my mind . . . and [my soul] wants to make up to her God for all the love He has shown to all creatures in Creation. She wants to honor Him as Creator of all things, and that is why she goes among the stars and places her “I love You” and “Glory to my Creator” on each twinkling of the stars. In each atom of the sun’s light that falls upon the earth she places my “I love You,” and “Glory”; in the singing of the birds, in the movement of their wings, “Love” and “Glory to my Creator”; in the blades of grass that sprout from the earth and the flowers that bloom and the perfumes they release, “Love” and “glory”; on the heights of the mountains and in the depths of the valleys, “Love” and “Glory.”

I go around and speak for the heart of every creature—as if I wanted to enclose within each one my “I love You” and “Glory to my Creator.” I desire one single Will, one harmony among all things, and one single cry: “Glory and love to my Creator.” And after having united everything so that all things exchange love and declare the glory that God has done in Creation, I fly to his Throne and say:

“My Supreme Majesty and Creator of all things, this little child throws herself into your arms to tell You that all creation . . . not only returns your love, but also the glory that should be Yours for having made so many things out of love for us. In the immense void of your Will, I have traveled everywhere, so that all things might glorify You, love You, and bless You!”

Jesus told Luisa:

*Upon Conception, I conceived within Myself all souls, past, present, and future, as my own life, I conceived with these, the pains and the deaths that I had to suffer for each. I had to incorporate everything into Myself — the souls, pains, and deaths that each had to suffer—so that I could say to the Father: “My Father, look no longer at the creature, but only at Me. In Me You will find everyone, and I will atone for everyone. I shall give You as many pains as You want. Do you want Me to undergo a death for each soul? I will do it. I accept them all, provided that I might give life to all” . . . In reality, I died for each one and suffered the pains of all. Truly, this required a miracle of my Omnipotence—a prodigy of my immense Will. Without my Will, my Humanity would never have been able to find and embrace all souls—nor to die so many times.*

No prior private revelation has ever explained how Jesus willed humanly *all* that He had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

### **“Greater Than the Fathers Who Have Been Glorified by Signs”**

Jesus explained to Luisa that his ultimate purpose in living his divine-human life on earth was **to bring mankind to share the same divine-human life with Him**. He told Luisa:

*The first link that made it truly possible to live in my Will was my humanity. My Humanity and my Divinity swam in the Eternal Volition. They traced all the acts of creatures and took them for Themselves. They gave the Father on behalf of all creatures the worth, the love, and the kiss of the Eternal Volition. Within the confines of the Eternal Will I saw all the acts that creatures did, and could have done, but did not do. **I did those acts which had not been done and repeated those acts which had been poorly done.** These acts which have been done only by Me are suspended in my Will. I wait for creatures to come and live in my Will so that they can repeat in my Will all that I did.*

Now, He told her, He desired to have an army of souls who in each moment of their lives would do the perfect acts of love that He had prepared for them, with the same intention that He had. These souls would fulfill St. Paul's words in his letter to the Ephesians: **"You are God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus, for good works, which He has prepared beforehand that you might walk in them"** (*Ephesians 2:10*). Through these humble souls, Jesus told Luisa, He wanted to heal and restore the entire Mystical Body of Christ. On January 11, 1922, He told Luisa:

*Now, the souls who live in my Volition will be—for the Body of my Church—like skin to the body. The body has both internal and external skin: in the skin blood circulates and gives life to the whole body, and because of this circulation the body's members reach their proper size. If it were not for the skin and the circulation of the blood, the human body would be horrible to behold, and its members would not grow to their proper size.*

*So you can see how much I need these souls who live in my Volition. **I have chosen them to serve as skin to the body of my Church and to give life to all its members.** They will nurture the members who have not grown, and they will heal the members that are wounded. By their continuous living in my Volition, they will restore freshness, beauty, and splendor to the whole Mystical Body, making all of it like my Head, which will sit in full majesty over all these members.*

Such predictions of **a surpassing but hidden holiness**, healing the Mystical Body of Christ in the latter times, by no means contradict the teaching of the Eastern and Western Fathers. In the fourth century, St. Niphon, Bishop of Constantia, in Cyprus, had foretold a great increase in hidden holiness towards the time of the Second Coming of Jesus:

To the very end of the age there shall not be lacking Prophets of the Lord God, as also servants of Satan. But **in the last times those who truly will serve God will succeed in hiding themselves from men and will not perform in their midst Signs and Wonders as at the present time, but they will travel by a path of activity intermixed with humility, and in the Kingdom of Heaven will be greater than the Fathers who have been glorified by Signs.** For at that time no one will perform before the eyes of men miracles which would inflame men and inspire them to strive with zeal for ascetic labors. . . Many, being possessed by ignorance, will fall into the abyss, going astray in the broad and spacious path.

May we not hope that the writings of Luisa, conceived at the crossroads between East and West, will kindle a new desire for divinization in Christians of the West and enrich the understanding of Jesus' interior life among Christians of the East?

May the writings of Luisa contribute greatly to **“the building up of the Body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, and to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”!** (*Ephesians 4:12-13*)

Amen! **Come, Lord Jesus!**