



The Living Presence: Christ in Eastern Christian Worship Encountering God in the Liturgy and Beyond

Rev. Dr. Mark Koscinski

Moravian University

Introduction: The Centrality of Christ

- The Eastern Christian understanding of worship is fundamentally Christ-centered.
- Christ is not just remembered but believed to be truly present in the liturgical life of the Church.
- This presence is not merely symbolic but a real and dynamic encounter with the living God.



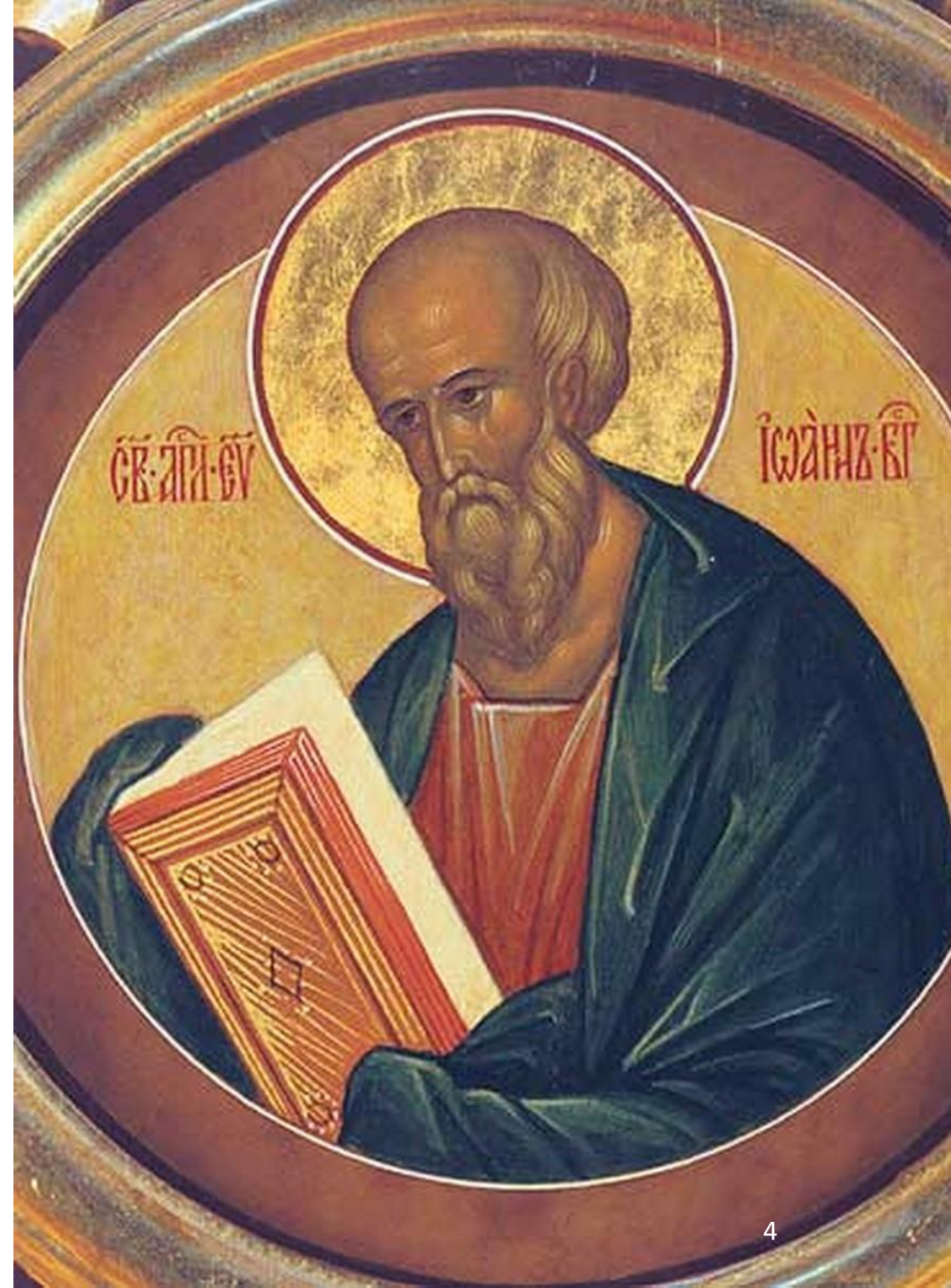
The Holy Eucharist (Divine Liturgy): The Pinnacle of Presence

- The consecration of bread and wine transforms them into the very Body and Blood of Christ.
 - Scriptural basis (Last Supper narratives).
 - The role of the Holy Spirit in the epiclesis (invocation).
- Communion as a direct participation in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.
 - :Union with Christ and with one another (the Body of Christ).



The Word of God (Holy Scripture): Christ Speaks to Us

- The reading of the Old Testament prophecies foreshadowing Christ and the New Testament accounts of His life and teachings.
- The Gospel reading as the direct voice of Christ present in the assembly.
- The homily (sermon) as an interpretation and application of Christ's teachings to the present.



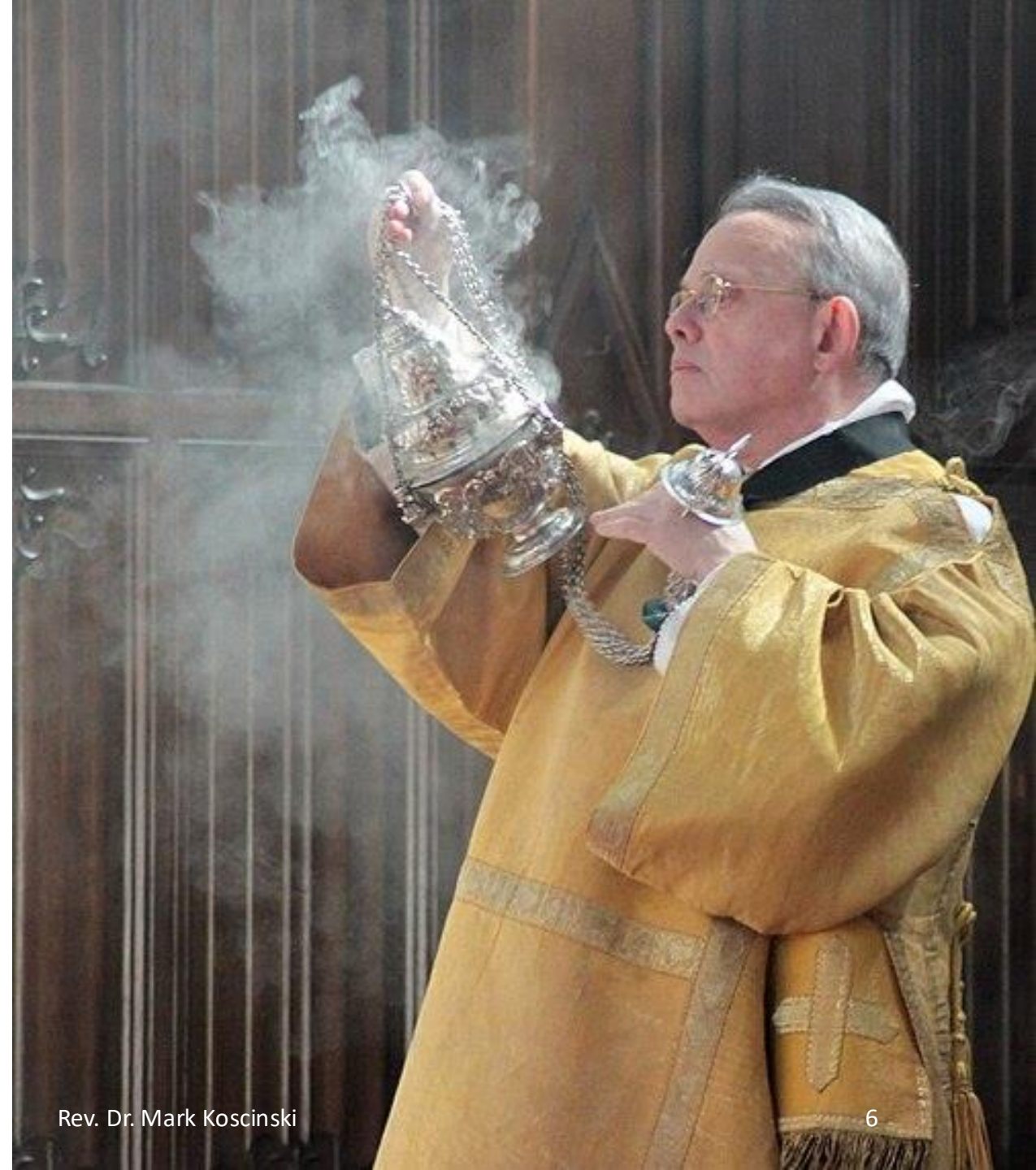
Icons: Windows to the Divine

- Icons are not idols but sacred images that make the person depicted present.
 - Theology of icons and their veneration.
- Icons of Christ serve as a constant reminder of His incarnation, humanity, and divinity.
- Through icons, the faithful can enter into prayerful communion with Christ and the saints.
- <https://www.htgocorlando.org/church-virtual-tour>



The Liturgical Actions and Prayers: Encountering the Risen Lord

- The priest acting *in persona Christi* ("in the person of Christ") during the services.
- The prayers, hymns, and responses that proclaim Christ's saving work and lordship.
- The physical movements (bowing, prostrations, processions) as expressions of reverence and participation in Christ's presence.



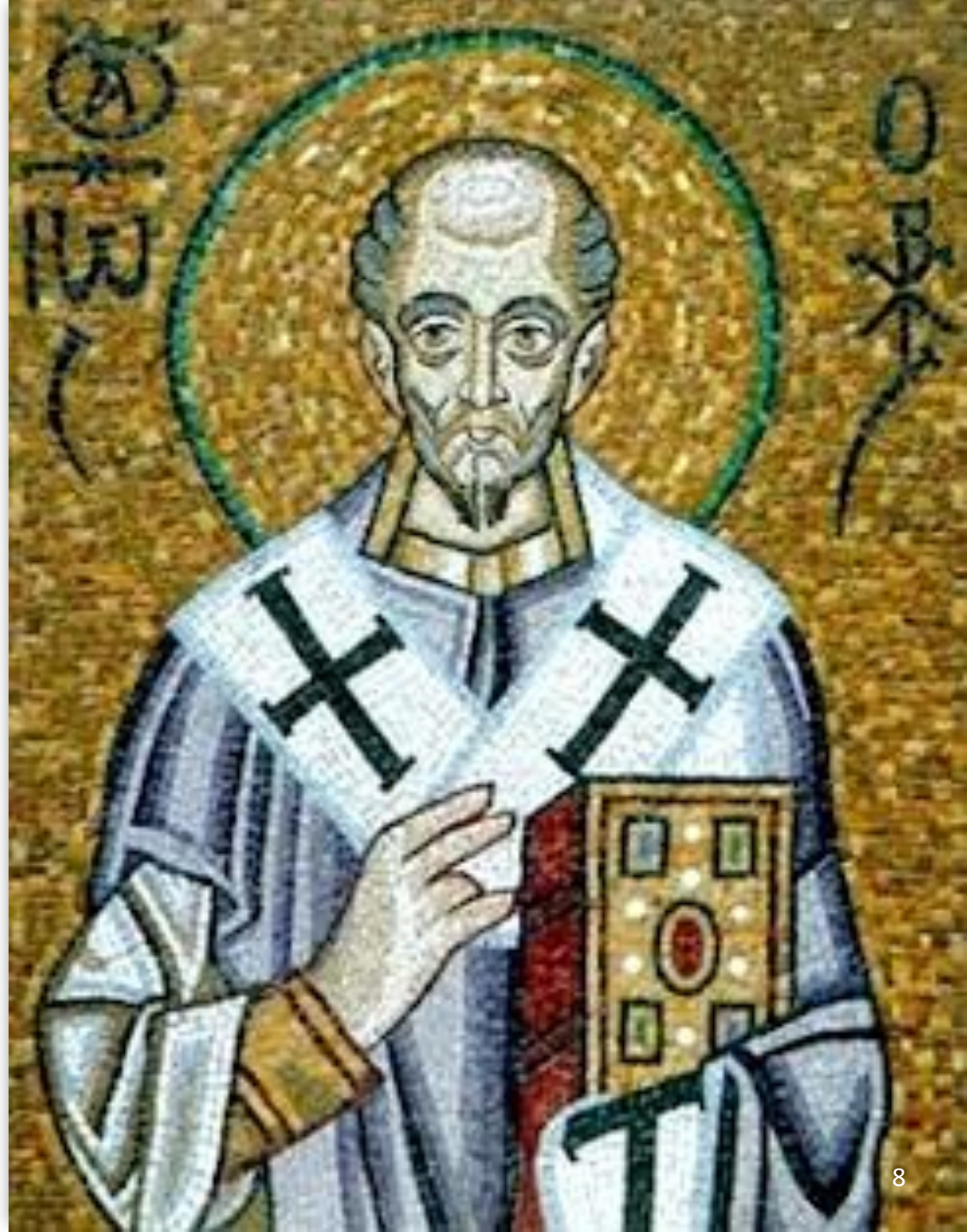
The Community of Believers: Christ Among Us

- Christ's promise to be present wherever two or three are gathered in His name (Matthew 18:20).
- The Church as the Body of Christ, where each member is united to Him and to one another.
- The love and unity within the community as a tangible manifestation of Christ's presence.



Deepening of Faith and Understanding

- Experiencing Christ's presence fosters a stronger personal relationship with Him.
- Regular participation in worship leads to a deeper understanding of Christian theology and the mystery of the Incarnation.
- Receiving Holy Communion provides spiritual sustenance and strengthens the soul.
- Encountering Christ in worship inspires repentance, forgiveness, and spiritual growth.
- The liturgy cultivates virtues and shapes the moral compass of the faithful.



Christ in the Liturgy

- **Sense of Belonging and Unity:**
 - Shared participation in worship strengthens the bonds within the community.
 - The awareness of Christ's presence uniting all fosters a sense of shared identity and purpose.
- **Hope and Assurance:**
 - The encounter with the risen Christ offers hope for eternal life and the Kingdom of God.
 - :The liturgy reminds believers of God's unwavering love and presence in their lives, providing comfort and strength in times of difficulty.
- **Call to Witness and Service:**
 - Experiencing Christ's love in worship motivates believers to share that love with others.
 - : The liturgy calls the faithful to live out their faith in their daily lives through acts of charity, justice, and compassion.



Conclusion

- The Orthodox liturgy is a vibrant and multifaceted encounter with the living Christ.
- This experience has a profound and transformative impact on the lives of the faithful, shaping their faith, their community, and their witness to the world.
- The ongoing presence of Christ in worship is the heart and soul of Orthodox Christian life.

