St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2018

TOPICS, TIPS, RESOURCES AND GUIDELINES

GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

Department of Religious Education
(800) 566-1088 | SJCOF@goarch.org

The purpose of the Elementary Division is to offer children the opportunity to express their feelings about their Faith and Church while gaining confidence and self-esteem. In addition, it provides an incentive to children for later participation in the Junior and Senior Divisions.

Basic differences between the Elementary and the Junior/Senior Divisions:

- The elementary division is strictly a local program.
- There is no judging.
- The topics are modest but invite creativity: Jesus, prayer, icons, etc.
- It is designed to fit easily into the Church school program with flexible topics that coincide with the curriculum.
- To make it even more interesting, consider having some classes sing a song or re-enact a parable or a Bible story. Be creative!

What are the rules?

- Encourage all children to participate. Teachers and parents should assist the children in choosing a topic. Invite the children to present their talks at a community gathering, perhaps after the Divine Liturgy, as part of a parish event, during a special Oratorical program or as part of the Junior and Senior Oratorical Festival.
- Each talk should last 30–90 seconds. However, strict timing should not be observed. For instance, one child may offer only two or three sentences, and another may offer considerably more. Also, if a child feels more comfortable
- Using an icon, picture or poster as part of the talk, this is permissible.

Suggested topics:

Jesus Christ	Helping Others	A Smile	The Bible
Love	The Cross	My Church	My Family
Being Kind	Prayer	Church School	My Favorite Icon
Lighting a Candle			

Information and Instructions for Participating in an Oratorical Festival:

1. You must be of the Greek Orthodox Faith. To participate in the Junior Division you must be in grades 7–9. To participate in the Senior Division you must be in grades 10–12. **Your topic must be selected from the list of topics in the corresponding division.**

2. The speech must be original and delivered in English. Previously used material is not eligible. Quotations must be used effectively as supportive material, and sources must be identified.

3. No audio-visual material (slides, charts, etc.) may be used. The speech must be delivered from the lectern. The contents and/or delivery of the speech should not be dramatically presented.

4. A parent or teacher may serve as a "coach" in preparation and delivery, but the speech must reflect your own writing and speaking style.

5. The top speakers in each Division of the Parish Festival will take part in the District Festival (pages 4–7). Finalists in the District Festival will go on to the Metropolis Festival. The first place junior and senior speakers in the Metropolis Festival will advance to the Archdiocese Festival. If a finalist in the District or Metropolis Festival is unable to attend the next level, then the next ranking speaker will take his/her place. A speaker can present his/her speech at only one Parish Oratorical Festival.

6. Topics must be chosen from the official list compiled by the Department of Religious Education. The speech delivered at the Parish level must be the same one given at the District, Metropolis and Archdiocese levels with only minor revisions (i.e., grammatical corrections, deleting a paragraph if speech is over time limit, correcting syntax).

7. Speech time limits for each division are

JUNIOR- minimum 3 minutes, maximum 4
SENIOR - minimum 4 minutes, maximum 5

A 15-second grace period will be given to speakers whose talks run over or under time.

8. A copy of the speech (typed double-spaced on 8½ × 11 paper) must be given to the person conducting the Orientation Session, on the other hand speakers who advance to the District, Metropolis, or Archdiocese Festivals will be asked to hand in their speeches earlier. Your name, full address, phone number, email, and division (junior or senior) should appear in the upper right-hand corner, along with the name and location of your Church. Place the title of your speech (taken from the official list of Topics) right above the opening statement. Speakers

who advance to the District, Metropolis and Archdiocese Festivals must also present a copy to the Chairperson at these events. (Instructions for Essays and Poetry available at www.goarch.org/oratorical)

9. Speakers should dress in clothing that is appropriate for Sunday church services, ideally a jacket or sweater, tie and dress trousers for boys and an appropriate-length dress or skirt for girls. Shoes should also be appropriate for church, too.

Suggestions for Writing Your Speech:

As you begin to write, keep in mind that you are writing a speech and NOT a research paper. Your goal is to persuade your audience that your response to the question or topic is of high quality.

Introduction

1. You may choose one of the following rhetorical devices to begin your speech: (a) restate the topic, (b) ask a question, or (c) begin with an anecdote.
2. The goal of the introduction is to alert your audience to the point that you would like to make.
3. You might consider introducing the two or three ways by which you will show that your thesis is an appropriate interpretation of the topic.

Body

1. The body of the speech is where you will provide both the evidence of your research and your analysis of that research.
2. Some topics, more than others, lend themselves to an emphasis on personal reflections or experience. You should consider what the topic means to you and why.
3. Some topics, more than others, lend themselves to a comparison between ancient times and the present. You should consider how such a comparison is made most effectively.

Conclusion

1. A strong conclusion will simultaneously lead your audience to believe that they now understand the topic more completely and that you have convinced them that your thesis was an appropriate one.
2. In some situations, it is appropriate to leave your audience with a reflective or personal sentence, either in the form of a question, statement or exclamatory remark.

The Chronology of the Writing Process

1. Decide on a topic.
2. Read the suggested research material for your selected topic and takes notes where appropriate.
3. Consider other avenues for research, including Scripture and Church History, using whatever tools are available to you.
4. Develop a Thesis. What do you think about this topic? The entire speech should be structured around your particular (and unique) answer to the prompt.
5. After you have a thesis, develop an outline that will effectively communicate that thesis--individual paragraphs should reflect the individual points of the outline.
6. Write your first draft. Practice it in front of others, ask for their feedback so that you can revise the draft.
7. Make sure that the time of your delivery fits within the allotted time for your division.

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

1. In John 15:13–15, Jesus teaches about friendship to His disciples. Discuss the importance of friendship in your life.

A. Read the Church's teachings:

John 15:13–15

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Throughout the Old and New Testament, there are many examples of friendships. Find a friendship in the Bible and describe what can we learn from it.
- What is friendship? Why is it an important relationship in our lives? How can friendships help better our lives?
- How do social media friends differ from IRL friends?

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- Sam Williams, "Three Lessons Friends Can Learn from the Old Testament," February 24, 2016, https://blogs.goarch.org/blog/-/blogs/three-lessons-friends-can-learn-from-the-old-testament
- Maria Pappas, "Friendship Goals: All of the Orthodoxy," September 9, 2016, https://blogs.goarch.org/blog/-/blogs/friendship-goals-all-of-the-orthodo-1
- *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 2008) (Orthodox Marketplace item #BIB007)

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

2. Choose a parable from the Gospel of Luke and discuss how it speaks to our contemporary life.

A. Read the Church's teachings:

The 27 parables in the Gospel of Luke are found in chapters 5–20.

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Each parable has a specific message. Talk about a time when you heard a parable and the message spoke to you.
- Just as the parables do, have you ever used a metaphor to help get the point of your story across better? How did it help?
- Choose a parable and look at the historical context. Different parables were said for different audiences. What do you think the message was that Christ was trying to communicate? How can this still apply to us today?

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- Archbishop Dmitri (Royster), *The Parables: Biblical, Patristic and Liturgical Interpretation* (SVS Press, 1996), www.amazon.com/Parables-Patristic-Liturgical-Interpretation-Tradition/dp/0881410675
- Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke* (Michael Glazier; Sacra Pagina edition, 2006), www.amazon.com/Sacra-Pagina-Gospel-Timothy-Johnson/dp/0814659667
- Lawrence Farley, *The Orthodox Bible Study Companion Series: The Gospel of Luke – Good News for the Poor* (Ancient Faith Publishing, 2011), https://holycrossbookstore.com/products/the-orthodox-bible-study-companion-series-luke
- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #85: "#BeTheSower," www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Pe6f8mnA1s
- Sam Williams, "Hearing Our Story in a Parable," May 10, 2017, https://blogs.goarch.org/blog/-/blogs/hearing-our-story-in-a-parable
- *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 2008) (Orthodox Marketplace item # BIB007)

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

3. Talk about a time and circumstance when you were in awe and wonder – where you sensed the majesty of God.

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Psalm 103 (104) "Bless the Lord, O my soul…"

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- The middle of an ocean, an empty field, surrounded by the tallest of trees…have you ever had a moment where you recognized God's Creation and experienced the vastness of it all?
- Miracles are often ways that bring us back to the majesty of God, right when we have begun to take things in life for granted. Share an experience that you had or may have heard about that helped bring you back to God.

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- The Order for the Lesser Sanctification of the Water, www.goarch.org/-/the-order-for-the-lesser-sanctification-of-the-water
- Fr. John Chryssavgis, "Stewardship as Creation Care" pamphlet (Orthodox Marketplace item #SEO310-B)
- Sam Williams, "With the 'Fear' of God: Three Things Awe of God Can Teach Us," February 5, 2016, https://blogs.goarch.org/blog/-/blogs/with-the-fear-of-god-three-things-awe-of-god-can-teach-us
- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Live the Word #5, "Encountering Jesus Christ,": www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxbS5HC_d0k&feature=em-subs_digest

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

4. Discuss how prayer, fasting, serving others, or study of Orthodoxy assists you with your relationship with Christ and the Church.

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Genesis 2:16-17

Matthew 6:16–18

Romans 14:21

James 1:22-27, 2:14–26

Matthew 6:9–13

Matthew 25:31–46

Acts 8:26–40

Official document of the 2016 Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, "The Importance of Fasting and Its Observance Today," www.holycouncil.org/-/fasting

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- When you are developing a new skill, there are many different aspects and disciplines that you need to work toward your goal, such as practicing, studying, and sharing with others. How can these spiritual disciplines of Christianity help us become closer to Christ?
- Why is it important to pray, fast, serve others, and study the faith as an Orthodox Christian rather than *just* being a "good person"?
- In James 2:24, it says we are not saved by faith alone, but also justified by their works. How easily can this be misinterpreted and how should it be interpreted?
- Discuss how Christianity is not only an idea, but must be put into practice. Prayer, fasting, etc., are some ways of practicing the Faith.

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- *PRAXIS* Magazine, Vol. 15, no. 3 (Spring 2016): "Preparing for the Holy and Great Council," www.goarch.org/-/praxis-2016-volume-15-issue-3-preparing-for-the-holy-and-great-council
- Peter Chamberas, *A Hunger for God: The Sacred Discipline of Fasting in the Orthodox Church* (Chamberas, 2011) (Orthodox Marketplace Item #FL537)

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #25, "Fasting from More than Food," www.youtube.com/watch?v=lw5BZZq-RhA
- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #26, "The Discipline of Fasting," www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rt9An2OaDs&t=58s
- *My Orthodox Prayer Book* (Department of Religious Education, 1985) (Orthodox Marketplace Item #FL501)

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

5. In Mark 2:1–12, four men remove a roof in order to bring a paralytic to Jesus to be healed. How inventive are *we* in bringing people to Jesus for healing?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Mark 2:1–12

Sacrament of Holy Unction, which can be found in the service for Holy Wednesday

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Imagine how much faith this group of people had in order to go to the lengths that they did to bring their friend to be healed. What can we learn from this?
- Many of our parishes are not fully equipped to accommodate those with special needs. What can we do in our own parish to help fix this problem?
- Hospitality comes in many forms, especially how we welcome people to our community. Talk about a time when you experienced hospitality.
- The Church is a place of healing for our mind, body, and soul. How can we bring in more people to be healed?

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 2008) (Orthodox Marketplace item #BIB007)
- John Chryssavgis, "The Body of Christ: A Place of Welcome for All People, Including People with Disabilities" (GOA Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism, 2017) (Orthodox Marketplace item #SEO014-B)
- Myroslaw Tataryn, *Discovering Trinity in Disability: A Theology for Embracing Difference* (Orbis Books, 2013)
- Press release about Orthodox Braille books: www.goarch.org/-/archbishop-demetrios-visits-national-braille-press-receives-first-copies-of-books-for-orthodox-ever-published-in-braille
- Orthodox Christian Prison Ministries: https://theocpm.org

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

1. People often say, "It felt right" in order to explain their decisions. How many of our decisions factor in not only our feelings but also the will and commandments of God?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Exodus 20: 1–17 (The Ten Commandments)

Luke 10:25–27

2 Peter 1:20–21

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Technology has helped create a faster-paced life for us today, which has also increased the speed of making decisions. Many times it seems we have to react before truly considering our choice. Do you notice the difference between a well-thought-out decision or a spur-of-the-moment one?
- Does making decisions in the moment lead to more regrets in the future?
- Are the "Commandments" involved in our everyday decision-making? Do you feel that they are relevant to our lives today?
- Popular phrases and slogans like "you only live once," "just do it," and "treat yourself" support the "it felt right" attitude. How can we combat this mindset in today's teenage world?

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- Fr. George Mastrantonis, "The Ten Commandments," www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7115
- George Nicozisin, *Teenage Ten Commandments* (Department of Religious Education, 1989) (Orthodox Marketplace item #810)
- St. John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984)

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

2. Christ's disciples made the commitment to follow Him without knowing what the outcome might be. What does it mean to follow Christ today?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Matthew 4:18–22

Matthew 19:16–24

Mark 1:16–20

Luke 5:1–11

John: 15–19

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Read the Bible passages. Can you imagine if *you* had been in those situations? Would you have dropped your whole life and followed Christ?
- In today's society it has become so easy to be noncommittal in so many aspects of life; activities, relationships, purchases, etc. seem more disposable and short-term. How has this affected your commitment as an Orthodox Christian? Is it harder to make a long-term commitment to things in your parish?
- Do you feel like people are making fewer and fewer commitments to each other? How can this be combatted?
- What does the Orthodox Faith teach about *theosis*, and how is that different from "being saved"?
- Are teenagers today less inclined to commit to something and avoid taking a risk because they are uncertain about the outcome? How has our society changed the lives of teenagers, and does this affect them when it comes to Faith?

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 2008) (Orthodox Marketplace item #BIB007)
- Jean Twenge, "Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?" *The Atlantic*, September 2017, http://tinyurl.com/twenge-atlantic

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

- Jean Twenge, iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy – and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood – and What That Means for the Rest of Us (Atria Books, 2017)
- Tara Bahrampour, "Not drinking or driving, teens increasingly put off traditional markers of adulthood," *Washington Post*, September 19, 2017, http://tinyurl.com/twenge-wapo

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

3. How can we have religious conversations on social media in an age of trolling?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Ephesians 4:26–31

James 3:1–12

Matthew 23

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Is it easier to post or share something about your faith on social media rather than in person? Likewise, is it easier for someone to respond disrespectfully on social media rather than in person – to "hide behind a screen"? Why is that?
- Have you ever been trolled about your faith online? How did you handle it? Did any of your friends step in to defend you, or did most people avoid getting involved?
- In today's world, we are careful to be tolerant of those who are different from ourselves, but can that prevent us for standing up for what we believe in?
- Why does talking about religion feel so taboo on both social media and in person in American society? Why has it become so out of place in our lives outside of our parishes? Do we feel as if we are compartmentalizing our lives rather than living one authentic one?

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- National Institute for Civil Discourse: http://nicd.arizona.edu/revivecivility
- Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (Penguin Press, 2015)
- Maeve Duggan, "Online Harassment 2017," Pew Research Center for Internet and Technology, www.pewinternet.org/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017
- Lily Herman, "What You Need to Know About Hate Speech and Free Speech," *Teen Vogue*, February 23, 2017, www.teenvogue.com/story/what-you-need-to-know-about-hate-speech-and-free-speech

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

4. Christ said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9). The Lord said this with reference to the way we hear the word of God. What is our response?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Mark 4:9–12

Matthew 19:16–24

The Divine Liturgy

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- How many times have you heard something without actually comprehending it? What does it mean to hear something?
- Have you ever felt that it is hard to "hear" and understand the word of God? Either through reading scripture, listening to sermons, or religious talks, etc.? Why do you think that is? How can we grow the "ears to hear"?
- In Mark 4:12, Christ says, "Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand…" What does this emphasis mean?

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- Metropolitan Joseph Al-Zehlaoui, "The Bible: God's Revelation to Man," page 1753 in The Orthodox Study Bible (Thomas Nelson, 2008) (Orthodox Marketplace item #BIB007)
- Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, "How to Read the Bible," page 1757i n The Orthodox Study Bible (Thomas Nelson, 2008) (Orthodox Marketplace item #BIB007)
- Shannon Sakellariou, *A Lamp to My Feet: An Introduction to the Bible* (DRE 2010) (Orthodox Marketplace item #M13)
- Theodore Stylianopoulos, Bread for Life (DRE, 1980) (Orthodox Marketplace item #BIB440)

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

5. Our lives are saturated with violence, not only in terms of the proliferation of war and terrorism but even as entertainment through movies and video games. In such an environment, how can a Christian cultivate virtues that lead to empathy, peacemaking, and self-sacrifice?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Matthew 5:9

Matthew 6:22–23

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Do you ever feel that you have become desensitized to real violence because you have seen fake violence so often? How can you remain empathetic and guard your eyes and heart?
- Here in the United States, our well-being is not *as* endangered as it is in war-torn countries or in places where there is Christian persecution. How can we be supportive of our fellow Christians who are daily facing persecution and martyrdom?
- In the Beatitudes, Christ says, "Blessed are the peacemakers…" What does an Orthodox Christian peacemaker look like, and how can we become one?

C. Once you have chosen a direction, learn more about the topic. Here are some recommended resources and readings:

- Eric Jobe, "Understanding Violence in the Old Testament: Critical and Patristic Perspectives," Departing Horeb blog, January 14, 2015, https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/departinghoreb/understanding-violence-old-testament-critical-patristic-perspectives/
- Thomas Hopko, "Peacemakers," *The Orthodox Faith*, Vol. 4, Spirituality, https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/spirituality/the-beatitudes/peacemakers
- Check out the posts on *In Communion*, the website of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship: http://incommunion.org
- Cory Turner, "E Is for Empathy: Sesame Workshop Takes a Crack at Kindness," NPR Morning Edition, October 17, 2016, www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/10/17/497827991/a-sesame-study-in-kindness