
St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019



TOPICS, TIPS AND RESOURCES



GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Elementary Division (Grades 4–6)

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			

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

1. Martyrs of the Church and some of the early monastics are both described as “athletes.” What does it mean to be an athlete for Christ?

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Read the Lives of the Saints

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

- What do athletes have in common with monastics? Can the discipline, rituals and training be compared to each other?
- Often times athletes talk about having some kind of adrenaline rush. Could that be compared to the extra strength the martyrs felt when defending their faith?
- Discover a martyr saint whose life inspires you the way you might be inspired by an athlete today.

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

- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Online Chapel: <http://www.goarch.org/chapel/>
- Orthodox Church of America Lives of the Saints: <https://oca.org/saints/lives>
- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #37: “What Sports Can Teach Us,” https://bethebee.goarch.org/home/-/asset_publisher/gAnk4cdUihei/content/what-sports-can-teach-us

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

2. On January 30th, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Three Hierarchs: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom. Select one of these Church Fathers and discuss his contribution to the Church.

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Read the lives of St. Basil, St. Gregory the Theologian (also known as St. Gregory of Nazianzus) and St. John Chrysostom.

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

- Each of the saints is famous for his many writings. Select a text by the saint and discuss what it has taught you about Christian life.
- Each of these saints had such an enormous influence on how the Church was shaped into what it is today. Choose one of the saints and highlight how we can still see his work or influence in modern day Orthodoxy.
- Both St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom wrote liturgies that we use today. Choose one and discuss how it has had an effect on Orthodoxy today.

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

- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Online Chapel, <http://www.goarch.org/chapel/>
- Life of St. Basil the Great (this can be found in many places, including: https://orthodoxwiki.org/Basil_the_Great)
- Life of St. Gregory the Theologian (this can be found in many places, including: https://orthodoxwiki.org/Gregory_the_Theologian)
- Life of St. John Chrysostom (this can be found in many places, including: https://orthodoxwiki.org/John_Chrysostom)
- *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press), available at www.goarch.org/-/the-divine-liturgy-of-saint-john-chrysostom
- Paul Schroeder, *On Social Justice: St. Basil the Great* (SVS Press, 2009)
- St. Gregory the Theologian: Letters and Orations, <http://newadvent.org/fathers/3103.htm>, <http://newadvent.org/fathers/3102.htm>
- St. John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty* (SVS Press, 1984)

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

3. Discuss the significance of water in the Church—Baptism, Theophany, holy water, etc.—and what this suggests about our responsibility for the natural world.

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Read the baptism and Blessing of the Waters services, as well as the hymns of Theophany.

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

- Water does so many things: it cleanses us, heals us, renews us, etc. What does this mean for us when it comes to taking care of the environment?
- Water can hurt us (floods, water-borne illness, drowning, etc.). When the Church blesses water, what is it praying for and what does this mean for our care of the natural world?
- In so many church services, we use physical elements like water, oil, wine, bread, etc. Why does our Church link these things to prayers?

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
- The Prayer for the Blessing of Homes at Theophany, www.goarch.org/-/the-prayer-for-the-blessing-of-homes-at-theophany
- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #16: “Holy Water for the Whole World,” www.goarch.org/-/holy-water-for-the-whole-word
- Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis, “Stewardship as Creation Care” pamphlet (Orthodox Marketplace item #SEO310-B)
- Frederick W. Krueger, *Greening the Orthodox Parish: A Handbook for Christian Ecological Practice* (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012)
- Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis, “The Green Patriarch: Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Protection of the Environment,” www.patriarchate.org/the-green-patriarch

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

4. Discuss the new commandment of John 13:34: “...Love one another, even as I have loved you...” What does it mean to love one another as Christ loved us?

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

John 13:34

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

- Not only did Jesus preach the message of love through His words, but He also often preached it by showing His love for mankind. How can we do the same?
- Loving everyone is easier said than done. What are some ways that can help you have a better and more positive outlook on mankind?
- Jesus often preached the message of love. Why did this seem to be a newer concept for those in His time?
- Have you ever loved someone but disliked what he or she does? What is the difference between loving and liking someone or something?

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)
- George Tsongranis, “What is Love?” <http://blogs.goarch.org/blog/-/blogs/what-is-love>
- Fr. Thomas Hopko, *The Orthodox Faith: Volume IV – Spirituality*, <https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/spirituality/the-greatest-virtue-is-love>
- Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (read Chapter 4: God As Man), (SVS Press, 1996)

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

5. In 1 Timothy 6:10, St. Paul writes, “For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.” How should Orthodox Christians relate to money and wealth?

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

1 Timothy 6:10

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

- Money can corrupt people just as it can help them. How can we as Orthodox Christians find a balance between living our Orthodox Faith and handling our money?
- Think about the fact that money is often the motivating reason behind crimes. How can we as the Church combat this?
- The Church asks its members to support it through their stewardship and donations. How might each person become a better steward of the Church?
- Consider the current imbalance of wealth both in our country and around the world. How should an Orthodox Christian respond to this imbalance?

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)
- Paul Schroeder, *On Social Justice: St. Basil the Great* (SVS Press, 2009), especially the sermon “I will tear down my barns”
- St. John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty* (SVS Press, 1984)
- Stewardship materials from GOARCH, <https://www.goarch.org/departments/stewardship/campaign>

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

1. Many of the Church's services employ objects from the natural world (such as wheat, wine, oil, or water) in order to confer a blessing upon the faithful. Why does the Church do this, and what does this suggest about our responsibility for the natural world?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Read the service of the Blessing of the Loaves, the Blessing of the Waters and other services that use natural resources.

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

- As Orthodox Christians, how do we view the environment and our responsibility to protect it?
- The Church uses all five senses in its worship services. How are natural resources helpful in assisting in how we worship?
- Have you ever felt the presence of God through His natural creations? How did that affect you?

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
- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #16: "Holy Water for the Whole World," https://bethebee.goarch.org/home/-/asset_publisher/gAnk4cdUihei/content/holy-water-for-the-whole-world
- Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis, "Stewardship as Creation Care" pamphlet (Orthodox Marketplace item #SEO310-B)
- Frederick W. Krueger, *Greening the Orthodox Parish: A Handbook for Christian Ecological Practice* (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012)
- Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis, "The Green Patriarch: Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Protection of the Environment," www.patriarchate.org/the-green-patriarch

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

2. From ancient Greece to the present, politicians have aligned themselves with religious concepts and constituencies. How is an Orthodox Christian to discern whether today's politicians do this out of genuine piety or in order to manipulate the electorate?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Romans 13:1–7

Mark 12:13–18

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

- How can we keep our Orthodox Christian mindset and morals in a world where we are a minority?
- Read Romans 13:1–7. How does this relate to us today, especially in America where we have a separation of church and state?
- Mark 12:13–18 talks about giving back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. How do we as Orthodox Christians view the government and politics?

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)
- George Demacopoulos, "What Orthodox Christianity Can Bring to American Politics," *Public Orthodoxy*, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2015/12/18/what-orthodox-christianity-can-bring-to-american-christian-politics/>
- Kevin Allen, "Orthodox Christianity and Politics," *Ancient Faith Today*, https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/aftoday/orthodox_christianity_and_politics
- *Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World* (SVS Press, 2011), <https://www.svspress.com/living-orthodoxy-in-the-modern-world/>

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

3. The hymns of the Church contain the whole of its theology. Pick one hymn from the Lenten or Holy Week period and describe how it speaks to you personally.

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Read the Holy Week Book

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

- Why might you feel more connected to certain Holy Week services one year vs. the next? Why could it be a different experience even though the services are not changing?
- Holy Week can be an emotional time of year for so many different reasons. Speak about a time during Holy Week where you heard a certain hymn and felt especially moved.
- Choose one hymn from Holy Week or Great Lent and explore the theology it conveys. What lessons are we learning as we are participating in these services?

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

- George Papadeas, *Holy Week through Easter Service Book* (Patmos Press, 1999) (Orthodox Marketplace item # FL900)
- Stephania Gianulis, *Journey through Holy Week Zine – Student* (Department of Religious Education) (Orthodox Marketplace item #L183)
- Robert Krantz, *Guide to Holy Week* (Volumes: Monday –Saturday) (Ellinas Multimedia, Incorporated)
- Fr. Alkiviadis C. Calivas, *Great Week and Pascha in the Greek Orthodox Church* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992)

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

4. Describe how science and technology should always be at the service of humanity and, ultimately, of God, in harmony with His purposes.

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Read the Official Document of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, “The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World,” (especially section F., paragraphs 10–12), www.holycouncil.org/-/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world

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

- How do scientific and religious explanations of the same phenomena provide different understandings of the world, thus opening up possibilities for our growth and development?
- We often hear of the clash of science and religion. How can we as Orthodox Christians respond to that?
- Technology helps progress the world that we live in, but it is not always used for good purposes. How can we as Orthodox Christians find ways for technology to help us with our Faith?

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

- *PRAXIS* Magazine, volume 18, issue 1: “Digital Media” (Department of Religious Education), <https://www.goarch.org/en/-/volume-18-issue-1-2018-digital-media>
- John and Lyn Breck, *Stages on Life's Way: Orthodox Thinking on Bioethics*, (SVS Press 2006), <https://www.svspress.com/stages-on-lifes-way-orthodox-thinking-on-bioethics/>
- Gayle E. Woloschak, Tatjana Paunesku and Katarina Trajkovic, “Science, Truth, and the Current Political Climate,” *Public Orthodoxy*, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2017/06/08/science-truth-and-the-current-political-climate/>
- Alvin Powell, “Stem Cells, Through a Religious Lens,” *The Harvard Gazette*, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2007/03/stem-cells-through-a-religious-lens/>
- “Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church,” (especially paragraphs 7–8), Official Document of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, https://www.holycouncil.org/-/message?_101_INSTANCE_VA0WE2pZ4Y0I_languageId=en_US

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019
Topics, Tips and Resources

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

5. In view of St. Paul's exhortation in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," discuss the importance of being biblically literate today.

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Colossians 3:16

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

- The Orthodox Church provides Bible readings to be read every single day. How can these short readings help us focus and center ourselves every day?
- The Bible can often be taken out of context if the passage is not researched correctly. How important is it for us to understand the historical context in which each book was written?
- The Bible is one of the most accessible books, and it's constantly on lists of best sellers. Even though almost every Christian owns one, how many are actually reading it? How important is it to read the Bible within Orthodox Christianity?
- How does the way Orthodox Christian theologians read and interpret the Bible differ from Protestant literalist readings of the Bible?

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

- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #111: "Why We Don't Hide Our Faith," <https://www.goarch.org/-/why-we-don-t-hide-our-faith-featuring-sister-vassa-larin->
- Download the Daily Readings App (created by the GOA Department of Internet Ministries) and explore the accessible daily Bible readings
- "The Eastern Orthodox Approach to the Bible," *Ancient Faith Today*, an interview with Dr. Jeannie Constantinou, www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/aftoday/the_eastern_orthodox_approach_to_the_bible
- Shannon Sakellariou, *A Lamp to My Feet: An Introduction to the Bible – Student* (Department of Religious Education) (Orthodox Marketplace item #M13)
- Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos, *Bread for Life* (Department of Religious Education, 1988) (Orthodox Marketplace item # BIB440)
- Fr. John Behr, *Public Orthodoxy* "Reading Scripture" <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2017/12/12/reading-scripture/>