

Instructions for Hosting a District Oratorical Festival

PLANNING THE FESTIVAL



Schedule and Announce the Date of Your Parish Festival

(3-6 months prior to the festival)

The success of the oratorical festival depends on networking among the parish, district and metropolis chairpersons. Therefore, once you are appointed as district chairperson, one of your first responsibilities is to communicate the date and location of your event to all parish chairpersons and clergy in your district. Their contact information will be made available to you by your metropolis chairperson. Please check the church calendar, as well as the local school calendars, to make sure there are no scheduling conflicts, and work with your metropolis chairperson to finalize the date of your district festival.

Please note: If you are in a district where there are five or fewer parishes participating, it is permissible for parishes to send two finalists per division (two junior and two senior) to the district festival. Because you likely won't know for certain how many parishes will be participating until February or even March, tell your parish chairpersons to plan to send one finalist per division and you will let them know as the district festival approaches if they may send more than one finalist per division.

On the other hand, your district might be accustomed to advancing two finalists per division from each parish even if there are more than five parishes participating. If so, we recommend that you have two panels of judges for the district festival for efficiency. You would have the panel of judges for the junior division deliberate while the senior speeches are being delivered.



Form a Committee

(2-3 months prior to the festival)

At the district level, you will want to have a host committee to share the following responsibilities:

- Welcome and register the speakers on the day of the event
- Create and print the program for the event.
- Promote the festival

- Plan for refreshments or meals
- Lead the speaker orientation session
- Lead the judges' orientation session
- Serve as time-keeper
- Prepare the certificates and gifts



Encourage Participation

Reach out to parishes that have not registered and encourage them to get involved in the Oratorical Festival.



Select Judges

(2-3 months prior to the festival)

As a district chairperson, selecting a qualified and objective panel of judges is one of the most important aspects of ensuring a successful Oratorical Festival. Here is a set of requirements for your selection:

- The judges must be Orthodox Christians.
- The panel of judges should be composed of both men and women, with three judges total (to avoid a tie).
- The judges should be proficient in English and knowledgeable in public speaking. Educators and lawyers are often good choices, as well as those who have studied theology.
- The judges should not be personally familiar with the speakers (e.g., they should not be speakers' Sunday school teacher, GOYA advisor, etc.) or related to the speakers.
- You should not have a parish priest or presvytera from one of the parishes in your metropolis serve as a judge - you can ask a priest or presvytera from another metropolis or another jurisdiction (Antiochian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, etc.)
- The same judge(s) cannot be used from one festival level to the next (e.g., if someone is a parish judge, he or she may not also be a district / metropolis judge).

Note: The judges should not hear the speeches before the festival.

Email your judges the topics in advance of the Oratorical Festival along with the judges' instructions and an example speaker evaluation form. Ask your judges to plan to meet you at least an hour before the festival is scheduled to begin so you can go over the processes.



Promote the Festival to the Community

(as soon as it's scheduled and ongoing until the event)

Ask your priest to talk about your parish hosting the district festival and encourage parishioners to attend so they may welcome the speakers and hear the speeches.



Prepare Certificates and Gifts for Participants and Judges

(Suggested: two weeks prior to the festival)

The committee member assigned to the certificates must download a certificate template from the Department of Religious Education *which can be* found in the Oratorical Festival section of www.orthodoxmarketplace.com. Follow the certificate instructions before downloading. Print the certificates on cardstock or parchment paper.

It would be appropriate to present all the participants with an icon, spiritual book or other small gift in recognition of their hard work. A small gift (an icon, spiritual book, gift card, etc.) should also be given to your judges to thank them for their time.



Create a Printed Program

Include in the printed program the festival schedule and the speakers' information (list speakers alphabetically by their parish city): the name of the parishes they represent, their names and the topics of their speeches. Also include the names (and short biographies) of the judges and the names of committee volunteers.

DURING

THE FESTIVAL



Checklist of Items to Bring

- Certificates and gifts for the speakers / judges -save time by filling in certificates with participants' names in advance; then all you must do after the judges' results are known is fill out the ranking of the participants (first place, second place, third place and honorable mention)
- Pencils and a clipboard for each judge
- Calculator or calculator app
- Speaker evaluation forms: one for each speaker plus a few extras (it's helpful to print copies of the junior forms on one color and the senior forms on another color so they can be easily organized)
- Copies of the judges' instructions: one for each judge plus one additional for the person leading the judges orientation session
- Two printed copies of the Judge's Ranking Sheet - Form C (one for the junior division and one for the senior division)
- Two printed copies of the Timekeeper's Report (one for each division)
- Copies of the topics for reference: one for each judge and one for the person leading the orientation session
- Stopwatch or stopwatch app and large time notifications cards to indicate time remaining to speakers (1 minute left, 30 seconds left)
- Names of speakers printed on address labels--this makes it easy to place their speaking order on the Speaking Order - Form A
- Printed copies of the program
- Podium, microphone and (if needed) step stool

Note: All forms can be found in the last section of this manual.

Typical Schedule for a District Festival

This is a typical schedule for a district festival. Specific guidance for each section is below.

- Speaker Registration and Breakfast
- Speaker Orientation
- Judge Orientation
- Gather everyone together where the festival will occur to announce festival will begin
- Opening prayer
- Welcome from parish chairperson
- Junior speakers
- Senior speakers
- Judge's deliberation
- Group photo, refreshments during judge's deliberation
- Announcement of finalists
- Parish chairperson closing remarks



Speaker Registration and Breakfast

Set up a welcome table to greet each speaker as they arrive. Each participant should provide a hard copy of his or her speech formatted as follows:

- Double-spaced
- Speech topic included at the top of the first page
- Participant's name, address, parish name/location and division (junior or senior) in the top right corner of the first page

Cross-reference topics on participants' speeches with the program to ensure they are the same.

Speaker Orientation Session – led by a pre-assigned committee member and held where the speeches will be delivered, preferably the church:

- Have participants pick their speaking order numbers out of a hat.
- Provide participants with an opening remark that makes sense given the clergy in attendance and the time of day, and have them practice this using the microphone. An example opening would be: "Reverend Father(s), honorable judges, parishioners, good morning." Each speaker should deliver the same greeting and say "Thank you" at the end of his or her speech.
- Be sure each participant can see above the podium. If not, you must provide a step stool. Let them know you will adjust the height of the microphone for them as needed.

- Show them where the judges and the time-keeper will be sitting. Introduce them to the time-keeper so they know who will be holding the time cards. Make sure the numbers on the time cards are large enough to be seen from the podium.
- Remind them of the time limitations (3–4 minutes for juniors, 4–5 minutes for seniors) and the notifications they will see from the time-keeper (1 minute left; 30 seconds left).
- Have the participants sit in the pews in the order in which they will be speaking. As each speaker gets up to deliver his or her speech, the other participants can slide down; this way the person who just gave a speech can take a seat at the end of the pew.

Judges’ Orientation Session – led by a pre-assigned committee member

Here is a checklist of tasks and items to prepare for the judges’ orientation:

- Provide the judges with copies of the topics and topic tips as well as pens / pencils and a clipboard.
- Provide the judges with speaker evaluation forms: one for each speaker plus a few extras (it’s helpful to print the junior forms on one color paper and the senior forms on another color paper so they can be easily organized).
- Provide each judge with copies of the Judges Ranking Sheet –Form C (for the division they are judging; if you have one panel for both divisions, provide each judge with a junior form and a senior form).
- Make sure the judges identify who will be the coordinating judge: this person is responsible for tabulating the results and leading the discussion if there isn’t clear consensus.
- Walk the judges through the speaker evaluation form and ensure they understand the criteria for judging. Remind them that content and delivery are to be weighted equally. Encourage the judges to be thoughtful, to take their time and to write comments / notes to remind themselves of each speaker.
- Remind the judges of the time requirements (3–4 minutes for juniors, 4–5 minutes for seniors) and that there is a fifteen-second grace period. One point is deducted for every five seconds over or under the grace period (e.g., if a speaker is under the minimum time or over the maximum).
- Advise the judges that if there are significantly different perceptions of the top four speakers (for example, one speaker is voted first by one judge and eighth by another), the judges should discuss why they voted the way they did and feel free to make adjustments as they see fit.
- Guide the judges to where they will sit, ensuring that the podium is visible to them. It is less threatening to the participants if the judges are sitting in a pew rather than at a table.
- Advise the judges that they could and should provide feedback to any speakers who approach them afterwards. Note that the evaluation forms will not be provided to the speakers even if they request them.



Speeches

The junior speakers should go first, followed by the senior speakers.

Introduce each speaker by stating the speaker number, the topic number chosen, and then read the topic in full. For example:

- “Our first speaker in the junior division will be speaking on topic number 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?”

The speaker will then walk to the podium (be ready to adjust the height of the microphone if needed.)

As previously instructed, the speaker will open by addressing the congregation (see Speaker Orientation Session above). The speaker delivers his or her speech and ends by saying, “Thank You.” After the speech is given, he or she proceeds to the end of the row of speakers and takes a seat.

Before introducing the next participant, give the judges a few moments to complete their notes and comments. After confirming with the judges that they are ready to move on, introduce the next speaker.

Note: If you have many junior and senior division participants, it is recommended to take a break between divisions. This way the judges can deliberate on the junior division before listening to the senior division. If, on the other hand, you have fewer participants, the judges might feel comfortable hearing both divisions before deliberating. If there will be a long intermission between divisions, plan to serve refreshments and / or lunch.



Judges’ Deliberation

(may occur twice if you take an intermission between the junior and senior divisions)

Some tips:

- Be sure the judges are given the completed timekeeper form for the relevant division before leaving to deliberate.
- The judges will deliberate in a designated, private room. The person assigned to the judges should check in with them while they are deliberating in case they have any questions.
- Ask the judges if they would like to see a printed copy of any speeches for review. If they do, you must cover up or black out the names of the participants and their parishes on the printed copies.
- Remind them of the time limit for the divisions and that penalties are applied after the fifteen-second grace period (at the 5:16 mark for seniors and the 4:16 mark for juniors).

When the results of each division have been determined, the person assigned to fill in the results on the certificates will take the Judges' Ranking Sheet - Form C and compare it to Speaking Order - Form A, writing in the names of the participants who received first, second and third place honors; all others receive the rank of honorable mention.

Be sure that when the certificates are filled in, first and second place recipients are written in as district finalists. When the announcements are made at the award ceremony, these recipients are referred to as the two junior and two senior district finalists who will attend the metropolis festival not as first and second place speakers.



Group Photo

Since the participants were introduced by speaking order number, during the judges' deliberation is the perfect time to introduce them by their names and the parishes they are from and take a few group photos.

Try to take some of the junior and senior division separately as well as the entire group of participants.

Sharing the photos on the church's website, Facebook and other social media platforms is a great way to publicize the Oratorical Festival.



Award Ceremony

The priest or district chairperson should ask everyone to assemble for the award ceremony. Introduce the judges and present a gift to them at this time, and thank any volunteers. The chairperson should announce the speakers and how they ranked. Give the certificates and gifts to the priest to present to the participants. Announce the ranking in ascending order: honorable mentions first, followed by third place and then the two junior and two senior district finalists who will represent the district at the metropolis festival.

Inform the finalists when and where their metropolis Oratorical Festival will be held.

AFTER THE FESTIVAL



Communication and Wrap-up

- Complete the Summary of Ratings and Rankings form. (The fillable PDF can be found at www.goarch.org/oratorical) Email the completed form to the Metropolis Chairperson as well as the National Chairperson at oratoricalchair@goarch.org.
- Contact the metropolis chairperson by email and provide the names and registration information of the finalists; be sure to copy the finalists on the email.