

# Instructions for Hosting a Parish Oratorical Festival

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## PLANNING THE FESTIVAL

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### Schedule and Announce the Date of Your Parish Festival

(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 parish chairperson, you must contact your district and metropolis chairpersons to let them know when your parish festival will be held and to learn when the district and metropolis festivals will be held. To find out who your district and metropolis chairpersons are, go to [www.goarch.org/oratorical](http://www.goarch.org/oratorical) and click on the link for your metropolis.

Find a date that works well for the students and your parish. Be sure to avoid dates when standardized tests (ACT and SAT) are given.

Consider hosting a festival after a church service, such as after the liturgy on a Sunday or after a weekday lenten service. This way you will have an audience beyond the participants' parents.



### Form a Committee

(2-3 months prior to the festival)

It is a lot of work to host an Oratorical Festival, so we suggest you form a committee to help you. Here are the responsibilities that you could divide among committee members:

- Promote the festival (see "Encourage Participation" below)
- Plan refreshments or meals
- Create and print a program for the event
- Provide feedback to participants as they write their speeches
- Be available for participants to practice delivering their speeches and provide feedback
- Lead the speaker orientation session
- Lead the judges orientation session
- Serve as time-keeper
- Prepare the certificates and gifts



## Encourage Participation

Here are some tasks to complete throughout the three months prior to your parish festival to encourage participation.

- Provide for potential participants the current topics, tips, key dates and information about the program, either in printed hard copy, by email or both.
- Work with your priest, Sunday school teachers and GOYA advisors to encourage participation—visit Sunday Church school classrooms, email membership lists, etc.
- Consider using a speech topic in a lesson plan or as a discussion starter in Sunday school or GOYA.
- Reach out directly to parents and encourage them to speak with their children about the program.
- Promote the festival in weekly and monthly church bulletins.
- Host speech writing workshops and practice speaking sessions to provide feedback to participants.



## Complete the Online Registration Forms

Complete the online parish chairperson registration form

Ensure all participants complete the online speaker registration form

Both registration forms can be found at [www.goarch.org/oratorical](http://www.goarch.org/oratorical).

Ensure all participants know they need to bring an extra hard copy of their speech to give to you, the chairperson, on the day of the festival, 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



## Select Judges

(2-3 months prior to the festival)

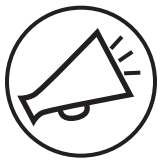
As a parish chairperson, selecting a qualified and objective panel of judges is one of the most important aspects of ensuring a successful Oratorical Festival program. Here is a set of requirements for your selection:

- 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.
- 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 (e.g., if someone is a judge, he or she may not also help with speech writing workshops, practice sessions, etc.).*

Email your judges the topics in advance of the Oratorical Festival along with the judges' instructions and the 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.

*Note: If you have used the same judges over multiple years you may consider finding judges from other nearby parishes. Perhaps you could share judges with another parish—the district chairperson can provide you with email addresses of other parish chairpersons to arrange this.*



## Promote the Festival to the Community

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

Ask your priest to promote the event in his weekly announcements and encourage parishioners to attend.

Include announcements in the weekly and monthly church bulletins, and send information to parish email distribution lists or specific groups like Sunday Church school or GOYA.



## Prepare Certificates and Gifts for Participants and Judges

(suggested 2 weeks prior to the festival)

Order a certificate for each participant [www.orthodoxmarketplace.com](http://www.orthodoxmarketplace.com)

- It would be appropriate to present all 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 (optional)

Some parishes create a printed program listing the names of the speakers and their respective topics, the order of events for the day, the names (and short biographies) of the judges and the names of committee volunteers.

More ideas and sample resources can be found on [www.goarch.org/oratorical](http://www.goarch.org/oratorical).

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# DURING THE FESTIVAL

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## 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 (for example, 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 the junior forms on one color paper and the senior forms on another color paper so they can be easily organized)
- Copies of the judge's 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 Report" (one for each division)
- Copies of the topics and topic tips for reference: one for each judge and one for the person leading the orientation
- Stopwatch or stopwatch app and large time notification cards to indicate time remaining to speakers (1 minute left, 30 seconds left)
- Names of the speakers printed on address labels—this makes it easier to place their speaking order number on "Speaking Order - Form A"
- Printed copies of the program (if you have one)
- Podium, microphone and (if needed) step-stool

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

## Typical Schedule for a Parish Festival

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

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



### Speaker Orientation Session

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

- Confirm participants have completed their online registration form (have copies of printed forms on hand just in case they are needed).
- Confirm you have the correct topic recorded for each of the speakers and collect the extra copy of each speech.
- Have participants pick their speaking order numbers out of a hat.
- Provide participants with an opening that makes sense given the clergy in attendance and time of day. An example would be: "Reverend Father(s), honorable judges, fellow parishioners, good morning." Each speaker should deliver the same greeting and say "Thank you" at the end of his or her speech.
- 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.
- Identify whether any speakers require a stepstool to be seen over the podium.
- Have each speaker say good morning into the microphone so they know the volume they need to project. The person introducing the speakers should plan to adjust the microphone for the height of each speaker.
- 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.

Ideally, you will hold practice sessions in the church or wherever your festival will be held prior to the event itself. This way, your participants can practice with the microphone and become more comfortable in the space. You can also see if any participants need a step stool to see above the podium or any other accommodations. This is a good opportunity to time the participants to see if speech length or pacing need to be adjusted.



## Judges' Orientation Session

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

- Provide the judges with copies of the topics and 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 senior form).
- Make sure the judges identify who will be the coordinating judge; this person is responsible for tabulating the results and leading discussion if there isn't a 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 on 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.



## 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 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 divisions 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 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 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.



## 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 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 is a great way to publicize the Oratorical Festival.



## Elementary Division (optional)

In some parishes, the fifth and sixth grade students (elementary division) are invited to present on an elementary division topic [see section 8 of this manual on page 33]. Including them not only fills the time while the judges deliberate, but it also gives these students the opportunity to listen to the junior and senior division speakers and become aware of what they will be asked to do once they reach seventh grade.



## Award Ceremony

The priest or parish 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, second place and first place.\*

\*If the top two speakers in each division are advancing to your district festival, the certificates should read "Parish Finalist" and the announcement at the award ceremony should be the same. The parish finalist rank takes the place of first and second place. The next ranked speaker is awarded third place. All other participants receive the honorable mention rank. If only one person advances to your district festival, then the rankings must be honorable mentions, third, second and first place.

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



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# AFTER THE FESTIVAL

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## Communication and Wrap-up

- Complete the Summary of Ratings and Rankings form. (The fillable PDF can be found at [www.goarch.org/oratorical](http://www.goarch.org/oratorical)) Email the completed form to the chairperson for the next level as well as the National Chairperson at [oratoricalchair@goarch.org](mailto:oratoricalchair@goarch.org).
- Consult with your priest to determine a good Sunday for your top speakers to present their speeches to the congregation after the liturgy.
- Contact the district chairperson by email and provide the names and registration information of the finalists; be sure to copy the finalists on the email.