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# St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2016

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## TOPICS, TIPS, AND RESOURCES

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*St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2016  
Topics, Tips, and Resources*

**Elementary Division (Grades 4–6)**

The purpose of the Elementary Oratorical program is to offer children the opportunity to express their feelings about their Faith and Church, as well as to gain 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 teenage divisions:**

1. The elementary division is strictly a local program.
2. There is no judging.
3. The topics are modest but invite creativity: Jesus, prayer, icons, etc.
4. It is designed to fit easily into the Church school program, with flexible topics that coincide with the curriculum.
5. To make it even more interesting, consider having some classes sign 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, no “strict timing” should 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 in 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			

**Junior Division (Grades 7–9)**

1. In the Old Testament we read that there is “a time to keep silence and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). What is the value of silence and quiet in a time when we are always “plugged in”?

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

Ecclesiastes 3:7

Psalms 46:10

**B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- While rushing through your daily school schedule, how can it be possible to make time for silence and for God?
- Many Metropolis Camps have scheduled “morning quiet time”. What have you learned from this experience? Is it possible to continue at home? Why does it seem so much harder to fit that into your everyday schedule?
- Some people choose to “unplug” for a certain amount of time, such as a vacation or a holiday. What are the positive effects of that? Is this something that you could do as a family or church community?
- Does your family have rules for unplugging and spending time together? Does this help you to realize the importance of taking a break and having quiet time?
- Research the mindfulness movement. Is this something that can go hand in hand with the teachings of our church?

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

- Annalisa Boyd, *Hear Me: A Prayerbook for Orthodox Teens* (Conciliar Press, 2007). (DRE item # YM750)
- National Day of Unplugging, <http://nationaldayofunplugging.com>
- F. M. Courey, *Walk in the Light: Spiritual Exercises in Great Lent for Young Adults* (Genesis World Press, 2009). (DRE item # BIB007)
- *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 2008). (DRE item # BIB007)
- Christopher Kies, “An Orthodox Christian Response to Mindfulness,” *The Word* magazine, June 2015, page 22, available at [www.antiochian.org/sites/default/files/june\\_2015\\_word.pdf](http://www.antiochian.org/sites/default/files/june_2015_word.pdf)

*St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2016*  
*Topics, Tips, and Resources*

**Junior Division (Grades 7–9)**

2. Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13–21). Discuss what this miracle teaches about our ability to serve humanity.

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

Matthew 14:13–21

Luke 9: 10–17

John 6:1–14

**B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- What are some ways that you and your family or you and your parish can help serve your local city and community?
- What was Jesus trying to teach us through this miracle? Was it more than just giving food to a crowd?
- In this miracle Jesus showed that He was the Creator, by taking His creation and then multiplying it for many. How can this encourage us that we are not alone in taking care of others?

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

- GOA Stewardship Ministries resources for 2016, [www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/stewardship/resources/2016](http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/stewardship/resources/2016)
- GOA Stewardship Ministries brochures, [www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/stewardship/brochures](http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/stewardship/brochures)
- GOA Department of Philanthropy, [www.philanthropy.goarch.org](http://www.philanthropy.goarch.org)
- Elaine Michaels and Mary Hallick, *Stewardship: Serving in God’s World* student book (DRE, 1995). (DRE item # M03)
- FOCUS, an Orthodox nonprofit group, <https://focusnorthamerica.org>
- YES (Youth Equipped to Serve), an Orthodox nonprofit group, <https://focusnorthamerica.org/yes>
- IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities), [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)
- OCMC (Orthodox Christian Mission Center), <http://ocmc.org>
- *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 2008). (DRE item # BIB007)

**Junior Division (Grades 7–9)**

3. Discuss how icons play a helpful role in the prayer life of an Orthodox Christian.

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

St. John of Damascus, *In Defense of Icons*

**B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- Do you have a favorite icon? Why is it your favorite? What is the story behind it?
- How do icons help our church with worship? Look at your church and compare to other Christian communities who do not use icons.
- There have been accusations that Orthodox Christians actually worship icons. What would you say to someone if they said that to you?

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

- St. John of Damascus, “Treatise I: *In Defense of Icons*,” in *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, translated by Andrew Louth (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), pages 19–58.
- Alfred Tradigo, *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church* (Getty Publications, 2006). (DRE item # FL401)
- Mary P. Hallick, *The Story of Icons* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001). (DRE item # CB016)
- Jim Forest, *Praying with Icons* (Orbis Books, 2008).
- GOA Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #53, “Venerating Icons,” [www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8iFOgppS6Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8iFOgppS6Y)
- MetCollects videos, “How Does an Icon Work? Helen Evans on Four Byzantine Icons,” <http://myocn.net/meaning-byzantine-iconography/>
- GOA Discovering Orthodox Christianity video series, “The House of God: Iconography,” [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UONEiHfHFHw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UONEiHfHFHw)
- “The Art of Belief” video series, beginning with “Pistevo ‘I Believe,’” [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUikmRlmd3Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUikmRlmd3Y)
- More videos from “The Art of Belief” series are available via OCN at <http://myocn.net/orthodox-christian-education/iconography-and-saints>

**Junior Division (Grades 7–9)**

4. Houses of worship and congregations have always been thought of as a sanctuary of peace and serenity. Recently they have become the vulnerable targets of violent crimes. Discuss the attitude of Orthodox Christians toward this issue today.

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

Psalm 11:4

Psalm 27

Service of the Consecration of a Church

**B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- How have we, as a Church, been reaching out to help in situations such as the church shooting in Charleston, SC?
- St. Nicholas Church in New York City was destroyed in the 9/11 terrorist attack. It is now being rebuilt as the St. Nicholas Shrine at the World Trade Center. How can rebuilding it help establish it as a place of sanctuary for all people?
- Describe how being in a house of worship is supposed to make someone feel. How do violent acts change that?
- Look up the 1963 church bombing in Birmingham, AL, or others that have happened since then around the world, and consider how they have influenced people worldwide.

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

- “2015 Charleston church shooting,”  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charleston\\_church\\_shooting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charleston_church_shooting)
- St. Nicholas National Shrine at the World Trade Center, [www.stnicholaswtc.org](http://www.stnicholaswtc.org)
- Holy Cross (Brookline, MA), “Service of the Consecration of a Church,” available at [www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical\\_texts/consecrate\\_church](http://www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical_texts/consecrate_church)

**Junior Division (Grades 7–9)**

5. How might Orthodox Christians contribute and support the efforts to eliminate poverty and hunger in the world?

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

Parable of Last Judgment (Matthew 25)

The Church Fathers on wealth and poverty

**B. Consider the 1direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- What are some things that you and your parish have done to get involved in helping work with eliminating poverty either overseas or here in America?
- What are the sources of poverty in America and the world?

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

- St. Basil the Great, *On Social Justice* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2009).
- St. John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty* (SVS Press, 1984).
- Circle of Protection, a group of Christian leaders calling on presidential candidates to make videos describing how they will address poverty and hunger, <http://circleofprotection.us>
- GOA Department of Philanthropy, [www.philanthropy.goarch.org](http://www.philanthropy.goarch.org)
- GOA Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #27, “An Invitation to Give,” [www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8iFOgppS6Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8iFOgppS6Y)
- OCMC (Orthodox Christian Mission Center), <http://ocmc.org>
- YES (Youth Equipped to Serve), an Orthodox nonprofit group, <https://focusnorthamerica.org/yes>
- UN Millennium Development Goals, “We Can End Poverty,” [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)
- Church World Service, a nonprofit that works to eradicate hunger and poverty and to promote peace and justice around the world, [www.cwsglobal.org](http://www.cwsglobal.org)
- ATD Fourth World (All Together in Dignity to Overcome Poverty), an international nongovernmental organization, <http://atd-fourthworld.org>

**Senior Division (Grades 10–12)**

1. How does gathering as a community of Orthodox Christians to participate in the Divine Liturgy influence your daily life?

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

*The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*

1 Corinthians 12

**B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- Discuss how you prepare for worship and how it influences the rest of your week.
- How does “missing” a Sunday affect you? What do you do to get “back on track”?
- What is the significance of the praying as a “Church family”?
- How does the idea of being the Body of Christ influence your involvement with the Church?

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

- Tom Papagiannis, *Heaven on Earth: The Divine Liturgy* student zine (DRE, 2009). (DRE item # M09)
- Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003).
- Stanley Harakas, *Living the Liturgy* (Light and Life, Kindle Edition 2012).
- GOA Discovering Orthodox Christianity video series, “Worship and Life,” [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZhP4v8b31s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZhP4v8b31s)
- *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press), available at [www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical\\_texts/liturgy\\_hchc](http://www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical_texts/liturgy_hchc)

*St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2016*  
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**Senior Division (Grades 10–12)**

2. In light of Genesis 1:24–27, the sixth day of creation, discuss how all living beings are connected and its impact on our responsibility for the planet.

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

Genesis 1:24–27

Psalm 24

*Vespers for the Preservation of Creation* (September 1)

**B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- Discuss the interdependence between various living beings and the impact when that is disrupted. How might we respond as Orthodox Christians?
- Consider how the Earth is home to all creatures and how the effects of environmental pollution can damage all.

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

- *Vespers for the Preservation of Creation*, composed by Monk Gerasimos of the Skete of St. Anne, translated by Archimandrite Ephrem (Lash), [www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical\\_texts/vespers\\_creation](http://www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical_texts/vespers_creation)
- Writings by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew:
  - Message on the Occasion of Earth Day, April 22, 2015, <http://tinyurl.com/EcPatrEarthDay2015>
  - Statement on Water, March 22, 2015, <http://tinyurl.com/EcPatrWater2015>
  - Message for World Oceans Day, June 8, 2015, <http://tinyurl.com/EcPatrOceans2015>
- “The Green Patriarch” DVD (Becket Films, 2009). (DRE item # FL083)

*St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2016*  
*Topics, Tips, and Resources*

**Senior Division (Grades 10–12)**

3. How do you respond to people who question your belief in God and participation in the life of the Church?

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

Lives of the Martyrs and Confessors (saints who had to stand up for their faith)

Lives of the Theologians (saints who defined and clarified what we believe as Christians, such as Gregory the Theologian)

**B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- Have you been questioned about your faith while at school? How did you respond? Did it make you question yourself?
- Often times your faith may be questioned by people outside of the church. Have you ever been questioned by someone of the same faith?
- Discuss a time when you questioned how public you would be about your Christian faith? What was that struggle, how did you respond?

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

- Orthodox Church in America, Feasts & Saints, [www.oca.org/fs](http://www.oca.org/fs)
- George Poulos, *Orthodox Saints*, Vols. 1–4 (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005). (DRE item # FL325–328)
- GOA Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #19, “Everyday Martyrs,” [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dq6qYrq2l\\_c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dq6qYrq2l_c)

**Senior Division (Grades 10–12)**

4. Discuss how “the arts” (music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and others) can inspire a greater connection between God and an individual or community.

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

St. John of Damascus, *In Defense of Icons*

St. Gregory the Theologian: *On God and Man*

**B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- Some art is looked at positively and some, not as much. Can art reflect what is going on in the artist’s heart and soul?
- In the Orthodox Church, there is art everywhere. How does this help us draw closer to God and the saints?
- Music is a very strong influence on society today. How can we use it for the good of the community and to bring people closer to God?

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

- St. John of Damascus, “Treatise I: *In Defense of Icons*,” in *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, translated by Andrew Louth (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), pages 19–58.
- Michael G. Farrow, “St. Romanos the Melodist, A Syrian Poet,” Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Sacred Music, [www.antiochian.org/node/22677](http://www.antiochian.org/node/22677)
- George Kordis, *Icon as Communion: The Ideals and Compositional Principles of Icon Painting* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011).
- Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (University of Toronto Press, 1986).
- St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Man: The Theological Poetry of St. Gregory of Nazianzus* (SVS Press, 2001).

**Senior Division (Grades 10–12)**

5. Human trafficking (i.e., the exploitation and enslavement of women and children) remains a tragedy even today. We know that all human beings are created by God in His image (Genesis 1:27); therefore, how can we as Orthodox Christians help these victims and assist in the efforts to eliminate human trafficking?

**A. Read the Church’s teachings:**

Genesis 1:27

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

**B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some examples:**

- How have Christians’ thoughts about slavery changed over the centuries?
- A lot of attention has finally been put on human trafficking today. A lot of it is being talked about on a humanitarian level, but what does it mean on a spiritual level?
- Present a story of a victim of slavery and trafficking. How might an Orthodox respond?
- What are the causes of trafficking? What might Orthodox Christians do to help eliminate the causes?

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

- UN Office on Drugs and Crime, “Human Trafficking,” [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html)
- World Council of Churches (WCC), “Communiqué on Human Trafficking,” [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/international-affairs/communique-on-human-trafficking](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/international-affairs/communique-on-human-trafficking)
- UNICEF, “End Trafficking,” videos and resources [www.unicefusa.org/mission/protect/trafficking/end](http://www.unicefusa.org/mission/protect/trafficking/end)
- TRONIE Foundation, a global UN accredited organization to end slavery and human trafficking, [www.troniefoundation.org](http://www.troniefoundation.org)
- NGO Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons, [www.ngocstip.org](http://www.ngocstip.org)
- President’s Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, “Building Partnerships to Eradicate Modern-Day Slavery,” <http://tinyurl.com/PresCouncilEndSlavery> (Archbishop Demetrios is a member)
- The White House, “End Human Trafficking” [www.whitehouse.gov/endtrafficking](http://www.whitehouse.gov/endtrafficking)