
St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2012



TOPICS, TIPS, AND RESOURCES



GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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*St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2011
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			

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Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

1. Many times in the New Testament, we see Jesus caring about the blind, the paralyzed, and others with physical disabilities (for example, Matthew 9:2 and 9:27–29). Following Christ’s footsteps, discuss the Christian attitude toward disabled people.

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Matthew 4:23–25, 8:1–13, 9:27–38, and 12:9–14; Mark 2:12; Luke 13:10–13

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

- Select several healing stories in the Bible and discuss whom it is that Christ heals. What is the Church’s attitude toward the disabled? Talk about how the Church in general and your local church are helping the disabled, and ways in which they could be of further help.
- What is “disability” in the Bible? How does our society define the term? Who are the disabled, according to Christ? Who are they in your eyes?
- We are created in the image and likeness of God. How does one carry that image despite a physical disability?

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

- Wendy Cwiklinski, “Church and the Child with Invisible Disabilities,” OCA Resource Handbook (2006), <http://oca.org/resource-handbook/familylife/church-and-the-child-with-invisible-disabilities>
- St. John the Baptist Philoptochos, *Angels and Autism: Finding Faith for the Autistic Child* DVD, available for order from http://stjohndfw.info/Files/autismdvdorderform_1.pdf
- Marina Katsoulis and Elizabeth Borch, “The Challenge Liturgy and Beyond,” *Praxis* vol. 8, no. 3 (Spring 2009), available at <http://issuu.com/orthodoxmarketplace/docs/issuepdf--21->

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- Michael Matsko, “Ministering to Residents of an Adult Foster Care Home,” OCA Resource Handbook (2001), <http://oca.org/resource-handbook/commservice/ministering-to-residents-of-an-adult-foster-care-home>
- Albert Rossi, Gay Rossi, and Stewart Armour, “No Small Change,” OCA Resource Handbook (1986), <http://oca.org/resource-handbook/commservice/no-small-change>
- Ray Velencia, “St. Matthew House [for individuals with severe physical disabilities],” OCA Resource Handbook (2000), <http://oca.org/resource-handbook/commservice/st.-matthew-house>

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Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

2. Discuss the lives of Sts. Cyril and Methodios and their missionary work. How can we follow their example by responding to Christ’s commandment to “go forth” (Matthew 28:19)?

A. Read about lives of Sts. Cyril and Methodios, and read Matthew 28:19.

- “Methodios & Cyril, Equal-to-the Apostles, Illuminators of the Slavs,” GOA Online Chapel, www.goarch.org/chapel/saints_view?contentid=486
- “Saints Cyril and Methodios,” pages 163–65 in George Poulos, *Orthodox Saints*, Vol. 2 (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005). (DRE item # FL326)
- “Saints Cyril and Methodius,” Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saints_Cyril_and_Methodius

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

- What do Sts. Cyril and Methodios have in common with biblical missionaries, such as Paul, Philip, or Barnabas? How did they spread the Gospel? What were the effects of their evangelical works? In what ways might you imitate them?
- Read about the life of a contemporary missionary. Would you ever consider becoming one? Why or why not?
- What does it mean to “go forth”? Talk about ways your local church can help with this mission.

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

- Orthodox Christian Mission Center Magazine, www.ocmc.org/resources/magazines.aspx
- Orthodox Christian Mission Center, “Orthodox Approach to Missions,” http://ocmc.org/about_missions/orthodox_approach.aspx
- Luke Veronis, *Missionaries, Monks and Martyrs: Making Disciples of All Nations* (Light & Life, out of print)
- Luke Veronis, *Go Forth: Stories of Mission and Resurrection in Albania* (Conciliar Press, 2010). (DRE item # FL250)

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Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

3. In the Old Testament, we see many stories involving disagreements among siblings. What can families learn from these stories today?

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Genesis 4:4–15; Genesis 27; Matthew 5:23–24; Matthew 22:37–38; Luke 10:25–37;
John 13:34

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

- Talk about the epic conflict of Cain and Abel and/or Esau and Jacob. What are the consequences of this conflict? Have you ever disagreed with your siblings, relatives or friends? What were the consequences of your conflict? How did you resolve it, or are going to resolve it?
- How would Jesus respond to a disagreement between siblings? What can you learn from Jesus response?
- What would the Church’s response be to sibling rivalry?

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

- Barbara Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? For Teens* (Free Spirit Publishing, 2005), pages 202–215. (DRE item # YM651)
- Jennie McLaurin, “Foe or Friend: How to rein in sibling rivalry,” *Christian Parenting Today* (2004),
www.kyria.com/topics/marriagefamily/parenting/familydynamics/17.40.html

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4. Discuss one of the Great Feasts of the Church. How has this feast become important to you and your family?

A. Choose a feast and read the Church’s teachings:

Pascha (the Feast of Feasts)

The Twelve Great Feasts:

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|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ○ Nativity of the Theotokos | ○ Annunciation of the Theotokos |
| ○ Elevation of the Holy Cross | ○ Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem |
| ○ Presentation of the Theotokos | ○ Ascension of the Lord |
| ○ Nativity of the Lord | ○ Pentecost |
| ○ Theophany | ○ Transfiguration of the Lord |
| ○ Presentation of the Lord | ○ Dormition of the Theotokos |

Scriptures related to the feasts, e.g., Luke 2:1–38 and Matthew 26, 27, and 28

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

- Choose one the Great Feasts of the Church and talk about its importance in the Church. How does the Church celebrate this feast? How does your family celebrate this particular feast? What is this feast’s meaning to you?
- Have you ever invited a non-Orthodox friend to celebrate this particular feast with you, how did you explain it to him? What were his impressions?
- Think about a Feast that your family does not celebrate as much. How can you introduce the meaning and traditions of this particular Feast to them? What can you do to make it part of your family.

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

- *Enter In: Exploring the Feasts of the Orthodox Church* DVD. (DRE item # Y19)
- *Epiphany: Festival of Lights* DVD. (DRE item # GOTEL031)
- GOA Center for Family Care articles on Feast Days and Fasting Periods, www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/family/articles/art-feastdays

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- Frank Marangos, ed., *The Annual Resource Companion*, vol. 1: The Liturgical Year. (DRE item # FL025)
- A Monk of the Eastern Church, *A Year of Grace of the Lord* (SVS Press, 1997). (DRE item # FL761)
- Theodore Stylianopoulos, *A Year of the Lord: Liturgical Bible Studies*, 5 volumes (DRE items # FL611– FL615; entire set is item # FL616)
- Robert Snyder and Joan Teebagy, *Celebration: Feasts and Holy Days* (DRE item # FL751)

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Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

5. In our day, when people's lives have become more and more scheduled with events, how might we reclaim our understanding of Sunday (the Sabbath), as a day of rest and honoring the Lord?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Exodus 20:8–11; Matthew 12:9–14; Mark 3:1–6

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

- Read Exodus 20:8–11. What does the commandment say about the Lord's Day? What was Jesus' understanding of the Sabbath? How do you think the Lord's Day should be kept?
- Talk about the importance of Sunday as the Lord's Day in the Orthodox Church. What can the Church do to help its believers keep the Day of the Lord?
- Have you ever had the dilemma choosing whether to go to Divine Liturgy on Sunday or to attend another activity? What did you do, and would you change anything the next time you face the choice?

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

- Alkiviadis Calivas, *Come Before God: In Prayer and Solemn Feast* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998)
- Massachusetts Council of Churches, "Take Back Your Time," masscouncilofchurches.org/docs/takebacktime.htm
- George Mastrantonis, "The Ten Commandments," www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7115
- George Nicozisin, *Teenage Ten Commandments*," pages 44–49 (DRE item # 810)

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

1. In Leviticus 19:33, we read, “And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him.” Immigration has always been a source of growth and change in American society. What should be the attitude of an Orthodox Christian toward immigration and immigrants?

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Genesis 4:4–15; Genesis 27; Psalm 137 (136 Septuagint); Matthew 22:37–38; Luke 10:25–37; John 13:34

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

- Who were some of the immigrants in the Bible? How were they treated? Have any of your friends or family members been immigrants? How do you act toward them? (Alternatively: Would you ever consider emigrating to another country? Think about challenges you might meet.)
- The first Greek immigrants to arrive in the United States established the Greek Orthodox Church of America. How did their church integrate into a new culture? How did they maintain their Orthodox Tradition and Greek heritage?
- Does the Church respond differently to different kinds of immigrants? Why or why not?

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

- Thomas FitzGerald, “The Development of the Orthodox Parish in the United States,” pages 11–32 in Anton Vrame, ed., *The Orthodox Parish in America: Faithfulness to the Past and Responsibility to the Future* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004).
- National Council of Churches USA, “Resolution on Immigration and a Call for Action,” (September 22, 2008), www.nccusa.org/NCCpolicies/immigrationsresolution08.htm

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Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

- National Council of Churches USA Ecumenical Resources for Immigration Ministries, “Who Is My Neighbor?” www.ncccusa.org/immigration/immigmain.html
- National Council of Churches News Service, “More faith groups favor immigration reform, but just how many Americans are listening?” (February 28, 2011), available from www.ncccusa.org/news/110301immigrants2.html

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

2. Discuss the prayers and Biblical references of the Sacrament of Holy Unction in the Orthodox Church (James 5:14–15). What does the sacrament tell us about faith, healing, and our relationship with God?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Genesis 30:22–33; James 5:14–15

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

- In the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Unction is offered for the healing of soul and body and for forgiveness of sins. At the end of the service, the person is anointed with oil, and the grace of God is called down upon each person. What is the meaning of the service, and how is it meant to affect us?
- Focus on the Holy Unction service of Holy Wednesday. What are the troparias, psalms, prayers, and Scripture readings of the service?
- Who needs to partake in the Sacrament of Holy Unction, and when, according to the Church's teachings?

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

- *Holy Unction* video, available at www.goarch.org/multimedia/video/unction/qt-unction (DVD also available for purchase, DRE item # GOTEL012)
- Alkiviadis Calivas, *Great Week and Pascha in the Greek Orthodox Church* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992), pages 51–62.
- Donna Farley, *Seasons of Grace: Reflections on the Orthodox Church Year* (Conciliar Press, 2002), pages 133–36. (DRE item # FL760)
- Paul Meyendorff, *The Anointing of the Sick* (SVS Press, 2009).
- Meletios Webber, *Bread & Water, Wine & Oil: An Orthodox Christian Experience of God* (Conciliar Press, 2007). (DRE item #FL625)

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Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

3. In Matthew 18:21–22, Jesus tells Peter that one should forgive one’s brother not just seven times but “seventy times seven.” Discuss how and why we should forgive wrongdoers, even when something within us cries out for justice—especially if we’re the injured party.

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Luke 23:34; Matthew 6:14–15; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:3

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

- Read the story of St. Dionysius of Zakynthos, St. Moses the Ethiopian, or another saint noted for forgiveness. What can you learn from the life of these saints?
- How does forgiveness work in a world of violence, international and civil wars, totalitarian regimes, holocausts, genocides and so on?
- What are the steps of forgiving someone? How can we practice forgiveness in our daily life?

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

- Barbara Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? For Teens* (Free Spirit Publishing, 2005), pages 94–102 and 142–47. (DRE item # YM651)
- “Saint Dionysios of Zakynthos,” pages 298–300 in George Poulos, *Orthodox Saints*, Vol. 4 (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005). (DRE item # FL328)
- “St. Dionysius of Zakynthos,” www.ionianvillage.org/program/saints/dionysios
- “Saint Moses the Ethiopian,” pages 219–221 in George Poulos, *Orthodox Saints*, Vol. 3 (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005). (DRE item # FL327)
- “St. Moses the Ethiopian,” www.ewtn.com/saintsholy/saints/M/stmosestheblack.asp

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4. Discuss the famous speech of St. Paul in Athens (Acts of the Apostles 17:22–31). Why is the speech meaningful, and what is its relevance for others today?

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Acts 17; Romans 1:20–23; Hebrews 1:3; Titus 1:11–12

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

- Talk about Athens at the time Paul is preaching. What was the Athenians’ religion? Who is their Unknown God? Who is the Unknown God of Paul? How did Paul start introducing Him? How would you start talking about Christ to a non-Christian friend?
- What does it mean to be God’s offspring? How do we maintain this lineage according to St. Paul’s sermon?
- Could St. Paul’s sermon be preached at your church today? What is relevant to us today, and what is not?

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

- Theodore Stylianopoulos, *The Way of Christ: Gospel, Spiritual Life, and Renewal in Orthodoxy* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2002), pages 141–56.
- *The Young Church Pupil’s Manual* (Orthodox Christian Education Commission), available for order from <http://store.orthodoxed.org>.
- Archbishop Demetrios (Trakatellis), editor, *In the Footsteps of Saint Paul: An Academic Symposium* (Ecumenical Patriarchate and Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011).
- John Fotopoulos, “The Kingdom of God: Paul the Apostle’s Perilous Proclamation,” pages 19–41 in *Thinking through Faith: New Perspectives from Orthodox Christian Scholars*, edited by Aristotle Papanikolaou and Elizabeth Prodromou (SVS Press, 2008).
- Anton Vrame, “The St. Paul We Don’t Hear,” *Praxis* vol. 8, no. 2 (Winter 2009), available at <http://issuu.com/orthodoxmarketplace/docs/issuepdf--20->

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Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

5. Stress and anxiety seem to be inevitable nowadays, in our every relationship and activity. How are we as Christians supposed to act in times of worry and uncertainty?

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Matthew 6:25–28; Philippians 4:6

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

- What is your greatest stress or anxiety? Why? How did you manage it? What would Christ tell you in time of distress? How can your local church, family and friends help?
- How do you respond to other people who are stressed? How does their behavior influence you?
- How does the Church address society wide stressors such as inequality, violence and economic trouble?

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

- Barbara Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? For Teens* (Free Spirit Publishing, 2005), pages 172–83. (DRE item # YM651)
- GOA Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, “Orthodox Christian Teen Survival Guide: Managing Stress” brochure, available at www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/youth/youthworkers/survivalguide
- Dee Pennock, *Who Is God? Who Am I? Who Are You?* pages 118–31. (DRE item # 1011)