
St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019



TOPICS, TIPS AND RESOURCES



GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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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

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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)

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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

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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)

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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>