
St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival 2019



TOPICS, TIPS AND RESOURCES



GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

Department of Religious Education
(800) 566-1088 | religioused@goarch.org | sjcof@goarch.org

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Topics, Tips and Resources

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

1. Many of the Church's services employ objects from the natural world (such as wheat, wine, oil, or water) in order to confer a blessing upon the faithful. Why does the Church do this, and what does this suggest about our responsibility for the natural world?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Read the service of the Blessing of the Loaves, the Blessing of the Waters and other services that use natural resources.

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- As Orthodox Christians, how do we view the environment and our responsibility to protect it?
- The Church uses all five senses in its worship services. How are natural resources helpful in assisting in how we worship?
- Have you ever felt the presence of God through His natural creations? How did that affect you?

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
- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #16: "Holy Water for the Whole World," https://bethebee.goarch.org/home/-/asset_publisher/gAnk4cdUihei/content/holy-water-for-the-whole-world
- 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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2. From ancient Greece to the present, politicians have aligned themselves with religious concepts and constituencies. How is an Orthodox Christian to discern whether today's politicians do this out of genuine piety or in order to manipulate the electorate?

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Romans 13:1–7

Mark 12:13–18

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- How can we keep our Orthodox Christian mindset and morals in a world where we are a minority?
- Read Romans 13:1–7. How does this relate to us today, especially in America where we have a separation of church and state?
- Mark 12:13–18 talks about giving back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. How do we as Orthodox Christians view the government and politics?

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 Demacopoulos, "What Orthodox Christianity Can Bring to American Politics," *Public Orthodoxy*, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2015/12/18/what-orthodox-christianity-can-bring-to-american-christian-politics/>
- Kevin Allen, "Orthodox Christianity and Politics," *Ancient Faith Today*, https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/aftoday/orthodox_christianity_and_politics
- *Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World* (SVS Press, 2011), <https://www.svspress.com/living-orthodoxy-in-the-modern-world/>

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3. The hymns of the Church contain the whole of its theology. Pick one hymn from the Lenten or Holy Week period and describe how it speaks to you personally.

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Read the Holy Week Book

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Why might you feel more connected to certain Holy Week services one year vs. the next? Why could it be a different experience even though the services are not changing?
- Holy Week can be an emotional time of year for so many different reasons. Speak about a time during Holy Week where you heard a certain hymn and felt especially moved.
- Choose one hymn from Holy Week or Great Lent and explore the theology it conveys. What lessons are we learning as we are participating in these services?

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

- George Papadeas, *Holy Week through Easter Service Book* (Patmos Press, 1999) (Orthodox Marketplace item # FL900)
- Stephania Gianulis, *Journey through Holy Week Zine – Student* (Department of Religious Education) (Orthodox Marketplace item #L183)
- Robert Krantz, *Guide to Holy Week* (Volumes: Monday –Saturday) (Ellinas Multimedia, Incorporated)
- Fr. Alkiviadis C. Calivas, *Great Week and Pascha in the Greek Orthodox Church* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992)

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4. Describe how science and technology should always be at the service of humanity and, ultimately, of God, in harmony with His purposes.

A. Read the Church’s teachings:

Read the Official Document of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, “The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World,” (especially section F., paragraphs 10–12), www.holycouncil.org/-/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- How do scientific and religious explanations of the same phenomena provide different understandings of the world, thus opening up possibilities for our growth and development?
- We often hear of the clash of science and religion. How can we as Orthodox Christians respond to that?
- Technology helps progress the world that we live in, but it is not always used for good purposes. How can we as Orthodox Christians find ways for technology to help us with our Faith?

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

- *PRAXIS* Magazine, volume 18, issue 1: “Digital Media” (Department of Religious Education), <https://www.goarch.org/en/-/volume-18-issue-1-2018-digital-media>
- John and Lyn Breck, *Stages on Life's Way: Orthodox Thinking on Bioethics*, (SVS Press 2006), <https://www.svspress.com/stages-on-lifes-way-orthodox-thinking-on-bioethics/>
- Gayle E. Woloschak, Tatjana Paunesku and Katarina Trajkovic, “Science, Truth, and the Current Political Climate,” *Public Orthodoxy*, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2017/06/08/science-truth-and-the-current-political-climate/>
- Alvin Powell, “Stem Cells, Through a Religious Lens,” *The Harvard Gazette*, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2007/03/stem-cells-through-a-religious-lens/>
- “Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church,” (especially paragraphs 7–8), Official Document of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, https://www.holycouncil.org/-/message?_101_INSTANCE_VA0WE2pZ4Y0I_languageId=en_US

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5. In view of St. Paul's exhortation in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," discuss the importance of being biblically literate today.

A. Read the Church's teachings:

Colossians 3:16

B. Consider the direction your speech might take. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- The Orthodox Church provides Bible readings to be read every single day. How can these short readings help us focus and center ourselves every day?
- The Bible can often be taken out of context if the passage is not researched correctly. How important is it for us to understand the historical context in which each book was written?
- The Bible is one of the most accessible books, and it's constantly on lists of best sellers. Even though almost every Christian owns one, how many are actually reading it? How important is it to read the Bible within Orthodox Christianity?
- How does the way Orthodox Christian theologians read and interpret the Bible differ from Protestant literalist readings of the Bible?

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

- GOA Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, Be the Bee #111: "Why We Don't Hide Our Faith," <https://www.goarch.org/-/why-we-don-t-hide-our-faith-featuring-sister-vassa-larin->
- Download the Daily Readings App (created by the GOA Department of Internet Ministries) and explore the accessible daily Bible readings
- "The Eastern Orthodox Approach to the Bible," *Ancient Faith Today*, an interview with Dr. Jeannie Constantinou, www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/aftoday/the_eastern_orthodox_approach_to_the_bible
- Shannon Sakellariou, *A Lamp to My Feet: An Introduction to the Bible – Student* (Department of Religious Education) (Orthodox Marketplace item #M13)
- Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos, *Bread for Life* (Department of Religious Education, 1988) (Orthodox Marketplace item # BIB440)
- Fr. John Behr, *Public Orthodoxy* "Reading Scripture" <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2017/12/12/reading-scripture/>