



2018 St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival FAQs

About the Festival

The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival was created by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Religious Education in 1983 to provide junior and senior high school students an opportunity to research and to prepare a short speech on one of a predetermined set of topics and talk about their faith. There are parish, district, and Metropolis Festivals, culminating in the Archdiocese Festival. For further information and links: <https://www.goarch.org/-/st-john-chrysostom-oratorical-festival> and <https://www.goarch.org/departments/religioused>

Purpose

The purpose of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival is to give teenagers an opportunity to learn, write, and speak about their Orthodox Faith, Church, and Heritage. This process will enhance their understanding and appreciation of their identity as Greek Orthodox Christians, and cultivates spiritual growth and maturity. The overall Oratorical program is called an Oratorical Festival rather than a contest to minimize the competitive spirit and emphasize a joyful learning experience.

Festival Levels/Divisions

The Oratorical Festival Program begins at the parish level and is divided into three divisions:

- Elementary Division (local parish festival only) for students in grades 4-6
- Junior Division for students in grades 7-9
- Senior Division for students in grades 10-12

Top speakers at the parish level advance to the district level. Two finalists in each district division represent the district at the Metropolis Oratorical Festival. The top speaker in each metropolis division is then selected to participate in the Archdiocese Finals, which is hosted by a different metropolis each year.

All 18 finalists at the Archdiocese Finals participate in a weekend of activities, the highlight of which is their speeches. The Oratorical Festival Scholarship Fund provides college scholarships to top speakers. Currently, the top three speakers of each division receive scholarships of \$2,000, \$1,500 and \$1,000. Last year, each honorable mention speaker was awarded \$500.

Parish Festival

The Parish festival will be held on Saturday, February 17, 2018. There will be a 45min orientation for the speakers prior to the beginning of the festival.

The top speakers in the Junior and Senior Divisions advance to the district level. Two finalists in each district division represent the district at the Metropolis Oratorical Festival. The top speaker in each metropolis division is then selected to participate in the Archdiocese Finals, which is hosted by a different metropolis each year.

District Oratorical Festival

The South-Eastern Florida Conference will be held at St. Demetrios in Ft. Lauderdale, FL on March 10, 2018.

Atlanta Metropolis Festival

The Metropolis Festival will be held at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Charleston, SC, May 18-20, 2018.

National Festival

The 35th National Oratorical Festival will be hosted by the Metropolis of Chicago and the Parish of St. John the Baptist in Des Plaines, IL on June 8-10, 2018.

FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism Awards

Each finalist receives an additional scholarship award from FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism as part of its grant to the Archdiocese. FAITH has made these awards to Oratorical Festival Finalists since 2007.

The Chrysostom Scholarship for Hellenic College

In the 2018 St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival, each Senior and Junior division First, Second, and Third place finalist in each category (Oratory, Poetry, and Essay) at the Parish, District, Metropolis, and National levels of competition is eligible to receive a Chrysostom Scholarship upon acceptance to Hellenic College. This scholarship provides awards ranging from \$2,500 up to \$30,000 per year for four years.

Why the Oratorical Festival Matters

In a time when most people can barely express their faith and what they believe in, Dr. Anton Vrame, Director of the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, explains that the benefits of participating in the Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival for young people are enormous. They learn the formal aspects of preparing and delivering a speech in front of an audience and articulating their faith based on research and study from seventh grade and up, developing important skills in public speaking.

Not too young for theological insights

Dr. Vrame and the department of religious education are hard at work keeping the festival on track with the many parishes across the United States. Often he is struck by the scholarly depth and profound theological insights of the speeches. According to him they are worthy of being published in academic journals.

Gregory Floor, the Director of Admissions at Hellenic College Holy Cross has served as a judge on several Oratorical Festivals and confirms the high standard of the speeches. "What goes into these speeches is nothing short of an academic endeavor." observes Gregory Floor. It involves researching the topic, interpreting what contemporary society has to say but also going back and reading what the Church Fathers have said and finding scriptural support. Imagine the possibilities of a young person reading St. John Chrysostom for the first time, it might open up a world they never imagined.

Paving the way to success

The future for these young people will be bright. Dr. Vrame who has followed their lives is not surprised to note that the participants have gone on to lucrative careers in journalism, law and other fields. The positioning of the Oratorical Festival at that critical juncture in their lives, in those formative years when their contemporaries at school might be distracted by all things new, the Oratorical Festival steps in and leads the faithful to academic achievements and in matters of Faith a profound understanding will steer their lives in a positive direction.

Out of 500 plus Greek Orthodox parishes in the United States, Gregory Floor observes that in the 200 parishes that participate, the engagement is serious and communal in aspect. The young people are not only supported by their families but by their priests, parishes, their Sunday school teachers, friends and siblings, so that the event is one in which the entire community partakes, weaving bonds of friendship and love that last through their lives.

Student Records

The participation of a teenager in the Oratorical Festival can be a worthy addition to the student's school record. A letter for this purpose, prepared on Parish stationery, is available for any student participating in the festival.