



# 2025 TOPICS, TIPS & RESOURCES

THE 1-2-3 PACKAGE



EST. 1983  
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (DRE)  
GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA



# ABOUT THE ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival is a nationwide ministry of the Department of Religious Education (DRE) of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

The Oratorical Festival provides a platform and experience where Greek Orthodox youth from grades 7-12 present speeches discussing the Faith and the Church. Participants can explore and deepen their faith while honing their speech writing and public speaking skills.

National finalists earn significant monetary awards, a blessed spiritual gift, a plaque, and a certificate. All finalists at each competition level are eligible for scholarships.

The Oratorical Festival goes beyond a nationwide speaking competition. It centers around faith, education, and fellowship for youth.



## ABOUT THE 1-2-3 PACKAGE

# TOPIC TIPS & RESOURCES

This booklet used to be Topic Tips just for participants; then expanded to Topic Tips & Resources. Now, the Department of Religious Education (DRE) is providing, for the first time, a complete package of Topics, Tips & Resources all in one for participants, parents, mentors, GOYA advisors, and religious educators.

1. You will find the 2025 **Topics** for the Senior Division (grades 10-12) and Junior Division (grades 9-12) participants on pages 5-6. Parishes and religious educators can print these two pages and post them on church bulletin boards and in classrooms or easily include them in the parish's weekly bulletin, whether printed or digital.
2. The **Tips** section provides participants with suggestions, things to ponder, and thought-provoking questions on each topic to assist youth in brainstorming, developing, and writing their Oratorical Festival speeches. The Tips also empower parents, mentors, and GOYA advisors to assist participants easily and confidently across a wide range of topics. Sunday School teachers can also use these Tips to guide their students through discussions on any topic. They can even turn a class into a writing session to encourage all youth to participate in the church Oratorical Festival.
3. The **Resources** section includes a bibliography for participants with expansive materials such as books, articles, videos, websites, and liturgical documents. Sunday School teachers can also utilize any of these resources in the classroom at any time, confident that they are DRE-approved.

## HOW IT WORKS

# THE ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

The Oratorical Festival is divided into the Senior Division (grades 10-12) and Junior Division (grades 7-9). Participants start at the **Parish level**, which begins in the new year. Then, proceed to the **District or Metropolis level**. Then, two finalists representing each Metropolis of the Archdiocese advance to the **National Finals**.

If your parish still needs an Oratorical Festival, ask your priest or Sunday School teacher if this is something your community can start.

## HOSTS

# NATIONAL FINALS

Get ready for the National Finals on the weekend of May 30 to June 1, 2025, hosted by the Metropolis of Pittsburgh and the St. Nicholas Cathedral in Pittsburgh, PA.



## **PARTICIPATION INFORMATION**

Everything participants need to know about eligibility, speech requirements, and guidelines can be found in the Oratorical Festival Manual under the Participant Information section: [www.goarch.org/en/oratorical](http://www.goarch.org/en/oratorical)

## **AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS**

Participants at the National Finals receive awards and scholarships ranging from \$1,500 to \$7,000.

- Oratorical Festival Award Fund of the Department of Religious Education (DRE)
- FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism Scholarships
- Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society

Finalists at all levels are eligible to receive the Chrysostom Scholarship to Hellenic College ranging from \$2,500 to \$30,000 per year, to receive a credit for the pursuit of one undergraduate degree.

## **REGISTER**

Register for the Oratorical Festival as a parish chairperson or a participant today: [www.goarch.org/-/st-john-chrysostom-oratorical-festival-forms-and-registration](http://www.goarch.org/-/st-john-chrysostom-oratorical-festival-forms-and-registration)

## **SUBSCRIBE**

Keep up to date on this year's Oratorical Festival by subscribing to the email subscription service: [www.goarch.org/departments/religioused/lists](http://www.goarch.org/departments/religioused/lists) Or follow the Oratorical Festival on Instagram and Facebook: [@goarchORATORICAL](https://www.instagram.com/goarchORATORICAL)

## **ESTABLISHED/BEGAN**

The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical was established in 1983 under the late Archbishop Iakovos of North & South America of blessed memory, and began in 1984 under the Department of Religious Education (DRE) for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

## **ARCHDIOCESAN NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON**

Katherine Orfanakos Demacopoulos serves as the Archdiocesan National Chairperson of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. She has served as the National Chairperson since 2018. Before that, Katherine's parents, Presvytera Margaret Orfanakos and Fr. John Orfanakos of blessed memory, held the role since 1986. May their memories be eternal!

# SENIOR DIVISION

(GRADES 10-12)



## TOPIC 1

His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch, is recognized as the highest Primate in the Church. This title signifies a unique leadership role within the Orthodox Church, where authority and primacy are balanced with equality among Patriarchs. Discuss the practical implications versus the theoretical aspects of His All-Holiness' role in the Orthodox Church. What does it mean for him to be both "first among equals" and "first without equals"?

## TOPIC 2

The Seven Ecumenical Councils are regarded as seven of the most important parts of Church History, which came after the completion of the Bible. Pick one of the Council's and explain why it is important.

## TOPIC 3

The Bible is full of figures, both good and bad, who, while not talked about frequently, can be hugely helpful in understanding both salvation history and our place in it. Pick a lesser-known figure from the Bible, explain who they are, how they fit into the Biblical narrative, and what we can learn from them.

## TOPIC 4

While every church building is different, there are specific guidelines and practices that describe how and why they are built the way they are. Research them, and then explain their theological significance.

## TOPIC 5

As the world grows increasingly tumultuous and fearful, today's youth appear to be more anxious about the future. Discuss Christ's role as the bringer of hope and how that fits into modern life.





# JUNIOR DIVISION

(GRADES 7-9)

## TOPIC 1

Philanthropy is an important part of the Church's mission. It involves more than giving money. Why is it important to support people in different ways besides just donating? In what ways can we offer support, and how can these other forms of help make a difference in the lives of individuals and the community?

## TOPIC 2

In Psalm 4, we are told to "[b]e angry, but sin not." Why would we be encouraged to be angry? How does anger fit into the life of an Orthodox Christian?

## TOPIC 3

The Orthodox Church is filled with repetition: we sing "Lord, have mercy" dozens of times every service, we sing the Paschal Troparion all throughout Pascha, and we repeat the same Divine Liturgy every single time. What is the importance of repetition in the Orthodox Church?

## TOPIC 4

The Russian Orthodox novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky once said that "Beauty will save the world." What is the role of beauty in the Church and in the world at large?

## TOPIC 5

What is the symbolism of the liturgical vestments worn by a deacon, priest, and bishop, and how do these vestments reflect and correlate to their specific roles and responsibilities within the Divine Liturgy?





# SENIOR DIVISION

## (GRADES 10-12)

**Select 1 of the 5 following topics:**

### TOPIC 1

His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch, is recognized as the highest Primate in the Church. This title signifies a unique leadership role within the Orthodox Church, where authority and primacy are balanced with equality among Patriarchs. Discuss the practical implications versus the theoretical aspects of His All-Holiness' role in the Orthodox Church. What does it mean for him to be both "first among equals" and "first without equals"?

**Here are a few suggested ways you could research and develop your speech:**

- A.** Explore the significance and implications of this dual role. Reflect on why the title "first among equals" is significant in the context of the Orthodox Church's governance and unity. Search for and find out about the Ecumenical Patriarch's administrative and spiritual role, comparing the duality of this title.
- B.** Consider that much of the New Testament is full of digressions on leadership and the idea of being the greatest: Christ, for instance, says, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28). This also gains further depth when contrasted with God's warning to the Israelites in 1 Samuel 8 against having a king, saying he will lord their power over them and enslave them. What does this suggest about the role of an authority figure in an Orthodox Christian context?
- C.** The early Christian communities were largely egalitarian, only appointing leadership structures until they realized they had to (Acts 6:1-3). If we attempt to stay equal, how would one balance attempt to be equal, with being "First Without Equals"?

## Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:

- A.** Read the Special Edition *EP<sup>2</sup> of Did You Know?* facts by the Department of Religious Education (DRE), which explains the history and current standing of our current Ecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew: *Successor of Apostle Andrew*: <https://www.goarch.org/documents/32058/12709588/Successor+to+Apostle+Andrew+%28Special+Edition+EP2%29/7de1b77a-6f3f-3ae9-99c3-11e8d6dc95b2>
- B.** Read this response by His Eminence the then Metropolitan of Bursa and current Archbishop Elpidophoros of America in 2019 in which he justifies His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's title of *First Without Equals*: <https://ocf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/First-Without-Equals-elp2014-01-en.pdf>
- C.** Read the *First Among Equals* Zine to learn about the administrative and spiritual roles of the Ecumenical Patriarch: <https://orthodoxmarketplace.com/first-among-equals-the-ecumenical-patriarchate-zine-student/>
- D.** This article *The Origins and Authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church* reviews several authoritative sources of the Byzantine centuries (330-1453) that bear on the origins, development, jurisdictional responsibilities, and authority of today's Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Christian Church: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-origins-and-authority-of-the-ecumenical-patriarchate-of-the-orthodox-church>



## TOPIC 2

The Seven Ecumenical Councils are regarded as seven of the most important parts of Church History, which came after the completion of the Bible. Pick one of the Council's and explain why it is important.

### Here are a few suggested ways you could research and develop your speech:

- A.** A good starting place would be to use the resources on the subsequent page to get a general overview of what each of the Seven Ecumenical Councils did for the Church. Then, think about the effect of the verdicts of those councils, considering how they impact the Orthodox Church today. Once you've done those things, do further research into the councils and determine the exact circumstances that led to the council and the decisions that were made because of it. Use those resources as jumping-off points for further research.
- B.** The Ecumenical Councils were unique historical events convened to address a specific crisis in global Christianity at the time. Consider the ways that the Councils not only addressed the specific issues of their day but also the ways in which they provided a precedent for theological decision-making in the Church, which was focused on building consensus. Why is this particular kind of process important and what does it say about our history and our Church?
- C.** Each Ecumenical Council addressed a major theological debate that had caused division in the Church. In every case, those theological debates were focused on questions about the Holy Trinity or the dual natures of Christ (human and divine). Even the debate about icons at the seventh Ecumenical Council was a debate about Christ's material nature and whether or not it was possible to represent him through art. Consider the significance of the fact that the Church's credal statements have, historically, been confined to these two theological questions: Holy Trinity and Christology. Why do you think that is?

## Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:

**A.** Read this section of the First book in *The Orthodox Faith* series by Fr. Thomas Hopko, that provides a brief overview of the Ecumenical Councils in general and brief descriptions of their decisions: <https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/doctrine-scripture/sources-of-christian-doctrine/the-councils>

**B.** Read this article, which is a slightly more in-depth description of the Councils *Quick Facts About the 7 Ecumenical Councils*: <https://www.saintjohnchurch.org/quick-facts-7-ecumenical-councils/>

**C.** Read about each of the Ecumenical Councils from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

i. The First Ecumenical Council: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-first-ecumenical-council>

ii. The Second Ecumenical Council: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-second-ecumenical-council>

iii. The Third Ecumenical Council: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-third-ecumenical-council>

iv. The Fourth Ecumenical Council: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-fourth-ecumenical-council>

v. The Fifth Ecumenical Council: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-fifth-ecumenical-council>

vi. The Sixth Ecumenical Council: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-sixth-ecumenical-council>

vii. The Seventh Ecumenical Council: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-seventh-ecumenical-council>

**D.** Watch this *Be the Bee* video #78: *A Church of Councils* (featuring Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYJpdiYByZk>

### TOPIC 3

The Bible is full of figures, both good and bad, who, while not talked about frequently, can be hugely helpful in understanding both salvation history and our place in it. Pick a lesser-known figure from the Bible, explain who they are, how they fit into the Biblical narrative, and what we can learn from them.

#### **Here are a few suggested ways you could research and develop your speech:**

- A.** If you have a figure from the Bible but don't know where to start, consider the following: what happens to them? Does a Holy Figure interact with them? If so, what do they say? How are they treated by the author of the Book in which they exist? Do they remind you of your own life at all? If so, how? See if there are any commentaries written by the Church Fathers — what do they say?
- B.** For this question, the figure doesn't have to be a Holy Figure — it might be more interesting if they aren't! Sometimes, we can learn more from the mistakes and failures of others than from their teachings.
- C.** If you feel stuck, read a portion of the Bible that you've never read before, and if there's a figure you've never heard of, look into them. Think about how they lived in the context they existed within and if they resemble any figures you're more knowledgeable about.

**Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:**

**A.** Here are a few lesser-known figures mentioned in the Bible that are hugely helpful and enlightening in a Christian context:

- i. Melchizedek in the Book of Genesis
- ii. Joseph in the Book of Genesis
- iii. The Witch of Endor in 1 Samuel
- iv. The Women at the Well in the Gospel of John
- v. Cornelius in the Acts of the Apostles

## TOPIC 4

While every church building is different, there are specific guidelines and practices that describe how and why they are built the way they are. Research them, and then explain their theological significance.

### Here are a few suggested ways you could research and develop your speech:

- A.** It might help to begin by visiting and researching different churches and seeing what they have in common and what elements attract visual attention. Are there any specific icons painted on particular walls? Where do the smaller icons go? Is there a dome, and if so, what's painted within it? Consider these questions and more in your research.
- B.** Imagine entering your local parish for the first time if you have never been to a church. What might you notice and focus on? What would you be drawn to? How would you feel? Even aspects like acoustics and how light falls throughout the church are essential since they are intentional and designed to evoke certain emotions. What emotions might they instill? Why would a Church be designed to make one feel that way?
- C.** Consider the words at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy: "Blessed is the Kingdom..." These words are often interpreted as saying that we, the laity, are in the Kingdom of God while we offer the Liturgy to God. How does the design of the Church building, where we are to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, support this idea and deepen our relationship with God?
- D.** Orthodox church architecture is rich with symbolism, reflecting profound spiritual truths about our relationship with God. Every aspect deepens our understanding and connection to the divine, from the layout and design to the intricate details. Consider the following: Discuss the symbolic meaning behind the layout of Orthodox churches, such as the placement of the altar, iconostasis, and narthex. How do these elements guide our journey toward communion with God?

## Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:

- A. Watch this *Be the Bee* video #113 that discusses the symbolism within an Orthodox church: *Six Minute Church Tour*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-DXQ9ukZAU>
- B. Read this 1985 article by John Yiannis called *Orthodox Art and Architecture* that takes a specific focus on the History and Type of art in Orthodox buildings: <https://www.goarch.org/-/orthodox-art-and-architecture>
- C. Read Rev. Fr. Thomas Hopko's second book in *The Orthodox Faith* series, titled *Worship*: specifically, focus on the first four chapters of the section entitled *The Church Building*: <https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-building>
- D. Watch this video *The House of God: Architecture, Vestments & Religious Articles*: [https://www.goarch.org/-/the-house-of-god-architecture-vestments-religious-articles?redirect=%2Fliturgy&com\\_liferay\\_asset\\_publisher\\_web\\_portlet\\_AssetPublisherPortlet\\_INSTANCE\\_hT578\\_axv3GHv\\_viewSingleAsset=true](https://www.goarch.org/-/the-house-of-god-architecture-vestments-religious-articles?redirect=%2Fliturgy&com_liferay_asset_publisher_web_portlet_AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_hT578_axv3GHv_viewSingleAsset=true)

## TOPIC 5

As the world grows increasingly tumultuous and fearful, today's youth appear to be more anxious about the future. Discuss Christ's role as the bringer of hope and how that fits into modern life.

### **Here are a few suggested ways you could research and develop your speech:**

- A.** Think about the anxiety members of Generation Z — you, your friends, people you know — may experience. Where does it stem from? Does it make you act differently? How so? Does it feel of this world, or not of this world?
- B.** As Orthodox Christians, we have a plethora of tools at our disposal to combat anxiety. Research the Orthodox monastic/ascetic prayer tradition of hesychia (stillness) and the ways it has been prescribed for more than one thousand years as an antidote to anxious thoughts. What are the specific techniques of this prayer tradition, and how can it benefit youth?
- C.** Investigate the statistics of diagnoses of anxiety and depression among youth or young adults and some of the common explanations for this rise (e.g., increasing isolation, technological addiction). Consider the ways that the Church has built-in mechanisms to counteract these changing environmental conditions.



**Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:**

**A.** Read 2 Corinthians 4, considering while you read it the hope that Saint Paul exhorts the Corinthians to have, while also keeping in mind that in an earlier letter he says the virtue of hope was secondary only to love itself.

**B.** Read these 3 articles that discuss the topic of anxiety in Gen Z:

*i.* *The Loneliest Generation: Inside the Gen Z Mental Health Crisis:* <https://www.axios.com/2024/02/17/gen-z-depression-anxiety-future-workforce>

*ii.* *Over 60 Percent of Gen Z Have An Anxiety Disorder:* <https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/mental-health/4234365-over-60-percent-of-gen-z-have-an-anxiety-disorder/>

*iii.* *'It's Causing Them to Drop Out of Life': How Phones Warped Gen Z:* <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2024/03/24/the-anxious-generation-qa-00147880>

**C.** Read chapter 5 *Too Many Worries Distance Us From God* of Saint Paisios of Mount Athos book *With Pain and Love for Contemporary Man:* <https://anothercity.org/st-paisios-too-many-worries-will-distance-us-from-god-2/>

# JUNIOR DIVISION (GRADES 7-9)

**Select 1 of the 5 following topics:**

## **TOPIC 1**

Philanthropy is an important part of the Church's mission. It involves more than giving money. Why is it important to support people in different ways besides donating? In what ways can we offer support, and how can these other forms of help make a difference in the lives of individuals and the community?

**Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:**

- A.** The many charitable works performed in the Bible are typically not done through financial means. Consider what these works are, how they are carried out, who they benefit, and why.
- B.** Look into the projects your local chapter of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society is currently doing in your parish. Consider what needs they are trying to address and the steps they are taking to do so.
- C.** While donations are helpful, many people experiencing homelessness and hardship face challenges that go deeper. It is important to understand that their situations may stem from a lack of connections and support, complex and unexpected circumstances, and health and safety issues, among others. So, why would we do more in these scenarios than simply donate?

**Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:**

- A.** Read Christ's account of the Judgment of the Nations located in Matthew 25:31-46, focusing on how Christ puts emphasis on simply being there for the stranger, sick, and imprisoned as well as providing material aid for the hungry, sick, and naked.
- B.** Read 1 Corinthians 13 and think about the importance Saint Paul places on genuinely loving and caring for others as Christians.
- C.** Explore the diverse philanthropic projects: <https://www.philoptochos.org/projects/> and educational initiatives: <https://www.philoptochos.org/community-educational-initiatives/> of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society.

## TOPIC 2

In Psalm 4, we are told to "[b]e angry, but sin not." Why would we be encouraged to be angry? How does anger fit into the life of an Orthodox Christian?

### Here are a few suggested ways you could research and develop your speech:

- A.** There are many moments in the Bible where God displays anger: when Moses initially refuses God's call, when the Israelites create the golden calf, when Jesus drives out the merchants in the temple, and so on. Consider how this can exist in communion with His love for these people.
- B.** While writing to the Ephesians on matters of community and brotherhood, Saint Paul says, "[b]e angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." While this is similar to the passage from Psalm 4, Saint Paul expands on this idea — what does it mean to "let the sun go down on your anger"? How can we avoid giving "opportunity to the devil"?
- C.** Jesus speaks of anger in His sermon on the mount — "I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire," making it explicitly clear that unbridled anger is not a good thing, even saying that "if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." How does this fit into the greater context of being told we can be angry? If we become angry, what or who can we be angry at?

### Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:

- A.** Read the entirety of Psalm 4, Ephesians chapter 4, and Matthew chapter 5 to appreciate the context in which we are told to be angry.
- B.** Read Saint John Chrysostom's 17th sermon on the Acts of the Apostles, paying close attention to the portion in which he discusses arguing with "heathens" without wrath or anger: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/210117.htm>

### TOPIC 3

The Orthodox Church is filled with repetition: we sing Lord have Mercy dozens of times every service, we sing the Paschal Troparion all throughout Pascha, and we repeat the same Liturgy every week. What is the importance of repetition in the Orthodox Church?

#### Here are a few suggested ways you could research and develop your speech:

- A. How does the practice of repetition enhance our spiritual lives and deepen our faith? Focus on examples of three, twelve, and forty.
- B. Discuss spiritual discipline in monasticism and how repetition plays a significant role in their daily lives.
- C. Saint Isaac the Syrian states, "If at the time when the mind is praying it is distracted by an extraneous thought or worry or about anything, then this prayer is not called pure" (Homily 16). Consider how repetition can help redirect our attention during services.
- D. "Repetition is the mother of learning" is a famous saying which emphasizes the importance of repeating information or practicing skills, which is essential for effective learning. Consider the importance of repetition from a psychological perspective and apply that to your prayer life.

#### Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:

- A. Read this article *The Meaning of Ritual, or "Hurry up and get on with it, this ain't no opera!"* <https://www.pravmir.com/the-meaning-of-ritual/#:~:text=Anyone%20the%20least%20bit%20familiar%20with%20the%20Orthodox,in%20peace%2C%20let%20us%20pray%20to%20the%20Lord.%E2%80%9D>
- B. Read this article *Orthodox Prayer Rope: Why It's Vital to Faith* by Orthodox Christianity 101: <https://www.orthodoxchristianity101.com/post/orthodox-prayer-rope-why-its-vital-to-faith>
- C. Read this article *The Power of Repetition — Why 'Repetition is the Mother of Learning' Holds True*, which goes into detail about the scientific and psychological perspective on the importance of repetition: <https://skillapp.co/blog/the-power-of-repetition-why-repetition-is-the-mother-of-learning-holds-true/>

## TOPIC 4

The Russian Orthodox novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky once said that "Beauty will save the world." What is the role of beauty in the Church and in the world at large?

### Here are a few suggested ways you could research and develop your speech:

- A. Talk about what beauty means to Dostoevsky, how it reflects God and His creation.
- B. It might help to start by considering the meaning of the word "beautiful." It can be used to describe anything from a person to a sunset to a church service. Think about other things that the word beautiful can apply to and consider what unites them.
- C. Sometimes, it can help to define something by its opposite. If we assume that beauty will save the world, then it would follow that ugliness would doom it — in a Christian context, what is ugliness? What does it do to us?

### Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:

- A. Though it is not entirely necessary to read *The Idiot*, the book the quote originates from, it is worth it to have at least a basic understanding of Dostoevsky. Here is an article, *Crime and Punishment*, to start: [www.britannica.com/biography/Fyodor-Dostoyevsky/Crime-and-Punishment](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Fyodor-Dostoyevsky/Crime-and-Punishment)
- B. *For the Life of the World* by Father Alexander Schmemman is a book on the Christian approach to the secular world told through the viewpoint of the Divine Liturgy. Read chapter four, paying close attention to Fr. Schmemman's attitude towards the necessity — or lack thereof! — of beauty: <https://svspress.com/for-the-life-of-the-world-new-edition/>
- C. Rev. Fr. John Breck's article *Divine Beauty (1)*, *Orthodox Church in America*, talks about the beauty of creation: <https://www.oca.org/reflections/fr.-john-breck/divine-beauty-1>
- D. *The Nature of Divine Beauty* article in the *Orthodox Arts Journal* reflects on how we can come to know God through created beauty: <https://orthodoxartsjournal.org/the-nature-of-divine-beauty/>
- E. Saint John Chrysostom's homilies on Genesis contain commentary on the six days of creation, emphasizing the beauty of creation and its role in leading believers to a greater understanding of God: <https://www2.iath.virginia.edu/anderson/commentaries/ChrGen.html>

## TOPIC 5

What is the symbolism of the liturgical vestments worn by a deacon, priest, and bishop, and how do these vestments reflect and correlate to their specific roles and responsibilities within the Divine Liturgy?

**Here are a few suggested ways you could research and develop your speech:**

- A.** While symbolism is relevant, a good starting place might be to consider how vestments make you feel. How do they look? Do they evoke any other kind of clothing? What type of materials are used? Is there a particular aesthetic they frequently go for?
- B.** Consider the liturgical and pastoral role of the deacon, priest, or bishop and how their role is expressed in their liturgical garments.
- C.** Consider the significance of the liturgical colors of Orthodox vestments throughout the ecclesiastical (Church) calendar year. This contemplation can deepen your understanding and appreciation of the symbolism behind these colors.

**Here are some resources you can explore as you do your research:**

- A.** Watch this *Be the Bee* video #117 that goes in depth on the vestments that clergy members wear, *What Vestments Reveal About our Relationship with God*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIO02rQDQ6o>
- B.** Read this short chapter of a book on *Orthodox Worship* by Fr. Thomas Hopko about both the symbolism and the history of individual vestments: <https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-building/vestments>
- C.** *A Guide to Orthodox Liturgical Vestments* gives an in-depth explanation of the function and meaning behind each of the vestments worn by Orthodox clergy and includes images to accompany each description: <https://www.saintjohnchurch.org/orthodox-liturgical-vestments/>
- D.** Watch this video *The Liturgical Colors of Orthodox Vestments Explained I Greek Orthodoxy 101*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f7Ek1BfKT0>

# DON'T FORGET!

Everything participants need to know about eligibility, speech requirements, and guidelines can be found in the Oratorical Festival Manual under the Participant Information section: [www.goarch.org/oratorical](http://www.goarch.org/oratorical)

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