

Rhetorical Training

vital role in the formation of an ideal orator. First, our students read, read, and read some more—and they read “good books.” Our Boni Libri program² requires a minimum of six hundred minutes per month, or about thirty minutes per day, of reading from a list of required and recommended books. Many students exceed the minimum, and a majority of the students complete the Boni Libri program each year without fail. Reading is essential to gaining the storehouse of knowledge an orator needs, and it is also important for the recognition and development of versatility in style. Second, our students are pressed to think deeply and diversely—that is, to think so as to remember, so as to infer connections and implications, so as to imagine possibilities. A well-trained mind smooths the road of the well-trained orator. Third, our teachers keep the standards high and smother their children with the love and grace necessary to keep children and families willing to seek after the standards. Orators honed in such a culture will have, Lord willing, not only the skills to speak clearly, pleasingly, and persuasively, but the vision to transform the culture of their churches and their communities.

Notes:

1. For information on this competition go to <http://accsedu.org> > School Resources > Chrysostom Oratory Competition.
2. For more on the Boni Libri program listen to Kenwyn Trotter’s conference workshop, “Everybody’s Reading Boni Libri” at <http://accsedu.org> > School Resources > Journal and Newsletter.

Why Another Crusade?

by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

You cannot but know that we live in a period of chastisement and ruin; the enemy of mankind has caused the breath of corruption to fly over all regions; we behold nothing but unpunished wickedness. The laws of men or the laws of religion have no longer sufficient power to check depravity of manners and the triumph of the wicked. The demon of heresy has taken possession of the chair of truth, and God has sent forth His malediction upon His sanctuary.

Oh, ye who listen to me, hasten then to appease the anger of Heaven, but no longer implore His goodness by vain complaints; clothe not yourselves in sackcloth, but cover yourselves with your impenetrable bucklers; the din of arms, the dangers, the labors, the fatigues of war are the penances that God now imposes upon you. Hasten then to expiate your sins by victories over the infidels, and let the deliverance of holy places be the reward of your repentance.

If it were announced to you that the enemy had invaded your cities, your castles, your lands; had ravished your wives and your daughters, and profaned your temples—which among you would not fly to arms? Well, then, all these calamities, and calamities still greater, have fallen upon your brethren, upon the family of Jesus Christ, which is yours. Why do you hesitate to repair so many evils—to revenge so many outrages? Will you allow the infidels to contemplate in peace the ravages they have committed on Christian people? Remember that their triumph will be a subject for grief to all ages and an eternal opprobrium upon the generation that has endured it. Yes, the living God has charged

me to announce to you that He will punish them who shall not have defended Him against His enemies.

Fly then to arms; let a holy rage animate you in the fight, and let the Christian world resound with these words of the prophet, “Cursed be he who does not stain his sword with blood!” If the Lord calls you to the defense of His heritage think not that His hand has lost its power. Could He not send twelve legions of angels or breathe one word and all His enemies would crumble away into dust? But God has considered the sons of men, to open for them the road to His mercy. His goodness has caused to dawn for you a day of safety by calling on you to avenge His glory and His name.

Christian warriors, He who gave His life for you, to-day demands yours in return. These are combats worthy of you, combats in which it is glorious to conquer and advantageous to die. Illustrious knights, generous defenders of the Cross, remember the example of your fathers who conquered Jerusalem, and whose names are inscribed in Heaven; abandon then the things that perish, to gather unfading palms, and conquer a Kingdom which has no end.

Source:

The World’s Famous Orations, ed. William Jennings Bryan (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906); online edition published 2003 by Bartleby.com, <http://www.bartleby.com/268/7/4.html>. This is from a sermon given in part in the English edition of Joseph Francois Michaud’s *History of the Crusades*.