

**Join us for a Lenten Retreat for families with a child/ren (of any age, birth to adult) with disabilities.** [Register here by March 3.](#) The retreat is sponsored by the [TEAM Belong](#) ministry of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, in collaboration with the [TEAM Belong](#) ministry of St. Demetrios (Elmhurst).

**Retreat Theme: In His Image: A Special Look at the Special Needs Family's Vocation**  
Our retreat leader for parents is Pres. Melanie DiStefano of the [Fully Human Ministry](#) of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.

**Retreat Activities:** Presentation/discussion for parents led by our retreat leader while participants with disabilities and siblings enjoy games, crafts, and music paired with volunteers. Lunch, prayers in the chapel, and family time outdoors (weather permitting), also included in the day.

**Date:** Saturday, March 18, 2023

**Time:** 10 am to 3 pm

**Location:** St. Iakovos Retreat Center, Kansasville, WI (about 45 minutes north of Chicago)

**Cost is based on the number of family members attending and ages:** Cost is \$60/person 12 years of age or older, \$40/child 4-11 years, and \$0 for children 3 and under

**Registration is open until March 3.** [Register here.](#)

**Retreat Theme: In His Image: A Special Look at the Special Needs Family's Vocation**  
Geared toward families of children with special needs, participants will examine ways in which their children are icons of Christ. These children are often deemed "substandard" by the world, yet have a special purpose in God's plan. Parents may face intensive challenges in navigating their child's care and may suffer with guilt feelings and anxiety. Retreat will help families see their special vocation, reflecting on how their children mirror God's grace and how their familial love can be inspiring within their communities.

**[Retreat Leader: Pres. Melanie DiStefano](#)**

Presvytera Melanie, serves as Resource Developer for the GOA Center for Family Care. She directs the Fully Human Ministry and hosts a monthly podcast called *Family Matters: Fully Human Edition* on Ancient Faith Radio. She is a graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (MDiv). Married to Father Joseph DiStefano for 16 years, they have one son, Michael Seraphim, who has special needs that greatly impact his health and his level of independence. One of her goals is to reach out to other families who are facing similar parenting challenges in order to provide faith-based perspectives, resources, and overall encouragement in their unique walk with Christ.

Please reach out to us with any questions about the retreat! Our hope is to have an event that is accessible and affordable for all! And of course, please spread the word!

With love in Christ,

Eleni Anast and Abby Vlahos