

## **A MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW DRE, DEBBIE VALLEY**

My name is Debbie Valley and I am your new Director of Religious Education. I was raised in Everett, WA (north of Seattle) as the youngest of three. My family also welcomed 13 foster children into our home while I was growing up. While in college, I met and married my husband, Jim. Jim was commissioned into the Air Force upon his graduation and we were stationed at Lackland AFB in San Antonio, TX. While there I graduated with a degree in Early Childhood Education from The University of Texas San Antonio. We also welcomed our first son, Jeremy. Shortly after my graduation we were sent to Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton. Our boys, Matthew and Brandon, were born on the base. After four years in Ohio we were sent to Oklahoma for 3 years and then we returned to Wright Patterson.

After 3 years in Dayton, Jim took a one-year assignment in Saudi Arabia (it turned into 15 months!). While he was in Saudi, I made the decision to start homeschooling our boys. We were blessed for Jim's next station to be in Kettering, at Defense Acquisition University (DAU), where he taught and eventually became a department chair. In 2010, after 24 years of service, Jim retired from the Air Force and has continued to work at DAU as a civilian.

During our homeschooling years, I was blessed to become the director of the Immaculate HEART Co-op in Dayton. It is a large co-op for 5<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> graders located at Emmanuel. In addition to heading up a team of amazing moms to run the co-op, I taught religion to 5-8 graders and 11-12 graders. I also ran the yearbook and choreographed for our amazing musicals (including teaching three kids to tap dance for Singing in the Rain).

I am happy to report, that all three of our sons, have now graduated high school. Jeremy is a student at Ohio University, Matthew is a certified welder working in Michigan, and Brandon attends Ave Maria University in Florida. I have also worked in ministry at my home parish, Incarnation, as the Director of Special Needs, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade catechist, and Director of Vacation Bible School. I am unapologetically pro-life, and I currently have the privilege of serving as the Vice Chairman for Elizabeth New Life Center Board of Directors in Dayton.

So how did I end up as your new DRE? While contemplating what I to do when my boys graduated, I heard a call from the Lord to go into fulltime ministry and so I began the Parish Catechetical Leadership program (formerly DRE program) through the Catechetical Institute at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. God willing, I will be completing the final year of the 5-year program this summer. I was excited to accept Fr. Mike's offer to join the parish staff and I know that this is where God wants me. I am looking forward to getting to know all of you and to serve you and the Lord. Please know that my door is always open to you if you need to talk, desire someone to pray with, or have any ideas or suggestions.

*"Life in Christ is a wonderful adventure!" – St. Pope John Paul II*