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## Parenting course helping parents with their first steps

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by Mark Reidy



*Family Education presenter, Maurice Watson, speaks to couples at the First Steps parenting course at Notre Dame University in Fremantle. Photo: Supplied.*

### By Mark Reidy

Twenty three couples reaped the benefits of a parenting course designed to tackle issues and challenges common in early childhood when they gathered at Notre Dame University in Fremantle earlier this year.

The *First Steps* course, which is aimed at parents with children from new born to age five, was organised by the Family Club, a non-profit organisation which aims to equip families with home life skills, as well as nurturing social support and friendship networks.

Joe Almeida, a member of the organising committee, told eRecord journalist Mark Reidy that the Pope's message at the Extraordinary General Assembly in October 2014 had been one of the inspirations behind his group approaching Family Education Australia (FEA) to facilitate the course.

Mr Almeida said that Pope Francis' call to recognise the important role of families within the Church had encouraged the Family Club to seek ways in which they could assist parents in their role as the primary educators of their children.

"The First Steps course is designed to equip young families with effective tools for moulding young children with strong character and to create bright and cheerful homes", Mr Almeida shared. "The course covered a variety of topics, including discipline and authority, parental unity and family environment."

The one and a half day course provided parents with information and practical ideas in helping their children form behavioural, emotional, and intellectual habits while they were at their most receptive stage of development.

Participants were given tools to identify their children's specific temperament and to assist them in developing the most effective ways to help them mature into well-formed adults.

Leading the weekend was Maurice and Jane Watson, who have been involved with FEA since its inception in 1986. The experienced couple, who have eight children, led workshops on Discipline and Authority, Effective Communication within the Family and Enriching the Family Environment.

Using a process known as the "Case Study Method" participants were provided with real life scenarios to allow them to identify issues, set goals and solve problems in a way that could be tailored to the unique issues and challenges of each family.

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Informative presentations, alongside small group discussions, also provided couples with the opportunity to further explore common issues relating to typical family situations and to learn from the experiences of other parents.

Organisers have been encouraged by the positive feedback from participants and are planning a FEA course for parents of teenagers in March next year.

“The best thing about the weekend was listening to the wonderful and passionate speakers, as well as meeting other parents in the same boat,” said Jeanette Zubac, who attended this year’s event with her husband, Ante.

“I really needed to hear what was said and it has given me more confidence and assurance in my role as a parent.”

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#### About the Author

Mark Reidy is a married father of three and has ministered to Perth’s homeless with the Holy Spirit of Freedom Community for the past 17 years. Mark has written for The Record for over a decade.

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