

MINISTER OF JUSTICE AT A MUSLIM RECEPTION

This was an occasion where the invited guests were given lots of food for thought and also enjoyed stimulating their taste buds. The Honourable Phil Goff, Minister of Justice, conveyed his best wishes to the recently wedded couple, Arief Rasheed and his wife Rizwana. He wished them a life - long partnership and advised the groom to follow the Rasheed's family trend of playing his role of adding to the numbers of the family here in New Zealand. The Minister also conveyed the best wishes of the Prime Minister, Hon. Helen Clark, to the family and the Muslim Community.

Br. Abdul Rahim Rasheed, the father of the groom and a long standing leader in this community, invited a number of guests to a waleema (reception) to publicise the wedding of his son, as well as request the Minister of Justice to convey his tribute to the Muslim community of Auckland. Dr Pratt, a senior lecturer from the University of Waikato, was requested to proffer some advice to the couple and the audience. It was the duty of Sr. Waseema Ahmed to give the mixed audience a brief outline of the Islamic perspective of the partner's role in a marriage.

Hon. Phil Goff acknowledged the contribution made by Br. Abdul Raheem Rasheed towards the welfare and growth of the Muslim Community here, since early 1981, when he became the President of NZMA involved in the construction of the Ponsonby Mosque, the first in New Zealand. He also paid tribute to the family. "The family is strong in its faith and it is seen as one of the driving forces in ensuring that people can maintain their culture, can maintain their tradition and maintain their religion."

The Islamic community is, "a community that is, generally, from the Ministry of Justice point of view, very well behaved and a very well disciplined community. It causes us very few problems, is very hard working, very committed and not only participates through education but is also very active on the sporting scene. I pay tribute to the Islamic community for their contribution to our society," were the compliments paid to the Muslim community of Auckland.

Dr. Pratt after conveying his good wishes to the married couple, advised them to make a HIT of their marriage. He also addressed the audience on the wider issues in which we live. He went on to apply his HIT theory in our lives, in our marriage, in all our relationships including a good interfaith Christian and Muslim relationship. "The 'H' stands for hospitality, which we are experiencing now. We need more of this extension of hospitality in the world between communities. The 'I' stands for integrity of our identities as for the people we are, the faith that we hold, our intentions and to live according to our beliefs. The 'T' is for tolerance, of understanding that we are prepared to walk the journey of life one with another," was the elaboration he gave on his HIT theory.

Sr. Waseema Ahmed began her discussion by pondering on a few pertinent questions concerning marriage. Is marriage only about love? Is it a mere word of acceptance? Is it a long process of discovering one another? "Marriage is a covenant contract that is witnessed by ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala - Glory be to GOD); it is between partners who share a common outlook on life and morality; who participate in the co-venture to fulfil their needs; and as representatives of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) on this earth," was the definition given by Sr. Waseema from an Islamic perspective.

She also touched on the role of the wife in this covenant. "I need to be a loving, tender, caring wife; I need to always return to my mate lovingly; and when he is sad and distressed, I should, as a righteous wife, be the one who looks and feels joy. There should be that closeness of the partners so that 'the one is like a garment for the other' (as quoted in the Glorious Qur'an in chapter 2: verse 187). She went on to elaborate that a garment is something that is nearest and closest to the human body and covers, as well as protects it.

In her concluding remarks, she stressed that due to our biological differences, man and woman are entrusted specific roles in society. She then addressed her remarks to the wedded couple, giving them the ingredients of a successful marriage according to the opinions of some of the scholars in Islam. "Make salaah; build your relationship on ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) and HIS Messenger; give your spouse quality time; don't blow small things out of proportion; establish good communication at all levels of the family; be ready to forgive the mistakes of each other; and develop taqwa (GOD consciousness) by holding your anger," were her concluding remarks.

After the vote of thanks, the guests were invited to partake in a delicious supper spiced with the taste of an Indian home cooked meal. The evening ended with the guests socialising and enjoying a buffet style meal.