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'Every Son and Daughter of God Matters'

Elder K. Brett Nattress discusses principles of human dignity at Auckland law and religion gathering

Faith, academic, governmental and community leaders gathered on Saturday 14 November in Auckland, New Zealand to discuss presentations from [last month's International Law and Religion Symposium](#) at [Brigham Young University](#) in Provo, United States. Due to COVID-19, this year's International Law and Religion Symposium (ILRS) was an online event. A highlights video of the symposium was viewed by attendees at the Auckland event, followed by speakers and a group discussion.

In his remarks, [Elder K. Brett Nattress](#), First Counselor in the [Pacific Area Presidency](#) of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, spoke of the human dignity of all of God's children.



He shared a parable by [Boyd K. Packer](#) (1924-2015), former president of the Church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In the parable a man found a perfect pearl, but discovered, to his dismay, that people admired the carefully crafted box holding the pearl, forgetting the treasure inside. "Too often we judge others on appearance, but Jesus Christ taught us to treasure the pearl," Elder Nattress said. "As we speak of religious freedom, I think of the pearl being sons and daughters of God. Every son and daughter of God matters."



Elder Nattress thanked the scholars, judges, lawyers and others present for their “defence of the pearls around [them].”

Dr. Juliet Chevalier-Watts, senior lecturer at Waikato University, attended the ILRS in Utah last year. “It was the best symposium I have ever been to,” she told attendees at the Auckland meeting.



Thanks to introductions made at that event, Dr. Chevalier-Watts now counts government officials and other thought leaders from around the world as dear friends. Though not a person of faith herself, Dr. Chevallier-Watts spoke of how fundamental religion is to the human race and the importance of defending the role of religious charities, even as “public voices grow ever louder” for their demise.

Other guests included Meng Foon, New Zealand’s Race Relations Commissioner; Judge Christian Whata; Ruth Cleaver, president of the Auckland Interfaith Council; Christchurch barrister, Jared Ormsby; Panama Le’auanae, a defence lawyer in South Auckland; and Gordon Tanner, Pacific Area Legal Counsel for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Throughout the afternoon, compelling discussions and inspiring ideas were shared, including an engaging dialogue on religious freedom protections in New Zealand led by Jared Ormsby and facilitated by thoughts from Judge Whata and others.

Gordon Tanner shared information about the International Center for Law and Religion Studies and J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University’s support of the [Human Dignity for Everyone, Everywhere](#) initiative.

According to the initiative’s website, the effort celebrates “the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with an invitation to a global conversation about preserving and protecting human dignity for everyone everywhere.”



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