Lithuanian version of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's book Freedom and Responsibility presented in Vilnius

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On 14 May 2012, the Lithuanian version of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's book Freedom *and Responsibility: In Search of Harmony. Human Rights and Personal Dignity* was presented at Seimas Palace of the Republic of Lithuania.

Present at the presentation were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Archbishop Innokentiy of Vilnius and Lithuania, His Eminence Audrys Juozas Cardinal Bačkis, Archbishop-Metropolitan of Vilnius; His Excellency Sigitas Tamkevičius, Archbishop of Kaunas; Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, Apostolic Nuncio to Lithuania; Vicar Bishop of Kaunas Jonas Ivanauskas; Ambassador Vladimir Chkhikvadze of Russia to Lithuania; Ambassador Vladimir Drazhin of Belarus to Lithuania; deputy of the Seimas Egidijus Vareikis; archpriest Vladimir Selyavko, secretary of the Vilnius diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church; Orthodox and Catholic clergymen, and representatives of public and educational organizations.

Deputy Vareikis greeted the audience and underscored the importance of discussing the topic of freedom in Europe at present. He is convinced that it is impossible to guarantee freedom without religious principles.

Cardinal Bačkis quoted Pope John Paul II, who had said that law and freedom have no future if separated from each other, and emphasized the importance of common Christian witness about incontestable moral truths in the modern world. He added, "Our dialogue is particularly important because many countries ignore Christian foundations."

Russian Ambassador Vladimir Chkhikvadze hopes that the topics which consolidate the public of Lithuania and Russia will be placed on the agenda of Russian-Lithuanian relations more often.

The DECR chairman, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, told the audience about Patriarch Kirill's book *Freedom and Responsibility: In Search of Harmony. Human Rights and Personal Dignity,* which is his first book translated into Lithuanian.

Metropolitan Hilarion thanked the translators, publishers and all people who helped to implement the project. "The Lithuanians can now get acquainted with the modern Russian religious and social

thought," he said and added that "His Holiness' work shows the sense of purpose of the contemporary Orthodox theology, gives a lead to scholarly discussion and, undoubtedly, brings an important contribution to the humanities today."

"When His Holiness wrote articles and addresses included in the book, he first of all had in view the witness about the incontestable values of Christian tradition, which the modern world needs at discussing topical problems of social development; the complex problem of human rights and freedoms being the most important.

"The readers will find arguments in the book confirming that the world devoid of spiritual dimension and built on the principles of permissiveness and egoism has no future. In the context of world financial crisis, inter-ethic conflicts and wars, depletion of natural resources, global terrorism and ecological problems. As they help people to keep the image of God within themselves, live in peace and good-neighbourly relations with those near and far, to cherish the invaluable gift of life and not to be insatiable consumers.

"The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church wrote certain articles and addresses when he led the group which prepared the Moscow Patriarchate's concept document on human rights entitled "The Russian Orthodox Church' Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights." It was adopted by the Bishops' Council in June 2008 and had a wide public response. This comprehensive document was presented at some international organisations, and its ideas were discussed in inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue.

"Freedom is, perhaps, the most difficult topic in the book. Freedom has been granted to people by God. In realizing it, people become creators of their life and reality. Therefore, freedom unites us with the Creator. However, at the same time freedom can be used not only for good deeds and creative work, but also for evil doings, which plunge people into the abyss of permissiveness.

"In his book, His Holiness favours freedom that becomes really valuable only when people go along the way of virtue and perfection. Christian tradition teaches us to live freely in accordance with the commandment of love of God and the neighbour. It is this freedom that makes human life valuable and exerts an elevation influence on people.

We believe this to be a starting point of public discussion of the role of human freedom in socium. We should take into account the category of moral responsibility in the dialogue with international organizations which sometimes understand freedom formally.

Lithuania is the state that develops independently. Its leaders and citizens are building their common

house in which human dignity is respected. Human dignity is a value not because it is fixed in international conventions and treaties, but because the human person has a moral orientation. I do not doubt that the majority of the residents of Lithuania does not perceived human dignity without Christian tradition which they put higher that the abstract dogmas of modern political correctness that brings moral enslavement to humanity.

I hope that people here will take an interest in reading the Lithuanian version of the book by the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. I hope that the book will enlarge the framework of discussion of the place and role of the individual in society and models of their harmonization with the Christian heritage of Europe, without which the present and the future of our continent are unthinkable."

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