

Metropolitan Hilarion spoke at an online seminar of the International Hellenic University



On the 16th of February, 2021, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, took part in a seminar of the International Hellenic University (MOET of IHU, Thessaloniki). The event, dedicated to the topic of "Orthodox Theology and Human Responsibility", was held online.

In the address titled "Freedom and Responsibility as Viewed by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill" Metropolitan Hilarion stated that the topics of rights and freedoms, their connection with responsibility, moral choice and human dignity have regularly been addressed by Patriarch Kirill throughout the years of his church ministry in sermons, speeches, lectures and written works.

"I believe that Christianity, like no other religion, can offer the most convincing worldview to people today, – noted the first hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in one of his addresses in 2010. – Indeed, if the highest value for a man of our time is freedom, it is in the person of the God-Man Jesus Christ that human

nature has attained its highest freedom—the freedom from evil and sin. Christianity offers a much loftier vision of freedom than just a negative concept of freedom ‘from’ something— from exploitation, violence and restrictions. With Jesus Christ, man can attain freedom ‘for’ something—for complete self-fulfilment in love for God and one’s neighbours. It is in this harmonious interaction (synergy) between God and man, as taught by Christianity and implemented in the lives of the saints and zealots of the Church, that everyone can find the answer to the issues concerning freedom, meaning of life and public service”

Based on the opinions expressed by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk emphasized: “a worldview anchored in the teaching of the Gospel cannot be subject to revision in order to please the ideologies or political preferences of certain groups of people”.

“We ought to admit that rights cannot exist without a solid moral foundation. Human rights must comply with the law of God, thus affirming human dignity and taking the side of creativeness, instead of destruction and death. Otherwise humanity will face degradation and degeneration and from “the force of law” the legal system will drift into “the rule of force.” - said the DECR Chairman.

He noted that the Russian Orthodox Church had attempted to formulate its own views on the nature of human rights, freedom and dignity. In 2008 it adopted the document called The Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights. The reason for producing this document is described in its preamble: “Christians have found themselves in a situation where public and state structures can force and often have already forced them to think and act contrary to God’s commandments, thus obstructing their way towards the most important goal in human life, which is deliverance from sin and finding salvation. In this situation the Church, on the basis of Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition, is called to remind people about the basic provisions of the Christian teaching on the human person and to assess the theory of human rights and the way it is being implemented”

Metropolitan Hilarion emphasized that “human rights, freedoms and especially dignity are associated in the public sphere with justice, first of all, social justice. Justice is not just a philosophical, juridical or political term; it is determined by morality. Striving for justice helps achieve social harmony and equality and give concrete meaning to the political, as well as socioeconomic rights of every human person”.

Following the Metropolitan’s speech, a discussion took place on the topics that he raised. Along with the DECR Chairman, the President of Honour of the Center of

Ecumenical, Missiological and Environmental Studies “Metropolitan Panteleimon Papageorgiou” (CEMES), Director of the MOET program of IHU, Professor Petros Vasiliadis took part in the conversation. Communication was held in English.

The International Hellenic University, established in October 2005, is based in Thessaloniki. It is the first university in Greece where all programmes are taught exclusively in English. The educational institution is funded by the European Union and the Greek state.

The university comprises nine Schools and thirty-three Departments with campuses in Thessaloniki (Thermi and Sindos), Kavala, Serres, Drama, Katerini, Edessa, Kilkis and Didymoteicho. Experts from all over the world teach there, and the composition of students is also international.

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