Magnifica Humanitas: A Reflection for Our Time

Artificial Intelligence, Human Dignity, and the Call to Love

A Time of Change

We are living through a moment of profound change. The world around us is being reshaped by powerful new technologies, especially artificial intelligence. These tools can now think, learn, and respond in ways that seem almost human. They influence how we work, how we communicate, and even how we make decisions.

In Magnifica Humanitas, Pope Leo XIV invites us not to be dazzled or frightened, but to reflect more deeply. He asks us to pause and consider a simple but essential question:

What kind of world are we becoming?

This is not just a technical question. It is a moral and spiritual one. The choices we make about technology are, in the end, choices about humanity itself.

The Heart of the Matter: Human Dignity

At the centre of the Church's teaching stands a truth that must never be forgotten: every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. This gives each person an unshakeable dignity. It is not something we earn. It does not depend on our intelligence, our usefulness, or our success. It is simply given.

In a world increasingly shaped by systems of efficiency and data, there is a danger that we begin to measure people in purely functional terms. We may start to see human beings as problems to solve, or resources to manage. But the Church reminds us: A human person is always more than a function.

Artificial intelligence must never be allowed to redefine what it means to be human. Rather, it must be guided by a clear understanding of human dignity, so that it serves the person rather than replaces or diminishes them.

A Gift and a Responsibility

The encyclical does not reject technology. It recognises that human creativity is itself a gift from God. The ability to invent, to innovate, and to improve the world around us is part of our vocation as stewards of creation. Artificial intelligence, in this light, can be seen as a remarkable achievement. It holds great promise for the common good.

The Good It Can Bring

AI already offers many positive possibilities:

- It can assist in medical care, helping to diagnose illness and support treatment.
- It can make education more accessible, opening new paths for learning.
- It can help coordinate responses to crises, improving humanitarian aid.
- It can reduce dangerous or exhausting labour, allowing people to focus on more creative and meaningful work.

These developments remind us that technology, when guided by wisdom, can be a genuine force for good. In the life of the Church, too, such tools can be helpful. They can assist communication, support administration, and even help share the Gospel more widely.
Properly used, artificial intelligence can serve communion rather than division.

The Shadows We Must Face

Yet alongside these possibilities, Magnifica Humanitas speaks with quiet seriousness about the risks. Technology is never neutral. It reflects the values and intentions of those who create and use it. For this reason, its power can be used in ways that harm as well as help.

1. The Subtle Loss of the Human Person

One of the deepest dangers is not immediately visible. It is the gradual loss of a true understanding of what it means to be human. If decisions about people's lives are made by machines, if human judgement is replaced by automated processes, we risk treating individuals as data rather than persons. This can happen quietly, almost without notice. But its consequences are profound.
A world that forgets the dignity of the person is a world that loses its soul.

2. Inequality and Injustice

Another serious concern is the widening gap between rich and poor.
Artificial intelligence requires vast resources: data, computing power, expertise. These are largely controlled by a small number of powerful organisations and countries. The danger is clear: those who already have power may gain even more, while the poor are left behind. In some cases, the vulnerable may even be exploited, through hidden labour, data extraction, or economic displacement.
The Church insists that this must not be so. Technology must be directed towards the common good, not the advantage of a few.

3. The Meaning of Work

Work is more than a way of earning a living. It is a way of participating in God's work of creation. It gives structure, purpose, and dignity to human life. Artificial intelligence can support work, but it can also replace it.
When jobs disappear without alternatives, people can be left feeling discarded. This is not simply an economic problem; it is a human one. A society that values efficiency above people risks losing sight of what truly matters.

4. Control and Freedom

AI also raises questions about freedom.
Systems that guide behaviour, influence choices, or monitor actions can easily cross the line into control. Social media algorithms, data tracking, and targeted messaging already shape how people think and act. There is a danger that freedom becomes limited, not by force, but by subtle manipulation.

For the Church, freedom is essential. It is the foundation of moral responsibility and the space in which we respond to God. Any technology that undermines this freedom must be approached with great caution.

5. Relationships and Isolation

Human beings are made for relationship. We grow through encounter with one another and with God.
AI can simulate conversation, offer advice, and even provide companionship. But these are never true relationships.
There is a risk that people may turn toward artificial substitutes and away from real human connection.
But no machine can replace:

- the warmth of a listening presence
- the depth of shared experience
- the grace of genuine love

The Church reminds us that the fullness of life is found not in simulation, but in real encounter.

6. The Question of Power and Peace

Perhaps the most serious danger lies in the use of AI in conflict.
Technologies that enable surveillance, cyber warfare, or autonomous weapons raise grave ethical concerns. They can make violence more distant, more efficient, and less accountable. This reflects what the encyclical calls a “culture of power” - a world where strength and control are valued above peace and justice. The Gospel calls us in the opposite direction: toward reconciliation, mercy, and peace.

A Deeper Question

All of these concerns lead us back to a deeper truth: Technology is not just about what we can do. It is about who we are becoming.
Artificial intelligence forces us to ask:

- Do we see others as brothers and sisters, or as data points?
- Do we seek the common good, or our own advantage?
- Do we build communion, or control?

These are spiritual questions as much as practical ones.

The Role of the Church

In this changing world, the Church has an essential role to play.

A Moral Voice

The Church reminds society that progress must always be measured against human dignity. Efficiency, innovation, and profit are not enough. What matters is how people are treated – especially the most vulnerable.

A Living Witness

The Church is also called to embody its teaching. This means:

- using technology responsibly
- protecting human relationships
- standing with those who are left behind

Parishes, communities, and individuals all have a part to play in this witness.

A Call to Each of Us

The encyclical is not addressed only to experts or leaders. It speaks to all of us.
Each day, we make choices about how we use technology:

- what we trust
- how we communicate
- how we treat others online

These choices shape the kind of world we are creating. We are not passive observers. We are participants.

A Choice of Two Paths

At its heart, Magnifica Humanitas presents a choice.
We can build a world driven by power, control, and self-interest – a modern Tower of Babel, where human achievement loses its moral direction. Or we can build a civilisation of love – a world rooted in justice, solidarity, and care for one another.
This second path is not easy. It requires wisdom, restraint, and courage. But it is the only path that honours the dignity of the human person.

A Hopeful Vision

The tone of the encyclical is ultimately hopeful. It recognises the risks, but it does not give in to fear. Instead, it calls us to responsibility and to trust. Human beings, guided by grace, are capable of shaping technology for good. We are capable of building systems that reflect compassion rather than control. We are capable of ensuring that no one is left behind.

Conclusion: Remaining Human

In the end, the message is simple and profound: Remain human.
In a world of rapid change, hold fast to what is essential:

- the dignity of every person
- the value of real relationships
- the call to love

Artificial intelligence will continue to grow and develop. But it must never define us. Instead, it is we who must define how it is used – guided by faith, by reason, and by love. And so we are invited to walk forward with wisdom and courage, choosing not the path of domination, but the path of communion.
For in the end, the true measure of progress is not what we build, but how we love.