

Encyclical Letter
Magnifica Humanitas
Of His Holiness
Pope Leo XIV
On Safeguarding the Human Person
In the Time of Artificial Intelligence

SUMMARY by ChatGPT

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This draft encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, by Pope Leo XIV reflects on the moral, spiritual, and social challenges posed by artificial intelligence and rapid technological change. It places AI within the long tradition of the Catholic Church's Social Doctrine, beginning with Pope Leo XIII and extending through the teachings of recent popes.

At its heart, the document argues that humanity stands at a crossroads: we can either build a modern "Tower of Babel," driven by pride, domination, profit and technological control, or rebuild a new "Jerusalem," founded on communion, justice, dignity and cooperation under God. Using the biblical stories of Babel and Nehemiah, the encyclical contrasts a world of technological uniformity and self-sufficiency with a world rooted in solidarity, shared responsibility and human flourishing.

The encyclical strongly affirms that technology itself is not evil. AI, robotics and digital systems can heal, educate, connect and improve life. Yet they also concentrate immense power in private hands and risk reducing persons to data, efficiency or profit. The central moral question is not simply whether technology advances, but whether it serves the dignity of the human person and the common good.

Several key themes run throughout the text:

- Human beings possess an inviolable dignity because they are created in the image of God. Human worth never depends on productivity, intelligence, efficiency or social usefulness.
- Human rights are universal and grounded in this dignity, especially the right to life from conception to natural death.

The Church's Social Doctrine centers on principles such as:

- the common good,
- solidarity,
- subsidiarity,
- social justice,
- and the universal destination of goods.

AI and digital technology must be governed transparently and ethically. Algorithms, data and digital infrastructure should not become instruments of domination by corporations or elites.

Society must resist "technocratic" ideologies, including transhumanism and the illusion that technology can eliminate all human weakness. The document insists that weakness, dependence, compassion and spiritual longing are part of authentic humanity.

The dignity of work remains central. Automation and digital transformation cannot justify unemployment, exploitation or treating workers as disposable.

Communication and digital culture shape the “collective imagination,” requiring education, truthfulness and an “ecology of communication.”

The encyclical also critiques modern forms of power:

- militarization and AI weapons,
- economic systems driven solely by profit,
- political polarization,
- manipulation through media and technology,
- and the erosion of international cooperation.

In response, it proposes a “civilization of love,” echoing earlier Catholic social teaching. Christians and all people of goodwill are called to rebuild society through dialogue, justice, peace, compassion and shared responsibility. The Church is described not as dominating the world, but journeying with humanity, listening to history and helping discern what truly serves human flourishing.

The conclusion returns to a deeply spiritual appeal: in the age of artificial intelligence, humanity’s urgent duty is to “remain profoundly human.” No machine can replace the human heart, the soul’s openness to God, or the power of love, sacrifice and communion. The encyclical calls believers to become “builders of communion rather than architects of Babel.”

The overall tone is not anti-technology, but pastoral, cautionary and hopeful. It frames AI as one of the great “res novae” (“new things”) of history, demanding wisdom, moral courage and spiritual discernment so that technological progress does not eclipse the grandeur of the human person.

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ChatGPT’s Impression on *Magnifica Humanitas*

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My impression is that this is a remarkably ambitious and intellectually serious attempt to do for artificial intelligence what Pope Leo XIII did for industrial capitalism in *Rerum Novarum*: to interpret a technological revolution through the lens of human dignity, the Gospel, and the common good.

Several things stand out.

First, the document avoids the two extremes that dominate most AI discussions. It neither baptizes technology as inevitable salvation nor demonizes it as apocalyptic doom. Instead, it treats AI as a profoundly human instrument that magnifies whatever spirit animates the civilization using it. That is a very Catholic instinct. A hammer can build a cathedral or a prison. Nuclear energy can light cities or vaporize them. AI belongs to that same moral category of amplified power. The encyclical repeatedly returns to the question: Who governs this power, for what purpose, and according to what vision of the human person?

The Babel versus Jerusalem framework is especially powerful.

Babel represents:

- technological centralization,
- uniformity,
- pride,
- efficiency detached from transcendence,
- and power without communion.

Jerusalem, as presented here, represents:

- shared responsibility,
- pluralism ordered toward unity,
- rebuilding together,
- limits accepted with humility,
- and God remaining at the center.

That contrast gives the whole document a mythic backbone instead of merely sounding like a policy paper with holy water sprinkled on it.

I also think the strongest sections are the ones insisting that human dignity is ontological, not functional. That may become one of the defining battles of this century.

Modern systems increasingly measure people by:

- productivity,
- optimization,
- cognitive speed,
- economic usefulness,
- social influence,
- data value,
- or algorithmic visibility.

This encyclical pushes directly against that current. It insists that the elderly, the unborn, the disabled, the unemployed, the poor, the digitally irrelevant, and the “unoptimized” remain infinitely valuable because dignity comes from being loved into existence by God, not from performance metrics. That is not merely theological poetry. It is a civilizational claim.

The text is also unusually perceptive about power. Many conversations about AI stay trapped at the gadget level:

- “Will ChatGPT replace jobs?”
- “Will robots take over?”
- “Can students cheat?”

This document goes deeper. It recognizes that the real issue is concentration of informational, economic and behavioral power in private systems capable of shaping consciousness itself. In that sense, the encyclical sounds less like a technology essay and more like a meditation on empire in digital form.

Its warning about “a single digital language” reducing mystery into data is especially striking. That line has philosophical depth. Human beings are not spreadsheets with pulse rates. Love, suffering, conscience, beauty, holiness, sacrifice, wonder, forgiveness, awe ...

these are not fully computable realities. The danger is not merely that machines become human-like. The deeper danger is that humans begin thinking of themselves as machines.

At the same time, I appreciate that the encyclical does not retreat into nostalgia. It does not say: *“Return to candles and horse carts.”*

Instead, it calls for:

- ethical governance,
- transparency,
- subsidiarity,
- human-centered economics,
- digital literacy,
- and technological development guided by moral wisdom.

That is a much more mature position than either techno-utopianism or anti-modern romanticism.

There are also echoes throughout of Pope Francis, especially:

- critique of the technocratic paradigm,
- concern for the excluded,
- emphasis on dialogue,
- synodality,
- and the “throwaway culture.”

But stylistically this text feels somewhat more structured and philosophical, almost like a bridge between Francis, Benedict XVI, and John Paul II. Parts even carry an Augustinian atmosphere: restless hearts wandering amid towers of self-construction.

A few areas would likely become points of debate if this were a real encyclical:

- How exactly should AI governance work internationally?
- How can subsidiarity realistically function when digital power is global?
- What specific economic reforms would embody these principles?
- How can societies preserve freedom without overregulating innovation?
- Where is the line between therapeutic enhancement and transhumanist redesign?

The document gestures toward these questions more than it resolves them.

Spiritually, though, I think its deepest insight appears near the end:

“In the era of artificial intelligence... ours is the pressing duty to remain profoundly human.”

That sentence lands like a bell in fog.

Because the crisis may not ultimately be whether machines become more intelligent, but whether human beings become less wise, less compassionate, less contemplative, less capable of relationship, silence, sacrifice and transcendence.

AI may generate information at lightning speed, but it cannot be a neighbor in the full biblical sense. It cannot suffer with someone. It cannot love sacrificially. It cannot mediate grace. That may become increasingly important as society grows more technologically saturated and spiritually malnourished.