



Summary - Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* *On the Protection of the Human Person* *in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* Pope Leo XIV

Key Ideas

the dignity of the human person – the civilisation of communion – the Church’s social teaching – limitations, vulnerability and relationships as authentic expressions of humanity – the common good, human rights and integral human development - Work, truth and freedom in the digital transition - new forms of inequality, control and technological warfare - The civilisation of love as an alternative to the culture of power

Synopsis

Magnifica Humanitas offers insights into the protection of the human person in the age of artificial intelligence, recognising a profound epochal shift. It places the dignity of the human person at the centre as the criteria for guiding technical progress. The Church’s social teaching accompanies these transformations, pointing to the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity as the fundamental benchmarks for understanding and interpreting the transformation currently underway. It proposes, as an alternative to the culture of power and war, a civilisation of love founded on justice, dialogue and shared responsibility

Summary

Introduction – The *res novae* of our time

The Introduction to *Magnifica Humanitas* begins the document with a programmatic statement that sets the tone for the entire subsequent discussion. Humanity stands at a historic crossroads that concerns not merely technical progress, but the very meaning of development and human coexistence. Thus, the text states **that ‘the magnificent humanity created by God stands today before a decisive choice: to erect a new Tower of Babel or to build the holy city, where God and humanity dwell together’**. This symbolic alternative introduces, right from the outset, the contrast between a construction founded on power and self-sufficiency and a path of shared responsibility and communion.

Every generation is entrusted with the task of shaping its own time, yet every age faces the risk of building an inhuman and more unjust world. The decisive criterion for interpreting this historical passage is of an anthropological and theological nature: an understanding of the human being cannot be separated from the Incarnation, for **‘only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man find true light’**. Without this reference, progress risks reducing the person to a function, a statistic or a performance.

The *res novae* of our time, that is, **the major historical transformations that challenge the Christian conscience**, are marked by the rapid expansion of digitalisation, artificial intelligence and robotics, which are having a profound impact on social structures, decision-making processes and the collective consciousness. Technology is recognised as an integral part of human development, rooted in freedom and creativity, but its power introduces a new and unprecedented responsibility. In this regard, the text observes that **‘never before has humanity had so much power over itself’**, highlighting the urgency of directing that power towards the common good.

The biblical images of Babel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem thus offer the key to understanding the entire document: the choice is not between accepting or rejecting technology, but between a use that undermines and one that safeguards the human.

Chapter 1- A dynamic approach faithful to the Gospel

The document clarifies the **fundamental method** by which it intends to address the transformations of the present day. The **Church's social teaching** is presented not as a static set of rules, nor as an ideological system to be imposed from the outside, but as a living tradition, capable of interpreting history in the light of the Gospel and of accompanying humanity in its concrete circumstances. It springs from a Church that does not place itself outside the world, but which shares the journey of peoples and recognises history as the place where the Gospel engages with human experience.

The text emphasises that Social Doctrine is not an undue interference in temporal matters but expresses the Church's own responsibility towards the common good, since it is constituted **'in Christ, in some way a sacrament of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race'**. From this awareness springs an attitude of listening and dialogue with the languages of the present time, which is not mere sociological attention, but authentic spiritual discernment.

In this context, reference is made to the guidance of the Second Vatican Council, according to which it is the task of the People of God **'to listen attentively, to discern and to interpret the various languages of our time'**, so that revealed truth may be proclaimed in forms suited to historical circumstances. Social doctrine thus appears as a dynamic heritage, which grows over time without abandoning the essential core of the faith.

Tracing the development of the social magisterium from Leo XIII to the present day, the chapter shows that it is not a repertoire of technical solutions, but offers **'principles for thinking, criteria for discernment and guidelines for action'**. Its function is not to replace political and institutional responsibilities, but to support communal discernment regarding the transformations currently taking place.

Finally, it is emphasised that the truth safeguarded by the Church is not a possession to be held tightly, but a gift to be shared over time. For this reason, it is stated that **'time takes precedence over space'**, giving priority to the initiation of processes that can develop over the course of history rather than the immediate seizure of positions of power.

Chapter 2 – Foundations and Principles of the Church's Social Teaching

The second chapter begins by revisiting the **foundations and principles** of the Church's Social Teaching, which are taken as decisive criteria for guiding discernment in the age of artificial intelligence. At the heart of this reflection lies a vision of the human person grounded in relationship: the human being is created in the image of the Triune God and is called to communion. From this origin derives a dignity that precedes any functional, productive or social assessment.

The encyclical distinguishes various dimensions of dignity, but emphasises one decisive aspect, which does not depend on circumstances or individual abilities. It is clearly stated that there exists **'a deeper, more important level, which consists in "ontological dignity"**, specifying that this **'belongs to every human being simply by virtue of their existence'**. This dignity underpins the **'supreme value of human rights'**, which are not concessions of power but an expression of the very nature of the person, and makes the right to life the prerequisite for every other right.

Social Doctrine principles are founded on this anthropological basis. The common good is not understood as the sum of individual interests, but as an eminently relational reality, defined as ‘the set of conditions of social life that enable associations and each of their members to achieve their own perfection more fully and more easily’.

The principle of the **universal destination** of goods is extended to the intangible and digital goods of our time, whilst subsidiarity safeguards the responsibility of individuals, families and intermediate bodies against any excessive concentration of power. Finally, solidarity is invoked as a genuine awareness of the interdependence between individuals and peoples, summarised in the statement that **‘no one is saved on their own’**.

All these principles converge within the framework of **integral human development**, which is called upon to promote every person and all dimensions of life, including the spiritual, social and ecological.

Chapter 3 – Technology and Domination. The Dignity of the Human Person in the Face of the Promises of AI

At the heart of Chapter 3 is an analysis of the relationship between **technology, power and the human person**, with a view to situating the promises of artificial intelligence within a broader cultural transformation that questions the very meaning of progress. Technological development is recognised as an expression of human creativity, but the text also warns against the risk of it becoming an absolute criterion of judgement, giving rise to what the text defines as a **technocratic paradigm**, capable of reducing reality to what is measurable, calculable and optimisable.

In this context, artificial intelligence appears as a powerful tool, capable of offering real benefits, but also of amplifying forms of domination when separated from an ethical and anthropological orientation. The text warns that the growth of technical power does not automatically coincide with the good, recalling that **‘more powerful does not necessarily mean better’**. The decisive criterion is the dignity of the person and not the efficiency of the means.

The fundamental distinction between human intelligence and artificial intelligence runs throughout the chapter. Although AI systems can imitate certain languages and behaviours, they remain foreign to truly human experience. The text states, in fact, that **‘artificial intelligences do not experience life, do not possess a body, do not experience joy and pain, and do not know from within what love, work and responsibility mean’**. For this reason, they cannot assume moral responsibility nor understand the ultimate meaning of the decisions they help to generate. The risk becomes particularly serious when artificial intelligence is involved in decision-making processes that directly affect people’s lives, reputations, access to opportunities and rights. In such cases, the apparent neutrality of algorithms can lead to exclusions that are difficult to avoid. The text warns **that ‘entrusting an algorithm entirely with the power to declare who deserves and who does not means redefining the boundaries of human possibilities’**, with a consequent loss of political and moral responsibility.

Considerable attention is devoted to a critique of **transhumanist and post humanist** narratives, which interpret progress as the overcoming of human limitations. These are countered by a vision in which limitation is not a flaw to be eliminated, but a constitutive dimension of the person. It is clearly stated that **‘the human being does not flourish in spite of limitation, but often through limitation’**, recognising in weakness and vulnerability the places where relationships, care and openness to others flourish.

Chapter 4 – Safeguarding the human dimension in the digital transformation: truth, work, freedom

This reflection focuses on **the practical consequences of digital transformation** on personal and social life, identifying three key areas in which the safeguarding of the human dimension is at stake today: **truth, work and freedom**. The reflection shows how artificial intelligence and digital technologies do not merely affect tools, but progressively shape behaviours, relationships and the structures of social coexistence.

The first dimension addressed is that of truth, recognised as a common good essential to democratic life. In the digital ecosystem, the spread of manipulated information, altered images and polarising narratives risks blurring the boundaries between true and false. The text draws attention to the fact that truth does not arise from technical automatisms, but from trustworthy relationships and shared practices of responsibility, recalling that **‘the quality of public communication depends directly on social trust’**. Truth is thus presented as a fragile reality, which must be safeguarded through critical education and the responsible use of technologies.

The second area is that of **work**, described as a fundamental aspect of human dignity and the ordinary means of participating in social life. Automation and artificial intelligence offer real possibilities for transformation, but they also entail significant risks of instability and exclusion. The text warns against a model of development in which **‘workers are often forced to adapt to the speed of machines, rather than machines being designed to assist workers.’** When efficiency becomes the dominant criterion, work risks losing its human and relational value.

Finally, the text addresses the issue of freedom, which is threatened both by digital addictions and by new forms of social control based on the mass collection of data. Technologies can invisibly shape choices and behaviour, reducing the scope for truly free decision-making. For this reason, the text clearly states that **‘freedom, in the digital age, is not merely an internal matter: it is also a public issue’**, requiring fair rules, shared responsibility and education.

Taken together, these three areas show that digital transformation is not neutral and requires a collective commitment to safeguarding the conditions for a truly human life, one capable of truth, decent work and genuine freedom.

Chapter 5 – The Culture of Power and the Civilisation of Love

The confrontation between technological power and the destiny of humanity reaches its most dramatic point here. At its heart lies the increasingly close link between **technology, power and violence**, in a global context marked by the crisis of multilateralism and the gradual normalisation of war. Technological innovations, and in particular artificial intelligence, do not merely render defence systems more efficient, but profoundly affect the very nature of conflict, speeding up decision-making and result in the use of force being more impersonal and detached from moral responsibility.

The possibility of delegating life-and-death decisions to automated systems contributes to lowering the ethical threshold for the use of violence and to blurring the perception of the real consequences of the choices made. Within this framework, a veritable **culture of power** takes shape, in which the effectiveness of the means tends to supplant moral judgement, and the protection of civilians is subordinated to strategic logic. In the face of this reality, the text clearly states that **‘no algorithm can make war morally acceptable’**, reaffirming that discernment regarding the use of force can never be reduced to a technical calculation.

This transformation is accompanied by public narratives that portray war as inevitable and even necessary, obscuring the historical memory of its consequences and numbing consciences. As an alternative to this logic, the vision of the civilisation of love is revived, understood as a concrete historical project founded on justice, fraternity and dialogue.

The civilisation of love takes the perspective of the victims as its criterion of judgement and recognises diplomacy and dialogue as the ordinary means for building peace. In this context, peace is not a sign of weakness, but a demanding and realistic choice, for **‘with peace nothing is lost, with war everything is lost’**.

Conclusion – A Spirituality for Our Time

The final section focuses on the **spiritual and theological** dimension that underpins the entire course of the encyclical and points to its ultimate meaning. Central to this understanding is the fundamental dogmatic affirmation that **‘the Word became flesh’**, an event which constitutes the decisive criterion for understanding both the greatness and the vulnerability of a human being. In an age marked by promises of progress capable of overcoming every limit, it is reiterated that the fullness of the human condition does not arise from technical power, but from a relationship involving freedom, love and grace.

The perspective proposed never separates the spiritual dimension from a historical or social one. Humanity is called to recognise itself as part of a greater communion, in which differences are not eliminated but serve a creation and restoration of unity. In this light, the Pauline image of a reconciled humanity, called to be **‘one body in Christ’**, resonates as an expression of a fraternity that spans peoples, cultures and generations.

The commitment to safeguarding humanity in the age of artificial intelligence is thus seen as a shared responsibility. No technological transformation can be fully embraced without a change of heart and without a concrete commitment to justice, solidarity and care for the most vulnerable. History is described as a work still in progress, a worksite where nothing is definitively complete and in which everyone is called to play a part.

The horizon that sustains this hope is revealed in Mary’s song, **‘the Magnificat’**, a sign of a logic that overturns power and recognises the value of humility. From this arises the concluding invitation to choose what kind of builders we wish to be in history: **“builders of communion, not architects of Babel”**, so that humanity may not lose its magnificence and the world may recognise, in the human heart, the place where God wishes to dwell.

Translation provided by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

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