Magnifica Humanitas and Five Frameworks for Christian *Diákrisis*

PRESENTER
Rev. Ricky Manalo, CSP

COMMUNITY
Priests of the Sacred Heart (Dehonians)

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Part I: The Catholic Church and AI: A Timeline

2015 *Laudato Si'* critiques the technocratic paradigm and asks what authentic human progress requires.

2016 The Vatican begins the Minerva Dialogues, bringing Church leaders into sustained conversation with technologists, scholars, and ethicists.

2020 The Pontifical Academy for Life joins partners in launching the *Rome Call for AI Ethics*.

2024 *Dignitas infinita* reaffirms the intrinsic dignity of every human being. Pope Francis addresses AI in his World Day of Peace and World Communications Day messages and at the G7. The Builders AI Forum gathers at Casina Pio IV in Vatican City.

2025 *Antiqua et nova* distinguishes human intelligence, embodied, relational, free, and ordered toward truth and love, from artificial intelligence.

2026 *Magnifica Humanitas* treats digitalization, artificial intelligence, and robotics among the *res novae*, the "new things" of our time, within the living tradition of the Church's Social Doctrine.

SELECTED CHURCH TEXTS

Laudato Si' (Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, May 24, 2015)
Artificial Intelligence and Peace (Pope Francis, Message, World Day of Peace, Jan. 1, 2024)
Dignitas Infinita (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration, April 2, 2024)
Artificial Intelligence and the Wisdom of the Heart (Pope Francis, Message for the 58th World Communications Day, May 12, 2024)
Antiqua et Nova (*Note* on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence, Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education, January 28, 2025)
Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence (Pope Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter, May 15, 2026; promulgated May 25, 2026)

Part II: *Magnifica Humanitas:* A New Encyclical for a New Age

> *Magnifica Humanitas* ("Magnificent Humanity"), signed on May 15 and published on May 25, 2026, is Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical, officially subtitled "On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence." The encyclical calls for the inalienable dignity of every person, created in God's image, to remain at the center of technological development and its social consequences. Its central claim is that technology is not inherently hostile to humanity, but neither is it neutral. It must be directed toward the common good, with God at the forefront of our actions and the human person at the center of our choices.

Reading Magnifica Humanitas: Four Anchors

1. Babel and Jerusalem

Babel (Gen 11:1-9) represents technological power turned toward self-exaltation and domination. Jerusalem (Neh 2-6) offers another way of building: prayerful attention, shared responsibility, diverse gifts, and a common purpose rooted in God. Leo sees the "Babel syndrome" wherever technological development requires the weak to carry its costs or reduces the mystery of the human person to data and performance. Jerusalem offers a different pattern: those whose lives are being shaped by technology must have a place in the decisions surrounding it.

2. The Human Person before God

The person is created in the image and likeness of God and called into communion. AI may imitate intellectual functions and exceed us in computational speed, but data processing does not add up to embodied history, moral responsibility, freedom, relationship, and love. Human dignity is received from God rather than earned through intelligence or usefulness, and it remains when illness or disability makes a person dependent upon others. Leo welcomes technologies that alleviate suffering, but warns against treating human vulnerability and limitation as defects to be overcome or humanity itself as an obsolete condition to be surpassed.

3. Human Choices, Power, and Shared Discernment

Every AI system bears the marks of human choices: people determine its purpose, where it will be trusted, and which risks others are asked to carry. Leo warns that control over platforms, infrastructure, data, and computing power increasingly rests with major economic and technological actors, and that when power is concentrated in the hands of a few, it can become opaque and evade public oversight. Catholic social teaching offers a process of shared discernment shaped by dignity, the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, solidarity, social justice, and integral human development. These principles ask whether technological power fosters participation and responsibility, protects the vulnerable, ensures fair access, and serves the good of all.

4. Builders of Communion

Magnifica Humanitas places us on the "construction site" of the present age. The technological future is already being built through ordinary choices. Public responsibility and conversion of heart both belong to this work. Communities need enough knowledge to ask how technologies are designed, who is affected by them, and who bears their costs. The Christian task is to build in ways that protect dignity, deepen relationships, and strengthen our capacity for communion.

Part III: Five Frameworks for Christian Diákrisis

Part III, which covers diákrisis and five frameworks for Christian discernment, is adapted from my forthcoming book, The Catholic Handbook on AI: Promise, Prudence, and Pastoral Wisdom (Liturgical Press, 2027), where these ideas are developed more fully as a pastoral approach to discerning AI.

An Invitation to *Diákrisis*

Within the broader Christian practice of prayerfully seeking a faithful course of action, diákrisis (διάκρισις; dee-AH-kree-sis) names the Spirit-taught capacity to distinguish what is genuinely of God, what only appears to be, and what is not. St. Paul includes "discernment of spirits" among the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:10); Cassian reports the Desert tradition calling discernment the "mother of all virtues"; and the Ignatian tradition asks whether movements within us draw us toward deeper faith, hope, and love or gradually away from them.

> More than one thing can be true at the same time: AI can relieve suffering and cause harm; it can help us see more clearly and also confuse us. *Diákrisis* attends both to the choice before us and to the habits that choice is forming.

These are five lenses rather than five separate checkboxes. A use of AI may protect one genuine good while placing another at risk. The frameworks belong together, helping us see the whole picture before convenience, fear, or efficiency makes the decision for us.

1. Dignity and Human Encounter

> **CONSIDER: What understanding of the human person does this use of AI assume, and does it honor the irreducible dignity of human encounter?**

Ask: Will AI help us return to one another with greater or deeper care, or will we begin to prefer relationships that make no demands upon us?

Keep in view: AI can imitate human conversation, but it should not replace the relationships through which people know, accompany, and care for one another.

2. Formation and Responsibility

> **CONSIDER: What kind of person are our technological habits forming, and where does human moral responsibility remain?**

Ask: What capacity is AI helping a person develop? Who remains answerable for what follows?

Keep in view: A good tool should leave us more capable of exercising human judgment. Technological complexity may make responsibility harder to trace, but responsibility remains human.

3. Truth, Creativity, and Human Authorship

> **CONSIDER: When AI helps generate something, who can stand behind its truth and meaning?**

Ask: Is AI helping a human being express something more clearly, or replacing the human engagement that gives the work its meaning?

Keep in view: Fluency is not truth. Authorship means examining what is offered, accepting responsibility for it, and acknowledging AI's role when its contribution is substantial.

Five Frameworks, continued

4. Work, Rest, and Keeping Sabbath

> **CONSIDER: Does AI allow work to serve human flourishing, or does greater efficiency simply create greater demands?**

Ask: Will AI give people greater freedom for meaningful work, prayer and genuine rest, or make relentless productivity feel inevitable?

Keep in view: Saved time does not automatically become human freedom. Sabbath reminds us that time does not belong entirely to production and that human worth exceeds usefulness.

5. Creation and Our Common Home

> **CONSIDER: Do the benefits of AI justify the human and environmental costs required to produce them?**

Ask: What good are we seeking, and what cost does it require? Who receives the benefit, and who carries the burden?

Keep in view: AI rests upon energy, water, minerals, hardware, and often-hidden labor. Care for our common home also includes peace; decisions involving human life must remain under meaningful human judgment.

The Five Lenses at a Glance

1. **Dignity and encounter:** What understanding of the person is assumed?
2. **Formation and responsibility:** Who are we becoming, and who remains answerable?
3. **Truth and authorship:** Who can stand behind the truth and meaning?
4. **Work, rest, and Sabbath:** Does efficiency serve flourishing or create greater demands?
5. **Creation and our common home:** Are the benefits proportionate to the human and environmental costs?

The Question Beneath the Questions

> What kind of common life are we building, and what kind of people are we becoming as we build it?

For Ongoing Reflection

1. Where do you see signs of Babel in the ways AI is being developed or used, and where do you see possibilities for building Jerusalem?

2. Which of the five frameworks reveals the most urgent concern in your ministry or community? Which one are you most likely to overlook, and what might therefore remain hidden?

3. Consider one current or proposed use of AI in your setting. What good might it serve, what might it place at risk, and what kind of common life might it help us build?