

Quotes from *Magnifica Humanitas*

Quotes selected by Emilio Lehoucq (catholicaiproject@gmail.com).

<https://aiandcatholicism.com/>

Notes:

- These quotes are mostly focused on AI.
- These quotes are not meant to be representative of everything in *Magnifica Humanitas*.
- When the quote starts with “<number>:”, it means that it’s a quote from that paragraph, but not from the beginning of the paragraph. When the quote starts with “<number>.” it means that the quote starts from the beginning of the paragraph. Quotes don’t necessarily go until the end of the paragraph.
- Subtitles are kept to give a sense of where the quotes are taken from.

INTRODUCTION

The *res novae* of our time

4: Technology should not be considered, in itself, as a force antagonistic to humanity. On the contrary, it has formed part of our history since the beginning as “a profoundly human reality, linked to the autonomy and freedom of man.” [5] Over the centuries, technological development has significantly improved the living conditions of humanity. At the same time, each phase of progress has also revealed the ambiguity of tools that can cause harm when not oriented toward the good. Today, however, we find ourselves facing a new situation. The power and prevalence of emerging technologies are interwoven into the fabric of daily life, shaping decision-making processes and deeply affecting the collective imagination

6. For this reason it is necessary to begin a shared discernment process for identifying the spiritual and cultural roots of ongoing transformations. If we focus only on contingencies, we risk letting the succession of emergencies dictate the direction of our path. We are living through a rapid phase of transition, a “change of era,” in which — while some are vying for the future of new technologies and others dedicate themselves to reflecting on the matter — most people are watching and waiting, observing from afar and merely hoping for the best. For this very reason, crucial questions impose themselves on our conscience and can no longer be avoided: Where are we going? Toward what goal do we wish to orient ourselves? What direction should we choose as a people and as a human community?

Two biblical images

9: Scientific discoveries are talents entrusted to humanity so that they may bear fruit (cf. *Mt* 25:14-30). Technology has the power to heal, connect, educate and protect our common home;

but it can also divide, exclude and generate new forms of injustice. In the abstract, technology in and of itself is not a solution to humanity's problems, just as it is not inherently evil. In practice, however, technology is never neutral, because it takes on the characteristics of those who devise, finance, regulate and use it. Therefore, the primary choice is not between a "yes" or "no" to technology, but rather between constructing Babel or rebuilding Jerusalem; between a power that claims to dominate the heavens and a people who work together in the presence of God to rebuild the walls of fraternal coexistence.

10. We must, then, avoid the "Babel syndrome," namely the idolatry of profit that sacrifices the weak, a uniformity that neutralizes differences, and the pretense that a single language — even a digital one — can translate everything, including the mystery of the person, into data and performance. The risk of dehumanization — of building a future that excludes God and reduces the other to a means — is an ancient and ever-new temptation that today takes on a technical guise. Instead, let us choose the "way of Nehemiah," which highlights the importance of working together to make the City of God a safe place for returning exiles. Rebuilding today means recognizing that, precisely from the plurality of voices and visions which, even though they sometimes remind us of the confusion caused by the diversity of spoken languages, a bright possibility emerges. Indeed, this is the possibility of building together, of transforming diversity into a resource and of making listening and dialogue the common ground upon which to cultivate justice and fraternity.

Building for the common good

Remaining human

15: In the era of artificial intelligence, when human dignity is threatened by new forms of dehumanization, ours is the pressing duty to remain profoundly human. We must lovingly safeguard the grandeur of humanity bestowed upon us and revealed in its fullness in Christ, the splendor of which no machine can ever replace. True progress always stems from a heart open to others, an intelligence willing to listen and a will that seeks what unites rather than what separates.

16. I address this heartfelt appeal to all the Catholic faithful, to all Christians and to all men and women of goodwill. Let us not be afraid to get our hands dirty on the "construction site" of our time. Like Nehemiah, let us pray, plan wisely and work perseveringly, placing God at the forefront of our actions and the human person at the center of our choices.

CHAPTER ONE

A DYNAMIC APPROACH FAITHFUL TO THE GOSPEL

17: Indeed, in each era the *res novae* require that this teaching address historical questions in the light of revealed Truth. In this regard, artificial intelligence, too, should not be considered as merely yet another theme to be studied or a crisis to be managed, but rather as a development

that challenges the categories of Social Doctrine from within, calling for their further development in fidelity to the Gospel.

A Church journeying through human history

The wisdom of the word of God in dialogue with the human sciences

23: Following this perspective, Pope Francis emphasized that when dealing with many specific questions, the Church does not claim to offer “a definitive opinion,” [14] but recognizes the importance of listening to scientific research and of encouraging a serious and honest debate among experts while welcoming a diversity of opinions.

24: Precisely because this patrimony [i.e., Catholic Social Doctrine] arises from faith and a corresponding vision of reality, it does not amount to a repertoire of technical solutions or an economic or political model to be set against others. Instead, it belongs to a different order, [15] namely that of the principles that guide the interpretation of events and sustain an evangelical understanding of historical processes and the choices these entail.

Social Doctrine as a shared discernment

The development of Social Doctrine from Leo XIII to the present

The first stages of the Church's Social Doctrine

The years of the Second Vatican Council

The recent Magisterium

Interpreting history in the light of faith

45: In response to the challenges of their time, each one interpreted historical changes according to the Gospel, bringing to light different aspects of a single heritage: the dignity of the person, the value of work, the universal destination of goods, solidarity and subsidiarity, care for creation and the centrality of peace and fraternity.

CHAPTER TWO

FOUNDATIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

46: In order to protect the human person in the age of artificial intelligence, I believe that today we must once again reflect on the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, solidarity and social justice. I am convinced that a harmonious relationship between these principles requires that they be considered collectively, so that it becomes clear how they relate to and complement each other.

47. In offering these reflections, my hope is, first and foremost, to help the lay faithful and people of goodwill rediscover their duty of implementing the above-mentioned principles in their daily lives, family relationships, work and involvement in society. Thus, they will let themselves be inspired by the aim of embodying God's love in the concrete events of life.

The foundations of Social Doctrine

The human person: image of the Triune God

The equal dignity of all human beings

The supreme value of human rights

The principles of Social Doctrine

The principle of the common good

The principle of the universal destination of goods

67. Today, among the goods that are universally intended for everyone, we must also include new forms of property, such as patents, algorithms, digital platforms, technological infrastructure and data. In a context where the wealth of nations depends increasingly on knowledge and technology, when these goods remain concentrated in the hands of a few, without adequate forms of sharing and access, a new imbalance is created that contradicts the universal destination of goods. In turn, it widens the gap between the included and the excluded, between those who can participate in the digital revolution and those who remain on the margins. Furthermore, care for our common home and our responsibility toward the poor and future generations require that the use of the goods of creation and the new possibilities offered by technology be regulated in such a way as to respect the environment, avoid waste and prevent new forms of exploitation.

The principle of subsidiarity

71. The principle of subsidiarity applies especially in the context of the digital revolution. Here, the highest level is not the State, but rather major economic and technological actors that exercise *de facto* power over the conditions of everyday life. This level, which monopolizes expertise, data and decision-making authority, involves companies and platforms that define conditions for access, rules of visibility, forms of interaction, and even economic opportunities. The principle of subsidiarity requires that such processes not be imposed from above in an opaque and unilateral manner, but instead be directed toward the common good with transparency, accountability and meaningful forms of participation (including independent checks, transparency regarding algorithms, equitable access to data and avenues for recourse).
[96]

The principle of solidarity

76: Like the natural environment, the “digital ecosystem” can be preserved or exploited, shared or monopolized. Solidarity demands that decisions regarding data, algorithms, platforms and artificial intelligence take into account not only the immediate benefit for a few, but also the impact on all peoples and on future generations.

The principle of social justice

80: Justice demands that we prevent the emergence of new forms of exclusion and deprivation of freedoms: individuals and peoples hindered or denied access to basic technologies, communities exposed to invasive surveillance and social groups penalized by opaque algorithms that perpetuate prejudice and discrimination. In the digital age, a just social order guarantees everyone equal access to opportunities, protects the youngest and weakest members of society, combats hate and misinformation and subjects the use of data and technology to public oversight, so that the guiding principle is not solely profit but the dignity of every person and the common good of all people.

Integral human development

An examen for the Church

CHAPTER THREE

TECHNOLOGY AND DOMINANCE.

THE GRANDEUR OF HUMANITY IN LIGHT OF THE PROMISES OF AI

90: We are called to reflect on the great “construction sites” of our era and ask: What are we building? As technological development rapidly transforms languages, relationships, institutions and forms of power, we believers must and can choose which projects to work on and in what manner, so as to safeguard and value the grandeur of humanity that has been given to us as a gift. This is a choice not only for our future but also for our present, since artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are already part of our daily lives.

The technocratic paradigm and digital power

92. In his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis denounced the growing dominance of a technocratic paradigm [119] in our globalized world: the tendency to let the logic of efficiency, control and profit alone shape personal, social and economic decisions. This makes it clear that technology is not simply a tool. When it becomes the standard by which everything is judged, it begins to dictate what matters and what can be discarded, reducing creation to an object of exploitation and human beings to mere cogs in a system driven toward ever greater efficiency.

93. This paradigm has spread rapidly in recent years, fueled in part by the expansion of artificial intelligence, cognitive science, nanotechnology, robotics and biotechnology. In themselves, these innovations can greatly serve integral human development and the care of our common

home. Yet precisely because of their power, they can also hasten the expansion of the technocratic paradigm and therefore require a new spiritual, ethical and political framework.

94: For this reason, technological progress — valuable in itself — requires careful discernment of the anthropological vision that guides it and the ends it pursues. If technological development advances without a corresponding ethical and social progress, the result may be an increase in means without a growth in humanity: “having more” without “being more.” In such a scenario, there is a risk that individuals will be evaluated principally according to the outcomes they produce. [122]

96. Faced with this concentration of power in the digital world, the criteria for judgment and discernment in this new situation are the noble principles of Social Doctrine: the inalienable dignity of the human person, the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, solidarity and social justice. They demand that we assess whether the power of digital infrastructures and algorithms truly fosters participation and responsibility, protects the vulnerable, ensures fair access to opportunities and remains directed toward the good of all. On this basis, we can now examine more closely what artificial intelligence is, the possibilities it opens up and the risks it entails.

Artificial intelligence

99. It is not possible to provide a single, comprehensive definition of AI. What can be stated, however, is that we must avoid the misconception of equating this type of “intelligence” with that of human beings. These systems merely imitate certain functions of human intelligence. In doing so, they often surpass human intelligence in speed and computational capacity, offering tangible benefits across many fields. Yet this power remains entirely tied to data processing. So-called artificial intelligences do not undergo experiences, do not possess a body, do not feel joy or pain, do not mature through relationships and do not know from within what love, work, friendship or responsibility mean. Nor do they have a moral conscience, since they do not judge good and evil, grasp the ultimate meaning of situations, or bear responsibility for consequences. They may imitate language, behavior and analytical skills, or even simulate empathy and understanding, but they do not understand what they produce, for they lack the affective, relational and spiritual perspective through which human beings grow in wisdom. Even when these tools are described as capable of “learning,” their way of doing so is different from that of a human person. It is not the experience of those who allow themselves to be shaped by life and grow over time through choices, mistakes, forgiveness and fidelity. Rather, it is a form of statistical adaptation based on data and feedback, which can be very effective, but does not imply inner growth.

A valuable tool that requires vigilance

100: The speed and simplicity with which information, complex analyses, media content and practical assistance can be accessed undoubtedly makes life easier. Yet they can also encourage excessive reliance and the search for ready-made answers, and weaken personal

creativity and judgment. The apparent objectivity of the responses and suggestions these systems provide can lead us to overlook the fact that they reflect the cultural assumptions of those who designed and trained them, with all their strengths and limitations. The artificial imitation of positive human communication — words of advice, empathy, friendship and even love — can be engaging and at times genuinely helpful. However, for less discerning users, it can also be misleading, creating the illusion of a relationship with a real personal subject. When words are simulated, they do not build genuine relationships, but only their appearance. The artificial imitation of care or support can become particularly risky when it enters contexts where real relationships and emotional bonds are lacking. Here, the danger is not so much that a person may believe they are communicating with another person, but rather that they may gradually lose the very desire to form genuine human connections.

101: The gains in efficiency and the potential to improve certain services are clear, yet rapidly and uncritically adopting them exposes us to a range of risks, including the tendency to overlook the environmental impact.

Responsibility, transparency and the governance of AI

102. The use of AI is never a purely technical matter: when it enters processes that affect people's lives, it touches on rights, opportunities, status and freedom. Important and sensitive decisions — concerning employment, credit, access to public services or even a person's reputation — risk being fully delegated to automated systems that do not know "compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and above all, the hope that people are able to change," [125] and can therefore give rise to new forms of exclusion. There are clearly harmful uses, such as the manipulation of information or violations of privacy. Yet there is also a subtler danger, for when AI systems present themselves as neutral and objective, they end up reflecting and reinforcing the stereotypes or ideological bias of their designers and developers.

103. Indeed, entrusting an algorithm in practice with the power to select who is worthy or not, without anyone bearing responsibility for that judgment, is to hand over the task of redefining the boundaries of human possibilities.

104. From this follows a simple but compelling consequence: we cannot consider AI to be morally neutral. In reality, every technical tool embodies choices and priorities through what it measures, ignores and optimizes, and how it classifies people and situations. If a system is designed or used in a way that treats some lives as less worthy, or excludes them without the possibility of appeal, then it is not merely a tool "to be used well," since it has already introduced criteria that contradict the inalienable dignity of the human person. For this reason, ethical discernment cannot be limited to asking whether we are using a system for good or bad purposes; it must also examine how that system is designed and what vision of the human person and society is embedded in the data and models that guide it. [126]

105. For AI to respect human dignity and truly serve the common good, responsibility must be clearly defined at every stage: from those who design and develop these systems to those who use them and rely on them for concrete decisions.

106. Calling for prudence, rigorous evaluation and even, at times, a slower pace in adopting AI does not mean opposing progress; instead, it is an exercise of responsible care for the human family. This need is all the more urgent given the frequent imbalance between the speed of technological growth and the slower development of awareness, norms, safeguards and institutions capable of governing its effects. It is not enough to invoke ethics in the abstract; robust legal frameworks, independent oversight, informed users and a political system that does not abdicate its responsibility are required. Otherwise, change will be governed only by technocratic thinking and presented as necessary and inevitable, ultimately imposing rules shaped by those who control data, infrastructure and computing power.

108: In light of the common good and the universal destination of goods, this raises serious concerns, since small but highly influential groups can shape information and consumption patterns, influence democratic processes and steer economic dynamics to their own advantage, undermining social justice and solidarity among peoples. For this reason, it is essential that the use of AI, especially when it touches on public goods and fundamental rights, be guided by clear criteria and effective oversight, grounded in participation and subsidiarity. Communities and intermediary organizations must not be reduced to passive recipients of decisions made elsewhere; they must be able to contribute to discernment and oversight. Moreover, ownership of data cannot be left solely in private hands but must be appropriately regulated. Data is the product of many contributors and should not be treated as something to be sold off or entrusted to a select few.

109: To speak of subsidiarity calls for protecting the ability of communities to make choices and corrections, rather than confining their role to mere oversight after the standards have been set elsewhere. To speak of solidarity obliges us to recognize the hidden, often exploited workers, who sustain algorithmic systems. To speak of justice requires questioning the global distribution of power that decides who in fact can train these models and who is merely subjected to them. Likewise, it means acknowledging that social justice is not only a goal to be safeguarded after technologies are deployed, but a condition that must shape their very design from the outset.

110. Finally, I would like to employ the expression “to disarm,” which is close to my heart. Disarming AI means freeing it from the mentality of “armed” competition, which today is not limited simply to the military context, but is also an economic and cognitive phenomenon. This entails a race for ever more powerful algorithms and larger datasets, driven by the desire to secure geopolitical or commercial dominance. To disarm means discrediting the assumption that technical power automatically confers the right to govern. To disarm does not mean rejecting technology, but preventing it from dominating humanity. It means freeing technology from monopolistic control and opening it to discussion and debate, therefore making it human-friendly and restoring it to the plurality of human cultures and ways of life. Our task today is not only ethical or technical. It is ecological in the deepest sense, for it concerns a new dimension of our

common home. AI is already an environment in which we are immersed, as well as a force with which we must engage. For this reason, merely regulating it is insufficient; it must be disarmed, welcoming and accessible.

111: In one sense, technological innovation can represent human participation in the divine act of creation. Developers, therefore, bear a particular ethical and spiritual responsibility, for every design choice reflects a vision of humanity.

What must not be lost

112: More gravely, the pervasive technocratic paradigm in which we are immersed, and that is amplified by the digital revolution and AI, threatens to normalize an anti-human vision. In that vision, the fullness of life is equated with having more, reducing weakness, eliminating uncertainty and exerting total control. When efficiency becomes the ultimate measure of value, human beings are tempted to see themselves as a project to be optimized rather than as persons called to relationship and communion.

113: Thus, intelligence, when absolutized, overshadows other essential dimensions of life, such as affection, the will, commitment and relationships. Similarly, technical power, if left unbalanced, does not make us more capable; it makes us more isolated and more vulnerable to being dominated and excluded. This critical point does not oppose intelligence, but serves as a reminder that when intelligence becomes self-referential, its true purpose of serving life and the human person is lost.

114. The quality of a civilization is measured not by the power of its means, but by the care it is able to offer, by its ability to recognize the other as a face not merely as a function. The ability to care for one another is a fundamental dimension of our humanity, one that is learned and mastered through lived experience.

Underlying narratives: transhumanism and posthumanism

The limit, the heart, the grandeur of the human person

118. Our relationship with life seems to be in crisis today. Everything that appears as a “limit” — incapacity, illness, old age, suffering, vulnerability — tends to be seen primarily as a defect to be corrected, rather than as a reality through which our humanity matures and opens itself to relationship. And yet we must remember that humanity flourishes not *despite* limitations, but often *through* them. The light of faith offers a perspective on reality that helps us recognize what we call the “contingency” of the things of this world. While it is right to strive to alleviate the suffering that marks human life, it is also wise to acknowledge our fundamental finitude, knowing that “religious experience, and in particular Christian faith, propose that we live, without oversimplification, this ambivalence between human greatness and limitation, interpreting it in the light of our original and fundamental relationship with God.” [131]

120. Even when limitations are experienced as inner suffering, human wisdom teaches us not to deny or suppress it, but to integrate it. To eliminate suffering entirely would mean, in the end, extinguishing love and desire as well. Those who love and desire cannot avoid passing through trial and suffering; and over the years, we carry within us lessons that leave their mark like scars, the memories of a journey shaped by freedom and failure, dreams and disappointments. It is only thanks to the interplay of these elements that the wonders of the soul occur within us, allowing us to sense the richness of our humanity. [132] To renounce this adventure, both tragic and splendid, in the name of a presumed transcendence of all limits, could mean many things, but it would no longer be human.

126. It is this intertwining of just institutions, credible witnesses and daily fidelity that sustains hope and provides clear direction for technological progress without allowing the heart to regress. For this reason, humanity — in all its grandeur and woundedness — must never be replaced or surpassed. We can embrace the technological progress that alleviates suffering and unlocks new possibilities, provided that we do not abandon the very essence of our humanity, namely the capacity for relationship and love.

The authentic “more than human”: grace and Christian humanism

128: Herein lies the radical departure from Promethean dreams: what saves humanity is not enhanced self-sufficiency, but a relationship that liberates, a communion that transforms. In this light, a technology that merely classifies and optimizes what already exists can, however unintentionally, become an obstacle to change and growth. For an algorithm, an error is a flaw to be corrected; for a person, however, an error can be a catalyst for profound change. A person’s future is not calculable, but depends on one’s freedom — elevated by the inexhaustible grace of God — and on the relationships cultivated.

Two cities and two loves

129. Christian humanism does not reject science or technology, but embraces them with gratitude and realism, and grounds them within a higher vocation. The creative intelligence of humanity is a gift that can alleviate suffering and open up new possibilities, but it must remain ordered toward the common good, justice, the care of the vulnerable and creation. In this sense, the true alternative is not between enthusiasm and fear, but between two paths of development: a progress that serves individuals and peoples, or a progress that subjects them to the mentality of power. Ultimately, the key question remains the one posed by Saint John Paul II: does AI “make human life on earth ‘more human’ in every aspect of that life? Does it make it more worthy of man?” [138] If the answer is yes, then we can recognize it as an opportunity to be embraced responsibly, on a path of patient, shared reconstruction, akin to the rebuilding of Jerusalem narrated in the Book of Nehemiah. If, however, power grows while the heart withers and human bonds fray, then we are faced with a new form of Babel — a construction that is grandiose, yet fundamentally dehumanizing.

CHAPTER FOUR

SAFEGUARDING HUMANITY AT A TIME OF TRANSFORMATION. TRUTH, WORK, FREEDOM

Truth as a common good

Truth and democracy

Communication and the collective imagination

Toward an ecology of communication

137. Our first task is neither to demonize nor idolize technological tools, but to utilize them on the basis of a fundamental principle, namely that truth is a common good and not the property of those with power or influence.

An educational alliance for the digital age

140. Education, by contrast, is a long journey requiring patience, and therefore needs time for development and for engagement with reality beyond appearances. This is a fundamental issue because every technology shapes those who use it. Educating people about the use of AI, then, involves teaching them to decide when and for what purpose it ought *not* to be used. The speed and ease with which answers or summaries can be obtained risk extinguishing the desire to ask questions, which is a process that bears fruit only over time. As Plato wrote, the deepest and most important things are learned only after much time and effort, by engaging in discussion with others, “striking upon” ideas and experiences together like flint until the spark of understanding is kindled within us. [147] We must learn, then, how to exercise restraint in the use of AI and to protect our young people from the promise of the perfect machine, from that subtle temptation which renders human thought seemingly superfluous precisely when it is most needed.

The central role of schools

146: Without careful attention, an educational system lacking in a love for truth may emerge, in which an incessant flow of information replaces the essential exercise of research, reflection and discernment. As knowledge becomes increasingly fragmented, it becomes difficult to grasp reality as a whole, to ask profound questions about meaning, or to develop authentic, critical and creative thought. Many educators already report signs of dehumanization, where people may “know many things” but struggle to find direction in their lives, partly due to an inability to connect information with deeper knowledge or maintain a sense of purpose. A genuinely healthy attitude is needed, requiring rhythms that incorporate silence, in-depth study, reading and judicious analysis, for without these elements inner freedom may be compromised.

The dignity of work at a time of digital transition

The value of work

150: In reality, however, the “new ways” of working are not necessarily better, for “while AI promises to boost productivity by taking over mundane tasks, it frequently forces workers to adapt to the speed and demands of machines, rather than machines being designed to support those who work. As a result, contrary to the advertised benefits of AI, current approaches to technology can paradoxically de-skill workers, subject them to automated surveillance and relegate them to rigid and repetitive tasks. The need to keep up with the pace of technology can erode workers’ sense of agency and stifle the innovative abilities they are expected to bring to their work.” [152] Precisely in order to avoid this drift, it is necessary to design systems that are centered on the human person and not solely on performance.

The problem of unemployment

152. It is certainly desirable for technology to relieve humans of arduous, repetitive or dangerous tasks and to provide intelligent support for human activity. Yet, the protection of employment opportunities and the irreplaceable role of the individual must remain the general rule. The pursuit of greater profits cannot justify choices that systematically sacrifice jobs, because the human person is an end, not a means, and the economic order must remain subordinate to human dignity and the common good.

An economy that values dignity

164. In practical terms, in the age of AI and robotics, ensuring that the economy favors human dignity means adopting certain criteria for firm action. First, transparency and accountability: when data and algorithms influence credit distribution, personnel selection or access to services and opportunities, it is necessary that decisions be understandable, contestable and subject to oversight, so that individuals are not reduced to mere profiles. Second, inclusion and access: the benefits of innovation must be paired with investments in skills, infrastructure and essential services to ensure that technology does not widen the gap between those who have and those who have not. Finally, measures to ensure equity: taxation, social protection and industrial policies must correct the imbalances created by the concentration of wealth and power. Indeed, these criteria do not constitute a curb on innovation; instead they make it civilized and humane.

Families and young people: the social conditions for hope

Protecting freedom against dependencies and commercialization

Dependencies and societal control

171. A further risk, less visible but no less serious, is that of social control made possible by the massive collection of data and use of algorithmic systems. When every action—movements, purchases, relationships and preferences—leaves a trace, a new form of power emerges, namely the power to profile, predict and influence behavior, often without individuals being fully aware of it. If such kinds of data are used to make decisions affecting concrete opportunities — such as access to credit, employment or essential services — there is a risk of undermining freedom and discriminating against the most vulnerable. Furthermore, control is exercised not

only through explicit prohibitions, but also through the architecture of visibility: what is amplified or rendered invisible, what is rewarded or penalized, ultimately shapes opinions and choices, fostering conformity and self-censorship. For this reason, freedom in the digital age is not merely a matter of interiority but also a public concern. It calls for clear rules, transparency, the possibility of recourse and proportionate limits on the use of intrusive technologies, so that technology will remain at the service of the human person and not become a form of control over consciences.

Breaking the chains of new forms of slavery

173. This distorted view of the human person is reflected today in various forms of servitude directly linked to the digital economy. Nothing in the world of AI is immaterial or magical. Every seemingly immediate and flawless response is the result of a long chain of mediation, involving vast networks of natural resources, energy infrastructure and, above all, people. A significant part of the digital economy's functioning relies on the silent work of millions of people engaged in essential yet largely unseen activities, such as data labeling, model training and content moderation, often involving disturbing material. In many cases, these workers are young people, predominantly women, working under demanding conditions for minimal wages. Added to this invisible labor is the even harsher work of extracting the resources required for the production of the devices and microprocessors on which AI depends. In some regions of the world, children and adolescents work in dangerous conditions, crushing the materials from which rare earth elements are extracted. The bodies of these people are scarred, injured and worn down so that computational flow may continue uninterrupted. Furthermore, criminal networks use online platforms, messaging systems, anonymous payment methods and profiling techniques in order to recruit, control and transport victims of trafficking — very often minors — reducing men and women to “data” to be tracked and “packages” to be moved around within the same digital circuits that support much of the global economy. This reality deeply challenges the moral conscience of our time. It is not enough to invoke efficiency, nor to celebrate the benefits of innovation, if they are built on a chain of exploitation that remains deliberately hidden. If technology promises emancipation, yet produces new forms of global subordination, it stands in contradiction to the fundamental principle of human dignity.

178. Even today, colonialism assumes new forms. It no longer dominates only bodies, but appropriates data, transforming personal lives into exploitable information. Entire regions, especially those marked by structural fragility and limited geopolitical relevance, are currently subjected to a new mindset of extraction: that of health data, epidemiological profiles, genetic maps and demographic information. These have become the new “rare earths” of power: vital data which, once aggregated and analyzed, can be used to train predictive models, guide investment strategies, anticipate crises and, above all, determine who and what is deemed to matter. Those who control the health data of entire peoples — often collected under the pretext of aid, research or innovation — possess a structural leverage over the future, for they can shape needs and markets. They can also decide, before others, to whom medicines, investments and protections will be allocated. Here lies one of the most urgent moral challenges of our time: to ensure that shared knowledge becomes a true common good rather than an

instrument of dominance. This requires restoring to individuals not only the data that describes them, but also the ability to decide how it is used, by whom and for whose benefit. Otherwise, the digital age will not be post-colonial, but colonial in another form.

179. New forms of slavery are fueled by economic chains and digital infrastructures. Therefore, action is required on several fronts. First, the supply chains that underpin the technological industry and the digital economy need to become more transparent, so that no competitive advantage is built upon hidden exploitation. Second, companies and investors need to adopt clear criteria for preventive ethical verification (due diligence), placing among their priorities the protection of workers, the fight against forced labor and the assessment of the social impact of data-driven business models. Furthermore, digital platforms must cooperate responsibly with authorities and civil society to prevent communication, payment and profiling tools from becoming channels for the recruitment and control of victims. When such efforts converge, the digital environment can be transformed from a space of exploitation into one of protection, prevention and the promotion of human dignity.

A shared responsibility

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CULTURE OF POWER AND THE CIVILIZATION OF LOVE

182: Here the question is not merely the efficiency of new tools, but also the risk that technology, detached from ethics and responsibility, will render decisions about life and death more rapid and impersonal, and will present the use of force as an immediate and viable option.

The civilization of love in the digital age

187: This is the guiding principle for technological processes: it is not enough for artificial intelligence to make us more efficient or connected; it must also serve to build a universal human family, with shared rights and duties, where digital proximity becomes a real opportunity for encounter and mutual care.

The culture of power

The normalization of war

Force without limits

Weapons and artificial intelligence

198. Sometimes there is talk of “artificial moral agents,” as if machines were able to distinguish between right and wrong with greater consistency than a human being. Yet moral judgment cannot be reduced to calculation, for it involves conscience, personal responsibility and the recognition of the other as a person. Therefore, it is not permissible to entrust lethal or otherwise

irreversible decisions to artificial systems. No algorithm can make war morally acceptable. AI does not remove the intrinsic inhumanity of conflict; indeed it can only bring about conflict more quickly and render it more impersonal, lowering the threshold for resorting to violence, transforming defense into threat prediction and thus reducing victims to data. In this way, it will accustom us to the idea that violence is inevitable and needs only to be optimized. This does not diminish the importance of instilling, as far as possible, values and sound judgment into the artificial systems we build, so that they can contribute to a moral ecosystem in which humans are better able to listen to their own consciences, as well as allowing AI models to establish appropriate boundaries.

199. It is not enough to invoke a generic type of ethics. Concrete criteria for discernment must be established. The first such criterion concerns personal responsibility. When a decision to strike becomes automated or opaque, the risk of abdicating responsibility increases. For this reason, the chain of responsibility must be identifiable and verifiable; those who design, train, authorize and employ technology must be held accountable for their decisions. The second criterion pertains to the moral timeframe for making judgments. While AI tends to expedite the decision-making processes, speed and efficiency should never be the supreme motivating force for the irreversible decisions made in the context of war.

The crisis of multilateralism

A supposed political realism

Building the civilization of love

210: We view history in the light of the crucified and risen Lord, to whom the Father has given “all authority in heaven and on earth” (*Mt* 28:18). We do not consider the present as a predetermined fate, but an opportunity for personal and collective conversion. Moreover, we believe in the power of the Kingdom, which grows from the tiny size of a mustard seed, which, once sown, sprouts and grows (cf. *Mk* 4:26-32). While the tumult of confusion is all around us, goodness grows silently from the earth. In the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (*Is* 43:19).

211. A closer analysis of history confirms this. Even in the darkest nights, the Lord raises up men and women who refuse to give up, who persevere in doing good, who protect the vulnerable and open pathways to reconciliation. [...] For this reason, even when suffering seems to have the last word, Christians serve the good and are sustained by a theological hope that gives reality both meaning and direction.

We can all do our part

212. At this point, however, a subtle temptation may emerge, namely the thought that the problems are too big and we are too small, and that our choices, therefore, cannot make a difference. This is a polite form of resignation, often disguised as realism. Certainly, not

everyone has the same power to make a difference. There are those who govern, make investment decisions, lead institutions, conduct research, educate, produce or provide information, and then there are those who only seem to live their daily lives. Yet, no one is without responsibility. We all have our own areas for action, and it is precisely there — and nowhere else — that we must choose whether to fuel the mentality of force (even if only through indifference, cynicism, lies or hatred), or to preserve the mindset of peace (with truth, moderation, closeness and care).

213: The civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization. For this reason, it is worthwhile pausing to reflect on some aspects of how we, each in our own way, can cooperate in building the civilization of love.

The need to disarm words

214. The first contribution we can make toward a more humane civilization is to be mindful of our words. “Let us disarm words and we will help to disarm the world.” [188] Words have enormous power, something we experience in our daily interactions; for example, spoken words can change our mood for better or for worse. “Peace begins with each one of us: in the way we look at others, listen to others and speak about others. In this sense, the way we communicate is of fundamental importance: we must say ‘no’ to the war of words and images, we must reject the paradigm of war.” [189] We must all, therefore, examine our conscience regarding the words we use, the prejudices we have and the explicit or implicit aggression that lies within them. We have a real opportunity to contribute to the common good each time we speak the truth, offer wise advice, support those in need of comfort, denounce injustice and give a voice to the voiceless.

Building peace through justice

Adopting the perspective of victims

216. There are times when, in order to remain human, we must set aside our reservations and take a stand. In some conflicts, it is unjust to remain neutral, nor is it enough merely to claim that we are not complicit. [192] When we witness the bombing of civilians, attacks on hospitals, schools or vital infrastructure, and violence that affects children, we are confronted with scandals that wound humanity itself. For this reason, we cannot limit ourselves to the level of abstract analysis. Pope Francis encouraged us to “touch the wounded flesh” [193] of those who suffer, look at their faces, listen to their stories and acknowledge their wounds. Painful events require both history and memory, the former to recount the facts, the latter to bear witness to lived experiences.

Cultivating a healthy realism

Reviving dialogue

220. Indeed, dialogue is an ordinary part of human life and does not only concern relations between States. It involves acquiring an attitude that seeks to forge bonds of fraternity built on listening, an open demeanor, making time for each other and even wasting time together. For if we experience authentic encounters with others, with those who are different, strangers and migrants, it becomes much more difficult even to imagine war.

223. In rejecting the mindset of violence, interreligious dialogue plays a decisive role, because at the heart of the great spiritual paths lies a message of peace. [199] Whereas those who use the name of God to legitimize terrorism, violence or war betray his true nature, for to fight in the name of religion means attacking religion itself. [200] The “spirit of Assisi,” evoked by Saint John Paul II and carried forward by Pope Francis — for example, through his dialogue with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar — shows that believers can draw upon the most authentic sources of their particular spiritual traditions, where there is no room for “sanctified hatred.”

The necessity of diplomacy and multilateralism

Praying and hoping

228. These avenues for exercising responsibility are sustained by prayer, and in turn nourish prayer. Indeed, for each of us, peace primarily comes “from God, God who loves us all, unconditionally.” [203] It is a gift given by Jesus to his disciples on the day of Easter: “Peace be with you! It is the peace of the risen Christ. A peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering.” [204] With these words, I greeted the Church and the world on the day of my election to the See of Peter. I wish to repeat them now, and to invite everyone to pray for this gift. Let us never tire of praying for peace and of committing ourselves to achieving it in our relationships and in society.

CONCLUSION

The Word became flesh

223. For this reason, as a believer among believers, I invite everyone to contemplate, in the face of the Son of God, the *grandeur of humanity* that shines a light also on the era of AI. In Christ, we are called to cooperate in the work of creation, rather than be disinterested observers of technological processes that limit our freedom and responsibility. [212] The dignity inscribed in each of us by the Holy Spirit can also be seen in our capacity to reflect critically, choose and love freely, and form authentic relationships.

One body in Christ

235: The Eucharist opens us to justice and sharing, with a preferential concern for those who are burdened by poverty or marginalization. And while new economic and technological networks can generate exclusion, isolation and dependencies, the Church — nourished by the

Eucharist — is called to make visible a different paradigm, one that preserves human connections, gives a voice to the invisible and ensures that processes are aimed at respecting people's dignity.

The construction site of our time

236. The spirituality I wish to commend is that of the “wise architect” who, driven by hope for the Kingdom of God, is committed to building the world for the common good (cf. 1 Cor 3:10). As I mentioned at the beginning of this reflection, [217] the task of building in our time must place our relationship with God at its center. Our rule must be the acceptance of human limitations as a natural and positive reality, and should be characterized by shared responsibility and a language characterized by the Gospel. At the end of this reflection, the plan for a civilization of love can be seen more clearly, and the construction site appears to be already up and running, thanks especially to the many living stones solidly united to Christ the cornerstone (cf. 1 Pet 2:4-6). In this task, we are called to assume an active role, without taking refuge in spiritual sentimentality or retreating into our own little worlds. We must be faithful to the truth, invest in education, cultivate relationships and love justice and peace.

237. Let us remain faithful to the truth! Living amid incessant flows of information, opinions and images, we know how easy it can be to influence decisions and preferences through increasingly sophisticated algorithms. [218] In this context, it is imperative to cultivate hearts that love the truth, prefer what is right despite the most appealing content and pursue wisdom rather than immediate results. We must always keep before us the truth about God and humanity, just as Christ has revealed them to us. We must lay aside an individualistic and technical view of humanity, as if reality were mere matter to be shaped according to selfish interests, whether individual or collective. [219] Instead, let us cultivate what Pope Francis called a “situated anthropocentrism,” [220] which recognizes the human being as a creature embedded in a network of relationships with other living beings and with all of creation. Fidelity to the truth requires integrating the possibilities offered by technology within a framework marked by wisdom, which is capable of safeguarding both the dignity of each person and the future of our common home.

238. Let us invest in education, beginning with ourselves! We all need to learn how to engage with the digital world in a human way, as an integral part of our education in the faith and in a life lived according to the Gospel. Indeed, we must consider the digital world as a new continent to be evangelized, one that requires generous missionaries who are mature in the faith. In a particular way, we need adults to rediscover their vocation as artisans of education, prepared to work patiently each day, with the support of extensive and shared educational partnerships. Today, accompanying children and young people in using technology for developing responsible relationships, helping them to recognize the risks and choose what fosters inner freedom, is a concrete form of charity and will safeguard their dignity. Teaching new generations that technological evolution does not follow a predetermined path, but can be guided by personal and collective responsibility, constitutes one of the most valuable services to the common good.

239. Let us cultivate relationships! In an era that favors speed and fragmentation, the human person still yearns to receive care and recognition from attentive minds, kind words and hands capable of tenderness. The digital culture multiplies connections and offers new opportunities for interaction; yet, the human heart retains an irrevocable need for genuine closeness. I invite everyone to cherish places and times where physical presence remains crucial, such as shared meals, Christian community gatherings, time spent with the lonely and serving the poor. These are signs of a humanity that continues to believe that every person's body is a dwelling place of God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. It is precisely this covenant between glory and fragility that becomes the criterion for evaluating the anthropological models offered by contemporary culture.

240: Every technical or economic decision should include spiritual discernment and be an opportunity for assessing whether the advances in AI are promoting justice and participation or concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a select few. I would encourage a careful examination of the supply chains of digital production, the working conditions hidden behind our devices and the mechanisms that profit from manipulation and war. At the same time, practical ways of fostering fairness, participation and care for creation must be found.

241: In this era of digital transformation, I see in him a striking parable of our own vocation, which is not to be passive spectators of social and cultural fractures, nor mere commentators on what is crumbling, but men and women prepared to enter the construction sites of history — research laboratories, technology companies, schools, the media, institutions and local communities — in order to rebuild what has collapsed and protect what is threatened. Like Nehemiah, we too are called to unite listening and courage, prayer and responsibility, so that, even when a technocratic mentality or partisan interests seem to prevail, the human city may become a more fitting place to live.

The song of hope: the Magnificat

245. With the same faith as Mary, let us become “weavers of hope” in our world, sharing who we are and what we have, so that the presence of Jesus may grow among us and his Kingdom take shape. In the humble fidelity of daily life, even the era of AI can become a time in which the Holy Spirit brings about the civilization of love in our lives. Indeed, the Lord continues to make all things new and offers every era the possibility of becoming part of salvation history in the light of the Incarnation.