

Address by His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny
May 25th, 2026

Holy Father,
Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Speakers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this occasion of immense significance, when the Holy Father Leo XIV presents *Magnifica Humanitas* to the Church and to the world, asking us to view the age of artificial intelligence with clarity and hope.

My address centres on three expressions and their different perspectives: ingenuity, consciousness and conscience and care.

The first word is **ingenuity**. Artificial intelligence is one of the great accomplishments of human ingenuity. It gives ample proof of extraordinary capacities for research and design. Humanity can rightly be proud of what so many men and women of science and technology have been able to achieve.

There is, however, something even deeper that deserves to be recognised. In artificial intelligence, humanity can glimpse a reflection of itself: the capacity to abstract, to learn, to seek order within complexity. Every genuine achievement of human intelligence reveals something of the greatness of the human person and, for believers, points to the mystery of creation: men and women are made in the image of God and participate in a finite way in divine creativity.

This perspective allows us to face the challenges of AI with gratitude as well as discernment. Extremes of uncritical enthusiasm and paralysing fear are understandable, since changes brought about by new technologies are advancing at a pace that outstrips the cultural, political and educational processes through which societies used to assimilate major historical transformations. While the Industrial Revolution gradually transformed work, the city, the family and the economy, the digital transition proceeds in leaps and bounds, sometimes within the space of a few months, it seems like weeks.

It is in this context that the encyclical invites us to enter consciously into “the construction site of our time” (§ 236). The image is both sobering and evocative. What is being built is open and unfinished, a place in the making. It requires diverse skills, coordination and, above all, a shared vision. No one really builds alone; everyone’s choices affect the whole project.

The future of artificial intelligence, too, is a building site. It can contribute to a more just coexistence, support the care of our common home and serve the development of peoples. It can also concentrate power, exacerbate inequalities and leave behind those

who are already on the margins. The direction that AI takes is not written into the technology itself. It depends on our choices, on the institutions that host and underpin that choosing, and on our ability to manage innovation responsibly to serve the common good.

The second expression is **consciousness / conscience** (Italian: *coscienza*). *Magnifica Humanitas* proposes a clear vision and focus: the human being is “a creature embedded in a network of relationships with other living beings and with all of creation” (§ 237). Artificial intelligence affects the quality of our lived relationships and shapes the human environment in which our decisions occur and relationships develop. The question of technology becomes inseparable from the question of humanity: who we are, how we inhabit the world, and how we treat each other.

A related question, much debated today, is whether, and in what sense, we can speak of consciousness or conscience in relation to the most advanced artificial intelligence systems. It is a serious question, one that deserves attention and further study. Note, however, that it is not merely a technical query. More fundamentally, this is a philosophical question, for it concerns the meaning of experience, interiority, subjectivity and freedom. As such, it remains open to various interpretations

The Church welcomes these debates with respect and recognises the value of the scientific and philosophical contributions. Her engagement in these matters stems from her own vision of the human person, received through Revelation and developed within her living tradition. Here, the affirmation of the Second Vatican Council is indispensable: “Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths” (GS 16). The Council treats consciousness / conscience as that innermost part of the person where the human being is touched by the voice of God, recognises what is good, hears the call of truth, and becomes capable of responding. For this reason, it is part of the unique vocation of the human person: to be God’s interlocutor, a partner in the covenant, and a subject before Him. Other religions and secular thought also contribute richly to the understanding of consciousness / conscience.

The third word is **care**. *Magnifica Humanitas* highlights the impact of artificial intelligence on our common home and, from this perspective, stands in profound continuity with *Laudato si’* and *Laudate Deum*. In those texts, Pope Francis taught that when technical power is separated from wisdom capable of safeguarding relationships, it can turn into domination over humanity and creation. In the age of artificial intelligence, this awareness takes on a new urgency. The digital construction site and the construction site of our common home converge on the same question: what kind of world are we building, and what place does the human person have in it? This arises

on the material level too, given that the most advanced AI systems require energy infrastructure on a massive scale: the digital transition is also an ecological issue.

Caring for the future depends decisively on education. It is urgent to teach “new generations that technological evolution does not follow a predetermined path but can be guided by personal and collective responsibility” (§ 238). Educating in the age of artificial intelligence means forming people capable of employing powerful tools while maintaining inner freedom; accessing vast amounts of information while retaining critical judgement; and living in digital environments without losing the joy of real listening, encounters and interpersonal relationships.

As Christians, we enter this endeavour with a specific “hope rooted in the One who came down from heaven ‘to create a new story here below’” (§ 240). Our hope springs from the certainty that the Holy Spirit acts in history, also in this present age, supporting every choice that orients technology towards the good.

The encyclical expresses this with words of great intensity: “In the humble fidelity of daily life, even the era of artificial intelligence can become a time in which the Holy Spirit brings about the civilisation of love in our lives” (§ 245). This invites us to look beyond the mere level of technical control or institutional regulation. The stakes are deeper: they concern the very nature of human coexistence and the possibility that, in the age of artificial intelligence, peoples may grow in fraternity and develop in peace.

This is, perhaps, the most original contribution that Christian faith brings to the debate on artificial intelligence: the conviction that human beings always transcend the sum of their achievements, their data profiles and any possible technical simulation, because they are called to a fullness of life that finds its truth in relationship and its fulfilment in a constant and sincere gift of oneself (*Gaudium et spes*, 24).

To safeguard this truth and this freedom, facing the challenges of our time, is the task that *Magnifica Humanitas* entrusts to us.

Thank you.