Address by His Eminence Card. Victor Manuel Fernández

Magnifica humanitas, signed by the Holy Father on 15 May, adds to the rich heritage of the Church's Social Teaching. It does so in dialogue with the realities facing humanity today. For Christians, indeed, nothing that is human leaves us indifferent. This explains the name chosen by the Holy Father and the date chosen for the signing of the Encyclical: the anniversary of *Rerum novarum*.

Precisely because the Church's social documents give voice to the new challenges facing humanity, it is inevitable that the present Encyclical takes up themes such as artificial intelligence and war and others, for the subtitle reads "in the age of artificial intelligence", not "on artificial intelligence". But in my brief presentation, I shall focus exclusively on paragraphs 118 to 130, which are the 'most theological' and can provide a faith-based framework at the outset of this presentation. While this social document develops various themes of the Church's social doctrine, which qualifies it as theology, I say 'theological' in another sense, referring to the highest level of our spiritual life, where our 'yes' to God, the covenant of love with Him and the consequent transformation of our hearts become possible.

The title of the Encyclical leads us to appreciate humanity as "magnificent". And it does so, even though the text acknowledges the terrible capacity for evil that lies within us, highlighting just how wounded our humanity is—to the point of murdering thousands of children and innocent people in wars that clearly contravene international law and cannot be justified in any respect. Yes, this humanity of ours, which is capable of reducing so many people to slavery in the most diverse forms, even though we are in the third millennium. Yes, this humanity of ours, which can reach levels of indifference, cynicism and cruelty that never cease to astonish. Despite all this, the Holy Father is not ashamed to call it "magnificent". For every human being possesses infinite dignity and never loses that sublime capacity for love which God bestowed upon humanity when He created us.

Paragraphs 122 to 126 provide examples that make us proud to be human. They show that this wretched humanity is nonetheless capable of reacting laudably; on certain occasions it is truly manifest as "magnificent". Pope Leo argues, for example, that culture and art can "preserve this spark" of goodness and beauty and at times "have taken on an almost prophetic value". And he refers to Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Picasso's *Guernica* and the film *Schindler's List* (122). He then mentions the difficult and arduous birth of institutions that protect us, such as the Red Cross and the UN, as well as the signing of the Refugee Convention, etc. (123). Next, we read of significant events such as the civil rights movement in the United States, with the inspiring example of Martin Luther King, or the end of apartheid with Nelson Mandela's choice of forgiveness and fraternity. He highlights the names of great women such as Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, Marie Curie, Elisabeth Elliot, Benazir Bhutto and others who "have helped to make history more human" (124). The Holy Father also recalls the martyrs of fraternity and justice such as Kolbe, Romero, Angelelli and Van Thuan, in addition to the "martyrs of everyday life: parents, nurses, doctors, volunteers" (125). And he concludes that this fascinating interweaving of goodness, struggle and beauty helps us understand that "humanity – magnificent and wounded – must not be replaced or surpassed", must not deny "what makes it itself" (126) in its true grandeur.

Thinking about posthumanism, some forms of which go so far as suggesting that humanity be replaced, we pause to contemplate these people and these events that spring from the heart of the human. On the other hand, some forms of transhumanism invite us to anticipate a life in paradise thanks to future sophisticated devices solving all problems and enhancing our capabilities. But many

technological devices delight the individual at first yet, shortly after, an emptiness an emptiness returns, a feeling that something is missing. Various forms of posthumanism allege that this happens because humanity has reached its expiry date; it must simply be replaced, and an evolutionary leap towards a new form of life—a new level in the evolution of the species—is necessary. This leap is always dependent on technology. As believers, we are certain that none of this will fill the void; it will not fill the infinite space of our hearts, nor will it give a stable and lasting meaning to our human lives.

Behind this idea of progress lies a false mysticism that is precisely the opposite of what Christians and other believers call new life: the theological life, that life, which is truly on another level, that life which certainly takes us beyond ourselves into genuine transcendence. It is life lived in faith, hope and charity. In the hyper-technological worldview, however, faith is replaced by total trust in technological capabilities; hope is transformed into a superficial hope for a new product that will relieve our boredom; love is forgotten because we prefer to be attached to things, we desire to have more, while others—our brothers and sisters—disappear from view. This runs the risk of ignoring that the human person has a spiritual dimension, created directly by God, which cannot be reduced to the mechanisms of a technological system, nor can it be reproduced by them.

Of course, how can we not be deeply grateful, for example, for the possibilities of medical care offered by new technologies? This is beyond question. But the mystique embedded in transhumanism advocates the overcoming of every limit as the ultimate ideal. The Encyclical responds to this proposal in paragraphs 118 to 121, which explore the value and fruitfulness of our experience of limitation. In truth, limitation is not always a flaw to be corrected, but a "place where the human person matures and opens up to relationship" (118). For this reason, the Holy Father states, "human beings do not flourish in spite of their limitations, but often through them" (118), and adds: "it is precisely in our being limited that there is room for compassion, for a sincere concern for the needs of others, for the generosity that surprises even in the midst of darkness or failure, for spiritual experience and the worship of God" (119). Through our limitations "we can find a new wisdom" (119); we mature, we grow as people, we embark on a journey of deeper understanding. And we must say to those who think they can achieve a marvellous humanity by overcoming every limitation and suffering, that "to suppress pain entirely, we would, in the end, have to extinguish love as well" (120). For those who love always suffer. The Encyclical continues, "we cherish within ourselves the lessons that are etched like scars, a memory of the journey taken between freedom and falls, dreams and disappointments" (120). It is precisely from the intertwining of all this that we so often manage to "savour the sweetest taste of our humanity. To renounce this adventure, both dramatic and splendid, in the name of a supposed overcoming of every limit […] would no longer be to be human" (120). And it will certainly not be a triumph for humanity.

However, there is in all of us a genuine desire to rise above, to go beyond, which the Encyclical does not wish to deny. The true possibility of this 'beyond' is called "grace", a beautiful word that Saint Augustine, more than anyone else in history, has taught us to savour. The Holy Father, a son of Augustine, insists on showing how this call to transcend ourselves towards another level of humanity—the one dreamed of by God—resonates within Christianity as well. He does so in paragraphs 127 and 128. He states, for example, that "the human being is not confined within the limits of his nature, but is called to transcend himself" (127). He explains that this is possible through God's gratuitous, surprising and superabundant initiative. He offers us a process of elevation and transformation which, despite an infinite distance, "surpasses" our limited capacities, and thus, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we can "enter into the bosom of that inexhaustible life even as we walk within the limits of this world" (127). Accordingly, as St Paul said, we become "new creatures" (2 Cor

5:17). And Pope Francis is quoted as explaining that in this transcending of ourselves we do not become less human, but fully human: “We come to be fully human when we are more than human, when we allow God to lead us beyond ourselves so that we may reach our truest being” (EG 8). For example, what the Lord accomplished through his grace in the young Francis of Assisi is certainly far greater than anything algorithms and technology can achieve in us.

All these considerations leave us with a powerful and crucial message. Or rather, a fundamental question for our conscience: *Do I want to belong to that humanity, which is closed in on itself, decadent, empty and insensitive, proud of its technological resources to the point of worshipping itself in place of God? Or do I wish to belong to the magnificent humanity that God has dreamed of, the one capable of loving, of giving our life for others, of suffering with them, of allowing us to be led beyond ourselves to become fully ourselves in friendship with God?*

I leave the answer to each of us.

Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández