

Pope Leo's Eucharistic Answer to the Age of AI

By Thomas Reese, Religion News Service

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In the conclusion to his first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo XIV proposes what he calls "a sober yet demanding program of Christian life with which we can navigate this epochal change in the light of the Gospel." The epochal change he refers to is AI, and he writes of a eucharistic spirituality where we are united with the body of Christ in completing God's work of creation by living out the gospel message.

This is a challenge and antidote to contemporary culture.

He notes that "our world is filled with attempts to seize control of markets and spheres of influence, often shrouded in reassuring rhetoric and seductive ideologies." And he contrasts this with the message of the Gospel, where the Son of God becomes flesh, poor and vulnerable, like "so many brothers and sisters stripped of their dignity and reduced to silence."

Peace does not come through power but "is awakened when we allow ourselves to be moved by the tears of the little ones, the fragility of the elderly, the silence of victims and the struggle of those who fight against the evil they do not wish to commit," he writes.

While today's ideologies "urge humanity to overcome limitations through technology, and to rise above others by asserting dominance," the Son of God offers something quite different: He "takes upon himself our weakness and transforms it into a setting for salvation," the pope shares.

This is a demanding message.

What saves humanity, according to Leo, is "the divine love that descends into the most fragile point of our history and renews it from within."

"The Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery reveal God entering into our human condition and transforming it through the gift of himself," Leo explains. In the Eucharist, "the Lord gives himself and gathers the Church together, so that his offering becomes the principle of unity and source of new life."

he Eucharist is "never simply an act of individual piety," says Leo, quoting Benedict XVI. In the Eucharist, we "are the Church of Christ, his members, his body. We are brothers and sisters in him."

As a result, "The Eucharist opens us to justice and sharing, with a preferential concern for those who are burdened by poverty or marginalization."

This aspect of the Eucharist is missed by those who focus on smells and bells and prefer the traditional Latin Mass.

"While new economic and technological networks can generate exclusion, isolation and dependencies," reports Leo, "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."

Thus, the spirituality proposed by Leo is "committed to building the world for the common good." It does not take "refuge in spiritual sentimentality or retreating into our own little worlds." Rather, he says, "We must be faithful to the truth, invest in education, cultivate relationships and love justice and peace.

"Fidelity to the truth," explains the pope, "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."

Leo recognizes the need to invest in education to help children and young people use technology "for developing responsible relationships, helping them to recognize the risks and choose what fosters inner freedom."

Rather than living in our phones, he calls on us to cultivate relationships by cherishing "places and times where physical presence remains crucial, such as shared meals, Christian community gatherings, time spent with the lonely and serving the poor."

We must also love justice and peace, says Leo. "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."

Leo wants us to be active in building this world of justice and peace.

In Leo's view, our vocation 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."

Finally, he urges us, especially those who feel helpless, to a life of prayer modeled on Mary, whose "Magnificat" is a hymn of praise and joy.

She sees all of history through the lens of revelation, explains Leo. "The Romans continue to control her land, and her people are still subjugated and humiliated," Leo admits. "Yet, everything has changed within her, and this allows her to see what is invisible. God has already shown the strength of his arm; he has already scattered the proud, cast down the mighty, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed."

"Mary not only teaches us to recognize God's invisible work," writes Leo, "but also directs our gaze to 'the points at which humanity is broken and the world becomes distorted: the contrast between the humble and the powerful, the poor and the rich, the satiated and the hungry,' teaching us 'to look at the world from a lower position: through the eyes of those who suffer rather than the mighty; to view history through the eyes of the little ones, rather than through the perspective of the powerful; to interpret the events of history from the viewpoint of the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the wounded child, the exile and the fugitive.' "

Those who think that Catholicism became less demanding after the Second Vatican Council have not been listening. The Eucharistic spirituality proposed by Leo is sober and demanding because it rejects

the ideologies of power and wealth in favor of the Gospel message of reconciliation, compassion and love.

While the principles of Catholic social teaching are open to all, the spirituality offered here is a challenge to Christians who listen to the word and break bread together. What they do is not simply for their individual piety; it is to empower them as the body of Christ to build the kingdom of God — one of justice, peace and love.