News



Pope Leo XIV attends the presentation of his first encyclical, "Magnifica humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence," at the Vatican, Monday, May 25, 2026. (AP/Alessandra Tarantino)

by The Associated Press

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Pope Leo XIV has issued a sweeping manifesto about safeguarding humanity in the era of artificial intelligence, examining the many social areas that the technology is fundamentally reshaping.

Here are some excerpts from the 83-page document *Magnifica Humanitas* ("Magnificent Humanity") released on Monday.

Democracy

Leo says that disinformation “found a powerful amplifier” with AI through the ability to “manipulate content, images and videos,” which exposes people to “biased or misleading perspectives.” The pontiff said democracy is weakened when pragmatism, that is “what appears useful effective,” substitutes for truth. “Indifference to the truth leads, slowly but surely, to a descent to totalitarianism,” Leo wrote.

Social media

Leo said that those who control digital platforms, including social media, have a power that “should be constantly guided by the pursuit of truth or respect for human dignity.” The internet should be seen as “a setting in which inner freedom and critical thought can mature,’’ and not “an instrument of excessive distraction, homogenization or dominance.” The backdrop is that communication not only transmits information but creates culture.



(Unsplash/Julian)

Labor

Leo said the workplace must be governed by “the protection of employment opportunities and the irreplaceable role of the individual.” He warned that “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.” Leo also said governments must foster conditions that favor employment “since it is a primary good for families and for societies.”

War

Leo said that AI “can only bring conflict about more quickly and render it more impersonal.” He called for concrete criteria when making a decision to strike. That

includes an identifiable chain of responsibility applying also to “those who design, train, authorize and employ technology,” and measures, so that target selection takes into account the difference between combatants and noncombatants, and the impact on defenseless populations. Non-negotiable requirements include guarantees of accountability and that deployment of lethal force cannot be automated. Leo also called for a shared international framework “to curb the technological arms race and ensure robust protection for civilians.”

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Economy

Leo noted that the world’s wealth “is increasingly concentrated in fewer hands, widening inequalities.” In the age of AI and robotics, it is no longer possible to rely solely on the “invisible hand’ of the market,” Leo wrote, urging politicians to orient policies toward “the common good” and to promote “dignified work, social inclusion and an equitable distribution of the benefits of innovation.”

Human Trafficking

Leo underlined the role of digital networks — including online platforms, messaging systems, anonymous payment methods — in human trafficking, which he said “must be recognized as a contemporary form of slavery.” He warned that failing to respond to or tolerating these practices risks complicity in “today’s sins, which are akin to those of the past when slavery was being concealed and justified.”

Environment

Leo also addressed the environmental costs of the data centers that are generating AI models, consuming “enormous amounts of energy and water, significantly influencing carbon dioxide emissions.” As demands increase, especially for large language models, Leo called for the development of more sustainable technological solutions.



An aerial view shows an Amazon Web Services Data Center known as US East 1 in Ashburn, Va., Oct. 20, 2025. The explosion of massive data centers to handle the increasing generative demands of artificial intelligence have placed high demands on both power and the water used in cooling systems -- millions of gallons per day -- and low-income communities have typically endured the brunt of the air pollution they create. (OSV News/Reuters/Jonathan Ernst)

Youth impact

Leo called for an alliance among policymakers, educational institutions and families to help navigate the “culture of immediacy and hyperstimulation” created by digital media. He also highlighted how AI amplifies the danger of predation on young people, and warned against having personal mobile devices at too young an age. “Online phenomena such as grooming, blackmail and the sexual exploitation of minors are not uncommon, and are made more insidious by the use of fake profiles, algorithms that facilitate dangerous contact, and AI tools capable of manipulating images and videos,” the pope wrote.

This story appears in the **AI Encyclical: Magnifica Humanitas** feature series. View the full series.