

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY* by Thomas Mengel** of

[A HUMANIST REWRITE](#) · [Full text with tracked changes](#) · [Introduction + five chapters](#)**LEGEND** ~~Red strikethrough~~ = religious/theological text removed *Green italic* = humanist text added

The [full document](#) rewrites *Magnifica Humanitas* from a humanist perspective, grounding human dignity, social ethics, and the common good in shared human reason and solidarity rather than divine creation, Christology, or ecclesial authority. The social-ethical analysis — on AI, labour, truth, peace, and human flourishing — is preserved in full.

Magnifica Humanitas

"Magnificent Humanity"

Pope Leo XIV · Signed 15 May 2026 · Released 25 May 2026

On safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence

INTRODUCTION Humanity at the crossroads of AI

The document opens with a stark choice: build a new Tower of Babel — a project of technological hubris and concentrated power — or rebuild the city together, in the spirit of Nehemiah, through shared responsibility and democratic cooperation. In the humanist rewrite, human dignity is re-grounded not in the image of God but in the intrinsic, not conferred worth of every person.

The Babel and Nehemiah narratives are retained as powerful secular parables about collective arrogance versus collaborative repair. The four pillars for building the common good are: relational grounding in one another (not in God); acceptance of human vulnerability as constitutive rather than a defect; subsidiarity and shared responsibility across all sectors; and a language of common humanity rather than evangelical proclamation. The closing appeal is addressed to all people of good will — not to the faithful alone.

Dignity = intrinsic, not divinely conferred · Babel/Nehemiah retained as secular parables · Appeal broadened to all humanity · Active makers, not servants of a Kingdom

CHAPTER ONE A living tradition of humanist social ethics

What the original frames as the Church's dynamic Social Doctrine is reframed as a history of humanist social thought — spanning labour reform, international human rights law, democratic theory, ecological ethics, and the philosophy of technology. The chapter traces this tradition from 19th-century industrial reformers through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, postwar development ethics, and ecological solidarity, arriving at the digital revolution.

The key methodological claim is that moral understanding grows through reason, dialogue, and evidence — not revealed truth — and that this openness to revision and correction is a strength, not a concession. The tradition is described as a living process of shared discernment, pluralist in form but committed to the core principles of dignity, subsidiarity, solidarity, and the common good.

Social Doctrine → humanist social thought · Gospel → reason and moral experience · Papal lineage → labour movement, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ecological ethics · Openness to correction as a virtue

CHAPTER TWO Foundations: dignity, rights, and principles

The foundational chapter regrounds the five classic principles of social ethics — common good, universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, solidarity, and social justice — in humanist rather than theological soil. The human person is the centre: not as *Imago Dei* but as an end in themselves, in the Kantian sense, with a capacity for reason and moral agency that no system may override.

Human rights are translated directly into digital-age claims: meaningful explanation of algorithmic decisions, protection against discriminatory AI, data sovereignty, and participation in technology governance. The chapter concludes with a sober examination of the mixed record of existing institutions — real progress in rights and poverty reduction alongside growing inequality, democratic strain, and ecological crisis — framing this as context for AI's arrival, not cause for despair.

Imago Dei → intrinsic dignity / Kantian ends-in-themselves · Human rights extended to digital-age claims · Preferential option for poor = justice, not charity · Integral development includes meaning-making, not spiritual life

CHAPTER THREE Technology and dominance: what must not be lost

This is the analytical core of the document. It identifies the technocratic paradigm — treating technological capability as the supreme standard of value — as the primary threat and maps its four forms of digital power: data, algorithms, platforms, and automation. AI is assessed even-handedly: its genuine benefits (medicine, science, education, logistics) are acknowledged, but its present harms (discriminatory algorithms, surveillance, disinformation, worker displacement, autonomous weapons) are named as real and urgent, not hypothetical.

The chapter confronts transhumanism and posthumanism as seductive but ultimately reductionist ideologies that dissolve the normative core of humanist ethics. Against them, it defends human vulnerability as constitutive — the source of empathy and solidarity — and locates the authentic "more than human" not in silicon enhancement but in the deepening of love, justice, and wisdom through culture and moral formation. The Augustinian two-cities framework is secularised: the city of domination versus the city of solidarity.

Christian humanism → humanist ethics of vulnerability and care · Grace → culture, education, moral formation · City of God → city of solidarity · Transhumanism critiqued on humanist, not theological, grounds

CHAPTER FOUR Truth, work, and freedom in the digital age

Three practical domains are examined. On truth: democracy depends on a shared epistemic commons that is under assault from algorithmic outrage, information silos, and AI-generated disinformation; an ecology of communication — public journalism, algorithmic transparency, media literacy, international cooperation — is necessary and achievable. On work: technological unemployment is a genuine moral threat; the primacy of the worker over capital must be actively defended through retraining investment, strengthened safety nets, working-time reform, and cooperative enterprise models. On freedom: commercial platform addiction is characterised as engineered dependency — a structural problem requiring structural solutions, not individual willpower; gig-economy precarity is named as a form of unfreedom analogous to servitude. The

chapter closes by distributing shared responsibility across governments, corporations, civil society, educators, and citizens — replacing the Church's institutional self-commitment with a broader democratic politics of technology.

Epistemic commons framed as a justice issue · Platform addiction = structural, not moral failure of individuals · Gig economy unfreedom named directly · Church commitment → democratic politics of technology

CHAPTER FIVE The culture of power vs. the civilization of solidarity

The final chapter reframes the encyclical's "civilization of love" as a "civilization of solidarity" — a social order of mutual recognition rather than divine charity. The culture of power is anatomised across five dimensions: the normalisation of war, the use of force without legal limits, the specific danger of autonomous weapons systems (which diffuse moral responsibility lethally), the crisis of multilateralism, and the self-defeating logic of power-maximisation without ethical constraint.

Against each, the chapter proposes a practical program: strict international norms on autonomous weapons; reformed multilateral AI governance institutions representing all humanity; the disarming of language as a civic necessity; peace through justice rather than surveillance; and the adoption of victims' perspectives as the primary test of any social ethics. The chapter closes by replacing the Christian call to prayer with a humanist call to renewed commitment — hope not as theological virtue but as active, practical, world-making practice.

Civilization of love → civilization of solidarity · Hope as practice, not theological virtue · Autonomous weapons prohibition argued on humanist grounds · Magnificat → the long human aspiration toward justice

* About this article

This document has been created with research and editorial assistance of [Claude.AI](#). It draws on the full humanist rewrite of Magnifica Humanitas (Pope Leo XIV, 15 May 2026), in which all five chapters and the conclusion were reworked to ground the encyclical's social-ethical analysis in shared human reason and solidarity rather than theological authority. The rewrite retained the document's analytical framework and core ethical principles while replacing every load-bearing theological claim. [The full rewrite is available as a tracked-changes Word document also.](#)

** About the author

Dr. Thomas Mengel is a trained theologian with a focus on modern religious history and the sociology of religion. He also has graduate degrees in education, history, and computer science. More recently, he retired from his position as [professor of interdisciplinary leadership studies \(University of New Brunswick, Canada\)](#) and volunteers his time as cooperative community developer, and humanist chaplain candidate based in Pouch Cove, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. More about him and his writings can be found at [thomasmengel.com](#).