



Dear Friends,

This week, Pope Leo XIV published his first encyclical letter, Magnifica Humanitas (magnificent humanity).¹ The purpose of the encyclical is to protect the human person in the AI age.

You may be surprised by the encyclical's title. But Pope Leo is simply reflecting Biblical teaching about humans being made in God's likeness (Gen 1, Ps 8). He is aware that there are AI advocates making big claims for the technology. These claims are not simply about what AI can do. The more concerning issue is the nature of AI. AI may redefine what it means to be human.

Take, for example, this statement from Chris Olah:

We keep finding things [about AI] that are mysterious, even unsettling. We find structures that mirror results from human neuroscience. We find evidence of introspection. We find internal states that functionally mirror joy, satisfaction, fear, grief, and unease. I don't know what that means, but I think it warrants ongoing discernment.²

The reason for Pope Leo's encyclical is that AI raises moral, social, and political challenges for contemporary life. AI is not the future. It is already with us. It is significantly impacting our daily lives. People use AI at work, to plan holidays and to compose emails. AI is also replacing jobs.

As Christians, we need to think and act biblically about AI. This is a very big subject, much too big for a pastoral newsletter. So, what I propose to do is ask a couple of key questions about AI.

First, what kind of technology is AI? Is it "normal" or is it "extraordinary"? Or to put the question differently, is AI a tool for human use or is it a form of being, like human persons?

Humans, like their divine Creator, possess the ability to be creative. AI is not only capable of simulating human cognitive functions – such as learning, reasoning, and problem-solving. It can create content, including artistic works – such as paintings, music, poetry and stories. Chris Olah's statement also attributes to AI human attributes such as reflection and emotion.

It's because AI possesses these kinds of abilities and attributes that the question is raised, is AI a being, like a human person? To answer this question, we need to have a firm grasp on what the Bible teaches about what a human person is.

The second question is, what are the dangers associated with AI for our humanity?

One danger is that AI has the potential to diminish our humanity in several ways. For example, human creativity is at risk of being replaced by AI. Rebecca Winthrop writes:

I've recently drawn a sharp line in the sand: no A.I. for writing. I'm not talking about expense reports or routine emails. I mean actual writing, and the creative brainstorming that precedes it to explore different perspectives or develop novel insights. Increasingly, many people I talk to ... tell me that they think it's OK to use A.I. chatbots for brainstorming as long as they do the "real work" of writing...But this misunderstands something critical: Brainstorming is the work that's fundamental to writing.³

Another danger is that AI may be used as a substitute for human contact. By human contact, I also mean physical contact. The Bible defines a human person as an embodied being. The significance of humans being physical beings is highlighted by the eternal Word becoming a flesh and blood human being, dying on a cross, and being raised bodily. In Mt 8, when Jesus heals a man with leprosy and a woman with a fever, he touches them.

Pope Leo warns that when a person communicates with AI:

"The danger is not so much that a person may believe that they are communicating with another person, but rather that they may gradually lose the very desire to form genuine human connections."

As Christians grapple with the ethical, spiritual and existential issues raised by AI, we need to turn to Scripture to know what it means to be human and what place technology has in human culture. Then, we will be better equipped rightfully use AI as well as informed of how AI can be misused to diminish human persons and our connections to each other.

Please note: AI was not used in the production of this newsletter.

God Bless,
Mark Adams

¹ https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html#Remaining_human, accessed 28 May 2026

² <https://www.anthropic.com/news/chris-olah-pope-leo-encyclical>, accessed 28 May 2026

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/27/opinion/writing-creativity-ai.html?smid=nytcare-ios-share>, accessed 28 May 2026