Pope Leo XIV's Encyclical "Magnifica Humanitas"
and the Common Good

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The "dignity of the human person" is foundational in Catholic Social Teaching. From this dignity flows the belief that there are fundamental rights belonging to each person that no human power can reject or deny. Pope Leo in his encyclical, "Magnifica Humanitas", tells us these rights require us to shape the way we live together, including our economic and political choices, and the makeup of our cities. (MH #59) This forms the basis for our understanding of the **common good.** The common good is the social expression given to the recognition of the dignity that lies within each human person. It is understood as a greater good that belongs to everyone, and it is achieved, nurtured and protected only by the collective efforts of society.

Herein lies the danger posed by technology and in particular by AI or artificial intelligence. While technology may serve the common good, in the end, it can be used to benefit the few who created and developed it. Therefore, its effect on humanity, for good or ill, depends on the moral values and the intentions of those who control it. Pope Francis, in his encyclical, "Laudato Si'", denounced the tendency to put profits and efficiency over people. When this happens, it becomes clear that technology is not simply a tool. It then becomes the standard by which everything is judged. It begins to dictate what matters and what can be discarded, reducing creation to an object of exploitation and human beings to mere cogs in a system driven toward ever greater efficiency. (LS#119)

We must not lose hope. The common good means having a shared vision. It means working together as a living reality in which people learn to recognize that they themselves are interconnected and jointly responsible for their society. It doesn't mean that everyone will always agree on everything, but it does mean that everyone is willing to contribute to the building up of the people and society they wish to become, together. Technology needs to aid society in becoming its best self. No one should be left on the periphery, but everyone should be enabled to reach their full potential. Technology can make this happen.

