



# POPE LEO XIV, VOICES FOR JUSTICE IMAGINATIVE INTELLIGENCE AS RESISTANCE: SAFEGUARDING THE HUMAN PERSON IN THE “CONSTRUCTION SITES OF OUR TIME”

BY VANESSA ROTONDO, PH.D.

[<https://ignatiansolidarity.net/blog/author/vrotondo/>]

| May 28, 2026

A student recently admitted to me that she no longer knows whether struggling through a first draft is worth the time.

“Why would I spend three hours writing something,” she asked, “when AI can do it in thirty seconds?”

The question lingered with me long after class ended because it revealed something deeper about the world

students are inheriting: a culture increasingly uncomfortable with slowness, imperfection, ambiguity,

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We are growing in a culture trained to seek immediate answers before learning how to sit with difficult questions.



...xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html] , I found myself returning to this tension. Much of the public conversation surrounding artificial intelligence focuses on technological capability. People debate whether machines will surpass human intelligence, replace jobs, or transform education. We exist in an economic system where AI companies are racing within their ecosystems to be the first to develop the newest model. Yet beneath these discussions lies a deeper and more urgent concern. Every historical moment forms people in particular ways, and the technologies shaping modern life inevitably shape the human imagination as well.

In many ways, artificial intelligence has become, as Pope Leo XIV says, one of the great construction sites of our time. Through it, societies are actively constructing new patterns of labor, communication, education, community, creativity, and human interaction. At the same time, these systems are quietly constructing us (and, if we are not attentive... *deconstructing*). They shape how we understand attention, relationships, productivity, truth, and even what it means to be human. Ironic, no?



FROM THE ISN BLOGS:



More than a workaround.  
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2026-06-02 - 3:32 pm



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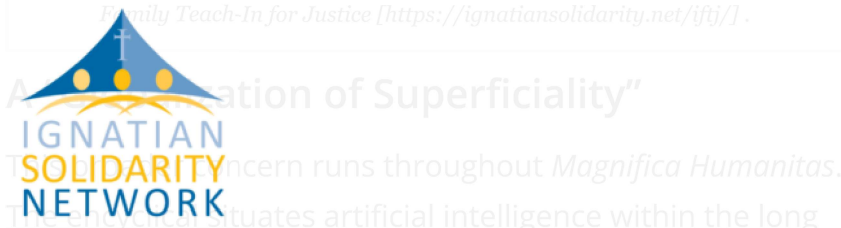
Imaginative Intelligence as Resistance: Safeguarding the Human Person in the "construction sites of our time"  
2026-05-28 - 10:33 pm

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Pope Leo XIV's Magnifica Humanitas





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tradition of Catholic social teaching, reminding readers that technological questions are always also moral, spiritual, social, and political questions. AI exists alongside labor exploitation, migration crises, environmental degradation, social fragmentation, loneliness, and widening inequality. It emerges within a world already struggling to sustain solidarity and shared flourishing.

This insight feels deeply connected to the concerns raised by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/document\_francesco\_20150524\_enciclica-laudato-si.html] and *Fratelli Tutti* [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/document\_francesco\_20201003\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html] . In *Laudato Si'*, Francis warned against what he called the “technocratic paradigm,” a worldview that increasingly evaluates creation in terms of utility, control, efficiency, and optimization. In *Fratelli Tutti*, he described cultures marked by isolation, disposable relationships, and the erosion of genuine social friendship. *Magnifica Humanitas* extends these concerns into the age of artificial intelligence by asking what happens when systems begin shaping the human person through the same logic.

This concern also echoes the warning offered years ago by the late Jesuit Superior General Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., who cautioned against what he called the “globalization of superficiality.” Nicolás feared a world flooded with information yet increasingly deprived of depth, reflection, interiority, and wisdom. His concern feels remarkably prescient in the age of artificial intelligence. Modern technologies provide immediate access to content, reaction, stimulation, and summary, yet they can also

a More Just World2026-05-26 - 8:38 am

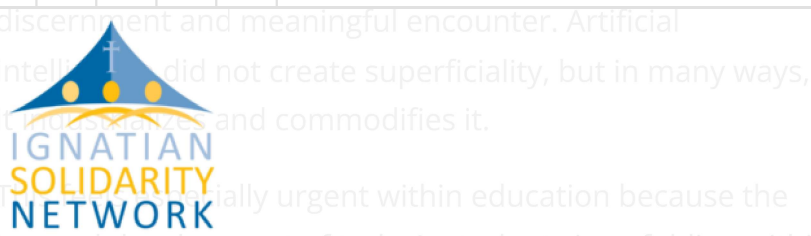


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discernment and meaningful encounter. Artificial intelligence did not create superficiality, but in many ways, it accelerates and commodifies it. Technological advances are especially urgent within education because the integral development of today's students is unfolding within these construction sites of our time: the classroom, the algorithm, the feed, the prompt, the search bar, the group chat, the learning management system. Students inhabit a world saturated with generated content and algorithmically curated attention. Many move constantly between notifications, tabs, summaries, and streams of information that reward speed and reaction while leaving little room for contemplation or depth.

This reality changes the meaning of education itself.

## The Dangers of an Artificial Humanity

The purpose of Jesuit education has never centered solely on information transfer or technical competence. Artificial intelligence can now generate summaries, essays, and increasingly sophisticated simulations of understanding within seconds. The deeper question facing education concerns formation. What kinds of people are students becoming while moving through these systems? What habits of mind, heart, and imagination are being cultivated? What is meaningful in the age of AI, and how can our institutions double down on mission, and the very aspects of the humanities that make us human?



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That claim directly challenges many assumptions embedded in contemporary culture. Increasingly, people experience themselves and others through metrics of usefulness and productivity. Our society measures success based on quantifiable metrics. Students feel pressure to transform every experience into a résumé line. Workers learn to quantify their value through measurable output and performance indicators. Social media encourages the cultivation of personal brands rather than authentic encounters. Relationships themselves can begin to feel transactional, evaluated according to visibility, convenience, or utility. How can we equally value the qualifiable “new things” that make us human within this ecosystem?

Let me be clear: artificial intelligence did not create these dynamics. Yet, artificial intelligence magnifies patterns already deeply embedded within modern life.

This is why I find myself thinking less about artificial intelligence alone and more about the danger of what might be called **artificial humanity**: a society in which people slowly lose the habits that sustain reflection, contemplation, inquiry, innovation, moral imagination, and meaningful encounter. The threat is not simply that machines become more human-like. The greater danger lies in human beings increasingly understanding themselves according to the logic of machines. The machine and all of its glorious mechanics exist to support the flourishing of the human person...not the other way around.

It is here that I believe imaginative intelligence becomes essential.

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than functions. Artificial intelligence can aggregate information and identify patterns with astonishing efficiency, but human beings remain uniquely capable of moral discernment, contemplation, wonder, empathy, and the search for transcendence.

Jesuit education at its best has always cultivated these capacities. It forms students capable of asking larger questions about meaning, justice, vocation, responsibility, and the common good. It teaches students to interpret history in light of faith and to discern their place in a world marked by both suffering and grace.

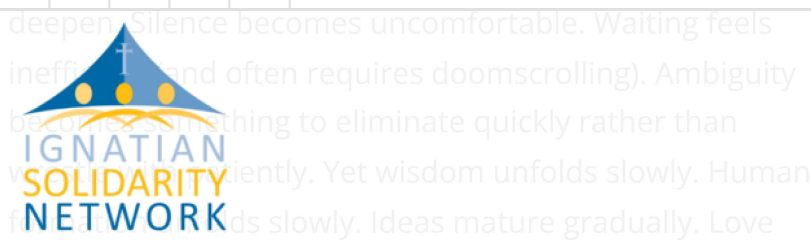
This feels increasingly important because modern technologies shape more than behavior. They shape perception itself.

In many ways, Plato's allegory of the cave feels newly relevant in the digital age. Plato imagined prisoners mistaking shadows for reality because the conditions of their captivity limited what they could see. Today, algorithms increasingly mediate perception itself, curating what individuals encounter through systems optimized for engagement and immediacy. The challenge facing modern societies concerns the formation of human attention and the erosion of spaces necessary for contemplation, depth, and discernment.

This is where Augustine feels especially important to me.

In the Confessions, Augustine wrestled constantly with memory, distraction, desire, restlessness, and time itself. He understood that human beings are shaped by what they attend to. Contemporary life increasingly fragments that attention into endless immediacy. Students move through

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unfolds slowly.

Wonder unfolds slowly, too.

Perhaps this is why wonder feels so important in the age of artificial intelligence. Wonder interrupts the logic of optimization by reminding us that human beings possess dignity beyond usefulness and value beyond productivity. Wonder emerges through experiences modern systems struggle to measure: silence during retreat, lingering over a difficult text, a conversation that changes us, beauty encountered in art or liturgy, and attention given fully to another person.

Wonder reminds us that people are mysteries to encounter rather than problems to solve.

The same is true of kindness, which increasingly feels countercultural in a world shaped by efficiency, performance, and optimization. At a time when artificial intelligence can generate increasingly polished, seemingly flawless results, authentic human imperfection matters even more. Some of the most transformative aspects of human life emerge precisely through imperfection: vulnerability in friendship, uncertainty in learning, struggle in writing, compassion in moments of failure.

Kindness creates room for limitation, growth, fragility, and grace. Artificial systems may increasingly simulate empathy, but authentic compassion grows from shared human vulnerability and the recognition that every person carries dignity beyond productivity or performance.

**Human Flourishing As Opposed to Human Optimization**

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counter-cultural leadership. Long before modern  
conceptions about servant leadership emerged, the  
Gospel presented a radically different vision of power  
rooted in humility, accompaniment, compassion, and self-  
gift. It consistently encountered people as ends in

themselves rather than instruments for someone else's  
advancement. In a culture increasingly tempted to value  
efficiency over encounter, that witness feels profoundly  
important.



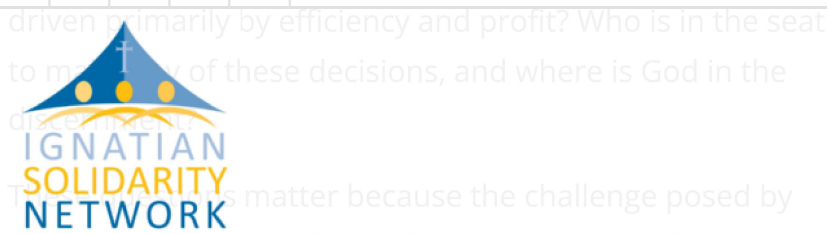
*Rotondo (front, middle) taught a course that observed the Synodal process in both 2023 and 2024, during which she took students to Rome to learn about it.*

*This photo, provided by the author, shows the Fordham group outside the Jesuit Curia.*

The same is true of solidarity. Solidarity cannot emerge within cultures that consistently encourage isolation, competition, and instrumental relationships. It requires communities capable of recognizing shared dignity and shared flourishing. Catholic social teaching insists that human flourishing always remains communal rather than merely individual.

This also means asking harder questions about justice in the age of AI. Who has access to these technologies, and who remains excluded from them? Whose labor powers the systems behind artificial intelligence? What environmental costs accompany the massive energy demands required to sustain AI infrastructure? Which communities bear those burdens most heavily? Who benefits from optimization, and

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artificial intelligence ultimately concerns more than machines. It concerns the moral and spiritual architecture of human society itself. The question facing us is whether schools, workplaces, churches, and communities will continue to form people primarily for efficiency and output, or cultivate the conditions for wisdom, solidarity, contemplation, and shared human flourishing.

The future of Jesuit education may depend less on whether students learn to use artificial intelligence and more on whether they learn to remain human while using it.

The classroom now stands among the great construction sites of our time, as Pope Leo XIV concludes. Within it, students are learning far more than how to produce information. They are learning how to see themselves, others, and what kind of world is worth building together.

The future will belong to communities capable of cultivating depth in an age of distraction, wisdom in an age of information, and solidarity in a culture increasingly tempted by superficiality.

Human beings are never merely means to an end. The task before us now is forming people capable of remembering that within our carefully cultivated civilization of love.



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2026-05-28 2 COMMENTS

TAGS: AI, MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS

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REPLIES



**Minahil**

2026-05-29 at 2:15 am

The concept of “construction sites of our time” is thought-provoking, particularly in relation to AI’s impact on human imagination and interaction. As we navigate these changes, it’s essential to consider the role of critical reflection and imperfection in shaping our understanding of the world, much like the discussions found on platforms that value community and thoughtful exchange, such as those that can be accessed through a resource like Top Follow APK.

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**Sense Projects**

2026-06-03 at 8:55 am

Very insightful article. The discussion on how imaginative intelligence can act as resistance highlights the importance of preserving human

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technological environments. The framework of  
Imaginative Intelligence as Resistance:  
"regarding the Human Person in the  
"construction sites of our time" encourages  
"for reflection on the role of human creativity

in shaping the future.

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