

MAGNIFICENT HUMANITY (MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS)
POPE LEO'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH
CHAPTER FIVE: THE CULTURE OF POWER AND THE CIVILIZATION OF LOVE
NUMBERS: 182 – 203

In Chapter Five Pope Leo comments that it is necessary to examine the implications of AI on the tragic issue of war. He writes “Here the question is not merely the efficiency of new tools, but also the risk that technology, detached from ethics and responsibility, will render decisions about life and death more rapid and impersonal.” (No.182, p.160) If people are to be treated with dignity and the common good is to be respected, then peace is absolutely essential. Many technologies which were created for defence can easily and quickly be used for offence and the fine line between protection and aggression can become blurred. It is necessary, therefore, that the responsibility for safeguarding humanity and the common good falls on every community, from families to States and also to relations between Nations. “This construction site of hope, is what we call, ‘the civilization of love’” (No. 185, p. 162) This phrase was first coined by Pope Paul IV in 1970 when the world was in the midst of the Cold War, an arms race and severe economic instability. The Church then and now proposes “a social order in which justice and charity are intertwined and love becomes the guiding principle of economic, political and cultural life....It is no naïve utopia but a demanding project which consists in translating charity (love) into structures of justice.” (No.186, p.163)

The digital age means growing interdependence between people so that decisions made in one place can effect the entire human family. It is not enough for artificial intelligence to make us more efficient or connected, the aim must be to build a universal human family, with shared rights and duties. Through this digital closeness we have a real opportunity for meeting, sharing and caring for one another. Unfortunately the “culture of power”, especially military power, and the ability to dominate often means that the “common good of humanity is relegated to the background and the concrete tragedy of peoples at war is reduced to a secondary consideration in relation to strategic interests.” (No.188, p.164/5) We seem to have forgotten the horror of two World Wars which killed millions of people - not just soldiers, but children, women, men and the old and sick. We also seem to have forgotten the appalling almost unspeakable horror of the Holocaust. “This leads to a selective or distorted rewriting of the past, in a context where fake news and the manipulation of narratives (stories) obscure the lessons that have been learned.” (No.191, p.166/7)

Moral judgment involves conscience, personal responsibility and the recognition of others as persons who deserve our care and our love because we are all children of God– every one of us – brothers and sisters, and members of the one human family. Technology that facilitates attacks without seeing the face of human beings is, in itself, inhuman. For these reasons we must avoid “the reduction of complex issues into simplistic categories - ‘me

first', 'friend or foe', 'us or them'..... these attitudes facilitate decisions that are often irresponsible and undermine mutual trust among nations (No.202, p.174) Instead we need "the principle of proportionality in responding to aggression, the protection of access to water, food and essential goods, and respect for the lives of civilians, especially children." (No. 203, p.175)