



Magnifica Humanitas

Reflection guide

Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical reminds us of the importance of human dignity and shared responsibility in this age of rapid technological development.

Use this guide to reflect on some of the themes explored in the document



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For the Christian
community, social
justice is a concrete
way of following Jesus
and remaining faithful
to the Gospel.”

Pope Leo XIV
Magnifica Humanitas #77



Introduction

Welcome to CAFOD's reflection guide on Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*. This guide will help you to reflect on some of the themes contained within the document and what they mean for how we live our lives as Catholics today.

This guide can be used for personal reflection, or in a small group or parish setting. We hope that it will encourage dialogue, reflection and encounter as we consider what it means to be human in this age of artificial intelligence.

If you would like to run this as reflection sessions with your parish or group, you can find our quick start guide to help you at cafod.org.uk/magnificahumanitas.



Get the leader's
guide here

Background to *Magnifica Humanitas*

In May 1891, Pope Leo XIII released his ground-breaking encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Of New Things). This text, widely considered foundational to Catholic Social Teaching, responded to injustice and exploitation of workers during the Industrial Revolution, articulating tenets such as human dignity, the rights of workers and the pursuit of the common good.

When he was elected, Pope Leo XIV explained his choice of name demonstrates his commitment to carrying forth the Church's social teaching in the challenges of the modern world. Presenting *Magnifica Humanitas* in May 2026, he said:

“Like the earlier Leo, I feel entrusted to look upon another huge transformation, with eyes of faith, with lucidity of reason, with openness to mystery and with the cries of the poor and the earth resounding in my heart.”

Throughout *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo explores how the principles of dignity, common good, solidarity and a sense of shared responsibility can apply to the challenges that we face in this age of rapid technological development.



Pope Leo released
his first encyclical
in May 2026



Session 1: **Technology**

Discuss in pairs **Icebreaker**

and/or share with the wider group. **How many different forms of technology have you used today? What were they?**

Key quote

“Technology has the power to heal, connect, educate and protect our common home; but it can also divide, exclude and generate new forms of injustice.” #9

Summary

While *Magnifica Humanitas* has widely been called “an encyclical on AI” – it is actually more about what it means to be human and how we can lead meaningful Christian lives in this time of rapid change.

Pope Leo is not against technology but he warns us against allowing it to create more division and inequality in our world, as wealth and power becomes concentrated in the hands of fewer people. He reminds us of the importance of using technology to collaborate, and to serve the poorest and most vulnerable people, rather than to dominate.

He warns that machines cannot replace people and that we must not delegate our decision-making to machines who cannot feel consequences and do not have a conscience. Technology is not neutral, it is shaped by those who create it, and therefore we should ensure broad participation in the design and implementation of technological solutions.

He also reminds us of the environmental impact of these developments, and the risk to us of losing what makes us truly human – our vulnerabilities, weaknesses, creative gifts and our interconnectedness.

For a more in-depth understanding of this theme read chapter 3, particularly paras 92-96, 99, 102-105, 108-110, 114 after the session.

Link to CAFOD's work

Rosmary Llado works for Caritas Beni, an organisation supported by CAFOD in the Bolivian Amazon. Caritas Beni works with indigenous leaders to defend their land and environment and to prepare for and recover from natural disasters such as forest fires.

Like many of us, Rosmary can see the benefits of technology, but she is also aware of how it can divide and exclude, as she explains:

“Sometimes we feel as though we are living in two worlds: one where a minority has access to the latest technology and artificial intelligence, and another where the vast majority live in outlying neighbourhoods and rural communities where education faces many limitations...

“I see the benefits of technology when we use WhatsApp and TikTok groups to warn of rising river levels, to save lives and crops and when artisans sell their products online. But I also see a tremendous injustice when children in rural areas or poor neighbourhoods cannot study because there is no internet signal, because they do not have a mobile phone, let alone a computer...

“Our work is all about education and peace. We must educate to show reality and bring people together, not to destroy.”



Watch a video of Rosmary responding to *Magnifica Humanitas* or read the transcript here.



Rosmary Llado works for Caritas Beni in the Bolivian Amazon





Questions for reflection

1. Where do you see the benefits of technology in our world today? Can you think of examples of where technology is being used for dialogue, collaboration and participation?
2. Where is technology driving division or being used to dominate? In the midst of this how do we retain authentic human connection?
3. Pope Leo reminds us that the path of technology is not predetermined. How can we actively shape this path so that it benefits all people – especially the poorest?

Prayer



Join in prayer
using the words
here or watch a
video version.

*God of all, you created us in your image,
and we praise you for our magnificent humanity
fully revealed in the face of your Son, Jesus.
Grounded in your goodness and grace
and guided by the social teaching of the Church,
may we always recognise and insist upon
the dignity and value of each person.*

*God of every gift, move us to love tangibly,
as we seek depth in an era of distraction.
Give us wisdom in our use of new technologies,
so that, inspired by the spirit of Nehemiah,
we may build authentic solidarity,
connection, compassion and community,
rejecting Babel's monument of pride.*

*God of Shalom, fill us with your gentle strength
and disarm our hearts and words.*

*Rejecting the culture of power,
may we, through our small, steadfast acts,
build a civilisation of love.
In our world wounded by conflict,
may all people choose the path of peace.*

*God who dwells among us, we sing your praise
with Mary, the woman of the Magnificat.
May we weave new hope in this new day
sharing who we are and what we have,
with creativity, courage and generosity.
With the Kingdom of God in our hearts,
strengthen us to build a better world for all.
Amen.*

*End the session by
praying the
Glory Be together.*





Session 2: **Work**

Discuss in pairs
and/or share with
the wider group.

Icebreaker

What was your first job? Or, if you could have any job in the world, what would it be?

Key quote

“Work is not merely a source of income but a crucial sphere in which identity is formed, friendships and relationships are forged, practical responsibilities are learned and one's vocation is discerned.” #167

Summary

Magnifica Humanitas reminds us of the approach to work that is featured in Catholic social teaching throughout the last 135 years, since the publication of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

Work exists for the benefit of humans, people do not exist for the benefit of work, their employers or the economy. Work enables us to make use of our creativity, our skills, to collaborate, find purpose and fulfilment, support our families and build relationships. It is a way in which we can participate as co-creators with God in the world.

However, like his predecessors, Pope Leo XIV recognises that not all work in our world is approached this way. He reminds us of the importance of dignified conditions at work, that enable us to meet the ideals set out above. He highlights the invisible exploitation in the technology industry – of those who work in extractives, mining the minerals used in our devices; those who work in data labelling and content moderation, who are often exposed to dehumanising content; and those who are locked in modern forms of slavery and human trafficking which are made easier by technology.

We are reminded in this encyclical that people must always come before profits, and that human beings should not be viewed as resources to be optimised. Efficiency and innovation should not be built on exploitation.

For a more in-depth
understanding of this
theme read paras 148-
157, 166-169, 173 after
the session.

Link to CAFOD's work

The money sent home by the millions of Bangladeshis working abroad is vital to their country's economy, with Saudi Arabia and Malaysia the main destinations for those seeking work.

However, these migrants' dreams of a better life are often shattered. They face exploitation by unscrupulous recruiters at home, and abuse by employers abroad. Many return destitute and traumatised and saddled with debt from loans taken to cover pre-departure costs or their journey home.

One man who migrated to Saudi Arabia said:

“I was given a job as a labourer on a construction site in a desert. I had to work more than 10 hours a day under the scorching sun. I couldn't drink enough water, because there were no good facilities. I was accommodated in a camp with 3,000 workers – one room for six or seven people, and one toilet for 100 people.”

Rehena Akter, a returned migrant worker said:

“We are told our remittances are the lifeline of the Bangladesh economy but we are not treated with dignity – not abroad, not at home. We are called the nation's fighters, only in words. But in truth, we are invisible.”

CAFOD's local partner, OKUP presses the Bangladeshi government as well as the authorities in destination countries to support migrant workers. OKUP also helps returned migrants to claim compensation when their rights have been violated. The compensation usually ranges from £140 to £500, allowing them to move forward with their lives and build hope for the future.



Rehena Akter
returned home to
Bangladesh after
facing exploitation
while working
abroad.





Questions for reflection

1. What strikes you about work in this encyclical? Does this change anything for you as an employee, employer and/or as a person who relies on the labour of others?
2. The encyclical mentions the unseen labour in the technology industry, what other types of invisible labour are there in our society? How can we make sure that these are truly valued?
3. How can we ensure our society's drive for efficiency and profit does not obscure the dignity of the worker? What would it look like to measure workplace success in terms of dignity instead?

Prayer

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*In our world wounded by conflict,
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*May we weave new hope in this new day
sharing who we are and what we have,
with creativity, courage and generosity.
With the Kingdom of God in our hearts,
strengthen us to build a better world for all.*

Amen.

*End the session by
praying the
Glory Be together.*




Join in prayer
using the words
here or watch a
video version.



Session 3: Peace

Icebreaker

Let us offer one another the sign of peace.

Key quote

“Peace is neither a naïve hope nor merely the absence of war; instead, it is always possible as the fruit of justice and charity.” #205

Summary

Pope Leo warns against the polarising effects of technology and the opaqueness of the structures behind it. He also warns of the difficulty of discerning truth and the lack of true human connection, which in turn can lead to conflict. He considers how outsourcing war to technology can make it feel much easier, despite the fact it still has grave consequences, as it is harder to hold a named person responsible for the damage or injury caused.

The Pope condemns the use of war as a political tool to gain power and to dominate, reiterating that it is morally wrong. He also states that the “just war” theory, which has too often been used to justify conflict, has become outdated, recommending that we use the more effective tools of dialogue, diplomacy and forgiveness to resolve tensions instead. He calls for a disarming of our language and our society as well as of technology. He envisions the dismantling of the culture of power which he sees growing in our world and calls for us all to work towards a civilisation of love, where true peace as a fruit of justice can be built.

For a more in-depth understanding of this theme read chapter 5, particularly paras 182, 183, 188, 190, 192, 197, 203, 205, 210, 212-220, 228 after the session.

Link to CAFOD’s work

Paul Muchena reflects on how Pope Leo’s message is relevant to his work at the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Zimbabwe, which seeks to promote interfaith dialogue, support job creation, and protect the environment and human rights.

“The Pope calls us to build a civilisation of love through dialogue. For us, dialogue means bringing together communities scared by violence, church leaders, civic actors, and government institutions to listen, reconcile, and find common ground. It is through dialogue that we strengthen social cohesion and promote social justice.

Magnifica Humanitas also reminds us that peace and justice are intertwined. In Zimbabwe, we see that without justice in governance, resource distribution, and respect for rights, peace cannot endure.

Finally, Pope Leo XIV calls us to disarm our words, our actions, even our use of technology, and embrace the disarming peace of Christ.

For the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, this means choosing reconciliation over retaliation, dialogue over hostility, and solidarity over division.”



Listen to the audio of Paul responding to Magnifica Humanitas or read the transcript here.



Paul Muchena
from Zimbabwe





Questions for reflection

1. Think about instances where the language of power, domination and violence has crept into everyday phrases, for example “the war on drugs”. How can we change our language to better reflect the civilisation of love we seek to build?
2. How can you work for peace in your own family, community, country and in our world?
3. Pope Leo states that authentic encounters with others who are different, such as migrants, makes it harder to imagine war. Think of an encounter that changed your perspective, what lesson did you learn?

Prayer



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sharing who we are and what we have,
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strengthen us to build a better world for all
Amen.*



*End the session by
praying the
Glory Be together.*



Session 4: **Dignity**

Discuss in pairs
and/or share with
the wider group.

Icebreaker

What is someone or something that makes you feel valued as a person?

Key quote

“Human dignity does not depend on a person's abilities, wealth or position in life, nor on the right or wrong choices made; instead it is a gift that precedes and transcends each person, endowed by God as an expression of his unfailing love.” #50

Summary

Pope Leo reminds us of the dignity of each human person, created in the image of God. This “magnificent humanity” is revealed to us in the person of Christ, who showed us what it means to live a life of openness to others and service to God.

Magnifica Humanitas recognises the instances where people's dignity is already being violated, for example in the conditions faced by workers in digital supply chains, or by victims of human trafficking. Pope Leo also asked for pardon for the Church's historical delay in denouncing slavery, despite it being clearly incompatible with the teaching on the dignity of the human person.

We are warned against developments which do not respect our dignity and value, of seeing our limitations as defects to be overcome, rather than moments for us to truly encounter one another and Christ. We are not resources to be optimised, but people who are called to relationship and communion.

For a more in-depth understanding of this theme read paras 50-53, 58, 118, 119, 122, 124-126 after the session.

Link to CAFOD's work

Luciane Udovic Bassiego is the President of CAFOD partner GRITO in Brazil. GRITO, which stands for Cry of the Excluded in Portuguese, works in communities to improve access to health and social care systems.

Luciane says that the encyclical reinforces the approach that she takes in her work and in her life, walking alongside the most vulnerable groups, caring for our common home and defending human rights. As she explains:

“When I read Pope Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* one sentence struck a deep chord in my heart: that no technology, no economy and no political system has any value unless it is at the service of human dignity. As a Christian and an activist in social movements, this message touched me deeply, because for many years I have been walking and working alongside communities, women, the elderly, immigrants, young people – in short, the most vulnerable groups. And along this path I have learnt that faith cannot be separated from people's lives....

For me, *Magnifica Humanitas* is not just a church document; it is much more than that. It is a call, a powerful invitation to all of us, to hope and to take action. It reinforces the conviction, the faith that I carry with me on my journey, in my activism, that every person has infinite value.



Watch a video of
Luciane here or
read the transcript.



Luciane Udovic
Bassiego from
Brazil





Questions for reflection

1. Where do you see threats to human dignity in our world today?
2. How can we resist the trend towards efficiency and profit, which risks devaluing our humanity?
3. What does our inherent dignity mean for how we treat one another, and for the type of world/society we would like to live in? How can we ensure that the unique contributions of each person are respected?

Prayer



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Session 5:

Common good

*Discuss in pairs
and/or share with
the wider group.*

Icebreaker

Find out something that you have in common with the person next to you.

Key quote

“The common good cannot be reduced to a mere list of conditions or institutions ... it is a greater good that belongs to everyone, and it can only be achieved, nurtured and protected by our collective efforts.” #60

Summary

Pope Leo sets out the conditions for building a society founded on the common good. These include: a firm relationship with God, accepting our own limits and weaknesses, caring for one another, taking shared responsibility and using our differences for the same purpose. Just as the different groups building the different parts of the walls did in Nehemiah.

We are reminded that building the common good means building the conditions where each and every person can flourish. We cannot assume that pursuing our own progress will achieve this, unless we remember our interconnectedness and build in care for others. It is a reminder that we must place the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society at the centre of all that we do.

*For a more in-depth
understanding of this
theme read paras 11-14,
59-64 after the session.*

Link to CAFOD's work

MDF (the Movement in the Defence of the Favelas) is an organisation based in São Paulo, Brazil. CAFOD supports their work with favela communities living in poverty to secure decent housing, infrastructure, transport and work. They train women in leadership, mobilise communities and support them to reclaim their rights, access public services and shape urban development in a way that is fair, sustainable and supports the common good.

Sueli, who coordinates the work of MDF, reflected on the encyclical saying:

“We are building a city geared towards the common good, where people collectively – in communities, associations and trade unions – can improve their quality of life, where everyone has access to prosperity and peace so they can flourish... We believe in collective effort, and that's our experience with housing: it's not that an individual succeeds but that a community succeeds in urbanising a favela and securing housing in the city.”



*Watch a
video of Sueli
here or read
the transcript.*



Sueli from São
Paulo, Brazil





Questions for reflection

1. Pope Leo states that “working together for the common good requires a shared vision” #62. What is your vision for our world and how can we build this shared vision with others?
2. Working for the common good means recognising our interconnectedness without erasing our differences. When have you been enriched by the diversity of others?
3. We are reminded in *Magnifica Humanitas* that seeking the common good is a non-negotiable value of our faith (#59). What is one way we can put the needs of the most vulnerable at the centre of our daily lives?

Prayer



Join in prayer
using the words
here or watch a
video version.

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with creativity, courage and generosity.*

*With the Kingdom of God in our hearts,
strengthen us to build a better world for all.*

Amen.

*End the session by
praying the
Glory Be together.*





Session 6:

Solidarity and shared responsibility

*Discuss in pairs
and/or share with
the wider group.*

Icebreaker

Look at the label of your jacket, the items in your handbag or pocket, where were these items made? How many different countries are represented?

Key quote

“Solidarity, then, is the concrete recognition that the future of each individual is connected to the future of all; indeed, ‘no one is saved alone.’” #73

Summary

Magnifica Humanitas reminds us that we are part of a network of relationships, which bind us to one another and to creation. Solidarity, then, is rooted in our interconnectedness, and calls us to recognise that the future of each person is linked to the future of all. We are therefore invited to take a shared responsibility to work together for the common good. We have to make decisions to do without certain benefits, in order to create opportunities for others, both now and in the future, and to ensure all people can live with dignity.

Pope Leo reminds us that the source of our solidarity is found in Christ and nourished by the Eucharist. We are reminded “union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself” #234. The Eucharist calls us to unity with Christ and one another and teaches us how to share – inspired and nurtured by Christ’s self-giving love.

Each one of us has a role to play, from the most powerful, to the weakest. Solidarity requires us to stay informed, engage with others, make our voices heard and contribute to public decisions and choices.

*For a deeper
understanding of this
theme read paras 73-
76, 88, 180, 181, 234-236
after the session.*

Link to CAFOD’s work

In Honduras, the Reflection, Investigation and Communication Team (ERIC) accompanies some of the most vulnerable communities. One area of their work is a sustainable farming project, known as La Milpa. Jerónimo Carranza reflects on the importance of solidarity, shared responsibility and communion for this group:

“Communion means being together, living the value of solidarity, living the possibility of sharing what we have, what we do, what we possess, our knowledge, our joys even our sadness. When something happens to a colleague in the collective we all feel it and express our sincere feelings and encourage them, offering our moral and spiritual support. Working in community, in communion, leads us to this – to achieving reciprocity with our brothers and sisters, with our colleagues and ultimately becoming friends and sharing the table as the first Christian community did in the Acts of the Apostles.”



A farmer stands next to his lychee tree in north-western Honduras





Questions for reflection

1. Pope Leo contrasts the building of the Tower of Babel in Genesis with the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah. How do these stories show us the difference between working for our own glory and working for the good of all?
2. As part of the body of Christ, we are called to “think and act in community”. Can you think of some examples of the changes that people in solidarity have achieved in our society in the past?
3. We are reminded that “the civilisation of love, will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity.” #213 What could you do as an individual, family, or parish community?

Prayer

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Thank you for sharing in our reflections on
Magnifica Humanitas.

For more resources to explore the encyclical visit
cafod.org.uk/magnificahumanitas

A better world needs all of us. Play your part and
get involved at **cafod.org.uk**



If you have any feedback on this reflection
guide, please fill in our short survey.



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