



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Commodifying People

Reflection for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

31 May 2026

Mgr Daniel McHugh

God sent His Son into the world... “in order that the world might be saved through Him.” (John 3:17)

I had started to think about this Reflection on Monday of this week 25 May, the memorial of Mary, Mother of the Church. In my short Homily at Mass in St Augustine’s Church, Solihull, I noted that this memorial on the Day after Pentecost was introduced into the Liturgy by Pope Francis in 2018 with a view to the Church being more aware of its motherly role; care for all her children, especially those who are vulnerable. It was interesting for me to see Pope Leo choosing this day to launch publicly his first Encyclical letter “Magnifica Humanitas”; these two words introduce the Encyclical and the



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central theme expressed in the strapline “On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.”

It is amazing how quickly technology is developing: I remember just a year ago googling Pope Leo on my iPhone to research his addresses when he was chosen to succeed Pope Francis. I found talks he was said to have given in different locations: on checking further I found he could not have been there at that time, though the general theme was fine! AI is a tool that can help you pass exams without knowing the answers! Little wonder parents were assembled before Number 10 earlier this week to express their concern about the impact of free access to social media on their children. Those targeting young people in media posts are often not innocent; they have an agenda and it doesn't coincide with the good we desire for them.

There are many different sides to this new world of technological development not least the power certain media companies have to disseminate their immoral outlook on life, and on the other hand the power countries are taking to themselves to wage cyber war on others.

Pope Leo opens his Encyclical (cf *Aleteia* 26/03/26) with two biblical images: the Tower of Babel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. One is a project of pride and uniformity; the other is slow, communal and rooted in God” (Daniel Esparza in *Aleteia*). It was encouraging to see the interest



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taken in the media on Monday in what Pope Leo was speaking about when he introduced this Encyclical in person to the wider world. One commentator noted that AI was in danger of “commodifying people”, i.e., reducing them into objects for financial gain, reducing them to a product that can be bought or sold for profit. The image we have of human kind presented by Pope Leo is “Magnifica Humanitas”: Magnificent/Wonderful Humanity, the image presented in the greeting from St Paul in 2 Corinthians Chapter 13 when he says “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” It is the image that comes from the Triune God who reaches out to us in love. Fr Ferlita in his Reflection for Trinity Sunday writes of Father John S Dunne’s book “The Homing Spirit”. He says: “The Trinity, he was saying, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, does not appear when we consider God alone, but only when we consider the human being in relation to God.”

In “Seeds for the Soul” Father Brendan Mcguire writes : “Today, the Church celebrates the most Holy Trinity. We celebrate not so much the ‘doctrine’ but the reality of the Trinity. The reality of the Trinity is that God loves us. God expresses that love through the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the words of the Gospel today, God so loved the world that he gave us his only Son, Christ Jesus! Jesus then shows us how much the Father loves us by giving us the very gift the Father gave him – the Holy Spirit. God expresses his love for



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us explicitly through the actions of the persons of the Most Holy Trinity. The reality of the Trinity is all about God’s explicit expression of love for us.”

The Social Teaching of the Church – of which “Magnifica Humanitas” is the latest example – is about relating our vision of humankind to major changes in society. The foundational Encyclical of modern Catholic Social Teaching was “Rerum Novarum” (new things) written in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII: it sought to address the severe economic disparities, poor working conditions, and social upheaval brought on by the Industrial Revolution. That Encyclical built on a framework balancing the rights of workers with the rights of owners, while rejecting both extreme laissez-faire capitalism and state socialism. The core principles expressed by R.N. were the “Dignity of Labour” and the Right to a Living Wage.’ (cf Wikipedia). It is no accident that our new Pope took the name Leo XIV and that he has chosen to deal with the challenge of Artificial Intelligence from the perspective of the Gospel and Catholic Teaching on “Magnificent Humanity”.

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