



5 June 2026

Catholic Association of Teachers, Schools and Colleges (CATSC)

Statement of Welcome and Gratitude

from the CATSC President

on the publication of

MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS

Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV

15 May 2026 | 135th Anniversary of Rerum Novarum

I. Welcome and Context

It is with great joy and gratitude that I welcome, on behalf of the Catholic Association of Teachers, Schools and Colleges, the publication of Magnifica Humanitas. This first encyclical letter of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, although published on 25 May 2026, was signed on 15 May 2026, the 135th anniversary of Rerum Novarum, and that choice of date is itself a statement of intent. Just as Leo XIII, at the close of the nineteenth century, addressed the new things of the industrial revolution with the light of the Gospel and the Church's social doctrine, so Leo XIV now stands in that same prophetic tradition. He addresses the revolution of Artificial Intelligence and the dangers it poses if used to dehumanise society, threaten human life, displace the dignity of human work, or deceive and exploit human beings. The encyclical stands firmly in the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, extending it with urgency and pastoral depth into our own era.

Where Leo XIII saw workers dehumanised by the machinery of industry, Leo XIV sees humanity at risk of a different kind of dehumanisation, by machines that can reduce the mystery of the person to data and performance, distort truth through disinformation, and concentrate power in ways that threaten democratic life and the freedom of conscience. Together with his predecessors, the Holy Father draws on the wisdom of the Gospel and the Church's timeless doctrine to meet these challenges, and he does so with a deeply Christ-centred perspective that should animate every Catholic school and every Catholic educator.

II. A Christ-Centred Vision of the Human Person

What most distinguishes Magnifica Humanitas is its Christological heart. Pope Leo XIV invites us to contemplate, in the face of the Son of God, the grandeur of humanity that shines a light also upon the era of AI. (i) For, as the Gospel declares, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son' (Jn 3:16), a love that went as far as the Cross and the Eucharist, 'that the world might be saved through him' (Jn 3:17). The Holy Father reminds us that by becoming man, the Son of God enters our history and takes human flesh, bringing with him the love that unites him to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and that in him the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear. (ii) This is the irreducible dignity of every person, a dignity that no technology can grant and none can take away.

These words recall Pope Benedict XVI's Trinitarian reflection that the Father is love, the Son is love, the Holy Spirit is love, and that the strongest proof of our being made in the image of the Trinity is this: love alone makes us happy. (iii) It is this love, most perfectly encountered in the Holy Eucharist, that the Holy Father proposes as the heart of Christian life in the age of AI. He calls for a Eucharistic spirituality, a Eucharistic life

and love, (iv) that no algorithm can replicate or replace. He also commends his prayer to Our Lady, the Woman of the Magnificat, whose soul magnifies the Lord and whose spirit rejoices in God her Saviour, (v) that even the era of AI can become a time when the Holy Spirit brings about the civilisation of love in our lives. This vision is not a retreat from the world but a confident engagement with it, rooted in the certainty of the Resurrection.

III. Implications for Catholic Education

Magnifica Humanitas is not primarily a document about technology. It is a comprehensive restatement and development of the Church's social doctrine, applied to the most urgent transformation of our age. For Catholic education, its implications are foundational. The encyclical insists that every human being possesses an infinite and inalienable dignity that must be the first principle of every educational community. Our schools are called to be places where every student, every child of God, is known, valued and loved in their irreducible uniqueness, and not assessed merely by what they can produce or measure.

The Holy Father devotes significant attention to what he calls an educational alliance for the digital age, affirming the central role of schools in shaping the collective imagination of the next generation. Catholic schools are called to promote a digital literacy that is genuinely critical and spiritually informed, one that equips young people not merely to use technology but to interrogate it: asking whose interests it serves, what vision of the human person it embodies, and whose voices it excludes. The encyclical also calls for an ecology of communication in which truth is honoured, the imagination is formed by beauty and goodness, and the manipulation of information is actively resisted. In this sense, every Catholic school is called to be a school of discernment.

The encyclical's insistence on the dignity of human work is equally important here. The unique creativity, relationality and moral agency that characterise human labour are things no machine can replicate, and this truth should inform directly how we prepare students for a world in which livelihoods, purpose and social belonging will be profoundly shaped by AI. The Church's vision of work as a participation in God's own creative activity is a powerful corrective to purely instrumental models of education, and Catholic schools are well placed to offer it.

IV. Challenges for Catholic Educators and Leaders

The encyclical places serious and immediate challenges before Catholic educational leaders, and they cannot be avoided. Pope Leo XIV frames the central choice of our era in strikingly biblical terms: will we build a new Tower of Babel, a project of technological hubris without God that reduces diversity to uniformity and the person to data, or will we choose the way of Nehemiah, rebuilding together with patience, shared responsibility and fraternal solidarity? This choice confronts Catholic schools and colleges directly. There is a genuine risk that, in adopting AI tools uncritically, our institutions become complicit in the very reductionism the encyclical warns against: evaluating students solely by measurable outputs, substituting algorithmic processes for the irreplaceable relationship between teacher and student, and allowing commercial platforms to shape the spiritual and moral imagination of the young.

The Holy Father identifies new forms of digital dependency, surveillance and the commercialisation of personal data as genuine threats to human freedom. Catholic schools that are serious about forming the whole person must honestly assess whether the digital environments they have created liberate or diminish, form or deform. His insistence that the universal destination of goods extends explicitly to digital infrastructure, algorithms and technological knowledge is a direct challenge to how we address inequity both within and between our schools. Those serving disadvantaged communities must advocate urgently for equitable access; those that are well-resourced must exercise that privilege with solidarity.

Perhaps the most immediate challenge is the formation of teachers and school leaders themselves. We cannot lead what we have not understood. CATSC calls upon Catholic educational authorities, universities and formation providers to make Magnifica Humanitas a central text for professional development, so that Catholic educators can engage its theological, ethical and pedagogical dimensions with the depth and confidence that befits those who know themselves to be bearers of the Good News.

V. Opportunities for Catholic Educational Mission

The tone of Magnifica Humanitas is not fear but hope, not retreat but mission. At a moment when the deepest questions about what it means to be human are being contested in laboratories, boardrooms and parliaments, Catholic schools have both the opportunity and the responsibility to speak with clarity and confidence about the transcendent dignity of the person. The encyclical's rich anthropological vision, grounded in the mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnation, gives Catholic educators a resource of real depth for engaging these questions with intellectual seriousness and evangelical freedom.

The Holy Father's framework of integral human development encompasses the spiritual, cultural, moral, relational and ecological dimensions of the person, and it offers Catholic schools a compelling alternative to the purely technocratic models of education that are increasingly dominant. The purpose of Catholic schooling is not the production of economically useful individuals, but the formation of free, loving, truth-seeking persons made for communion with God and neighbour. This is the moment to reassert, with renewed confidence, what Catholic education has always known.

The image of Nehemiah, listening, convening and persevering in shared purpose, resonates deeply with the vocation of CATSC. The Holy Father's vision of shared responsibility, in which all are given their own section of the wall, scientists and researchers, entrepreneurs and workers, educators and legislators, civil society and faith communities,(vi) invites CATSC to deepen its collaboration with bishops, parents, civic partners and the wider Catholic community in developing a coherent response to the digital revolution. Our schools can be prophetic communities, modelling what it looks like to place technology genuinely at the service of the human person.

VI. A Commitment and a Prayer

In light of Magnifica Humanitas, CATSC invites every Catholic school, college, teacher and educational leader to study and pray with the encyclical and to make it a subject of staff prayer and professional dialogue throughout the coming academic year. We invite educational communities to assess their digital environments honestly, asking whether the tools, platforms and cultures they have adopted truly safeguard human dignity, promote truth, protect the freedom of the young and serve the common good. We call for investment in the formation of teachers and leaders, and for a renewed commitment to digital equity, so that no child is left behind in the digital transition because of poverty or marginalisation.

Above all, we call for the championing of the dignity of the human educator. The vocation of the Catholic teacher is irreplaceable: to accompany students toward the fullness of their humanity in Christ, in a relationship of trust, care and shared pursuit of truth that no system, however sophisticated, can substitute. The purpose of Catholic schooling has not changed and will not change. It is to form free, loving, truth-seeking persons made for communion with God and neighbour. No machine is our measure. Our measure is 'Christ himself, yesterday, today and forever' (Heb 13:8).

I give thanks to God for this extraordinary gift to the Church and to the world. I give thanks to Pope Leo XIV for his courage, his pastoral tenderness and his profound theological vision. And I give thanks to every Catholic teacher, headteacher, chaplain, teaching assistant, support worker and educational leader who, day by day, in classrooms and corridors, chooses the way of Nehemiah over the way of Babel, building, patiently and faithfully, a world more just, more human and more holy.

United with Pope Leo XIV in his prayer to Our Lady, let us go forward with her joy in our hearts, with Eucharistic love as our strength and with the wisdom of Magnifica Humanitas as our guide, trusting that the Holy Spirit, who has led the Church through every age of transformation, will not fail us now.

John Nish
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Notes

- i *Pope Leo XIV, Magnifica Humanitas, §49.*
- ii *Ibid., §49, citing Gaudium et Spes §22.*
- iii *Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, Trinity Sunday 2012*
- iv *Leo XIV, Magnifica Humanitas, on the need for a Eucharistic spirituality in the age of AI.*
- v *Luke 1:46–47; cited by Leo XIV in the Conclusion of Magnifica Humanitas.*
- vi *Leo XIV, Magnifica Humanitas, on shared responsibility in the digital era.*