

A couple weeks ago Pope Leo XIV published his first encyclical, Magnifica Humanitas. It's a large document about many things.

Pope Leo gives us a review of the history and principles of Catholic Social Teaching. He also addresses issues such as work, truth, war. But what has been getting the most media coverage is the chapter on Artificial Intelligence.

Within the larger topic of AI there are several paragraphs upon transhumanism and posthumanism. The Pope says these form the “ideological background for some powerful forces” behind AI and, so, “occupy the collective imagination” leading to enthusiasm in some quarters for a “futuristic vision” of a “human-machine hybrid.” This will mean “enhancement of human beings through technologies, biomedicine, body engineering, devices and algorithms.” Ultimately the goal is a hybridization of human beings, machines and the environment . . . where humanity surpasses itself in a new evolutionary stage.” (116) The Pope is certainly not against

all uses of technology for human flourishing, but he warns that this ideology is dangerous and in error because it “promises a purely technical form of ‘salvation.’” (117) Note that: Salvation through technology.

I saw an article last week in the WSJ about Putin, the Russian dictator, spending \$26 billion on trying to grow replacement organs, etc. He, too, wants to live forever. We have this faith and hope in technology, flowing from our universal human desires for -- more -- and fear of death, that technology will provide us with immortality, super-human knowledge and power. We’re all, even atheists, looking for “salvation” from somewhere, in something, in someone.

But today is Corpus Christi. What does any of this have to do with the Eucharist? What these powers behind AI hope for from technology are just the rather pathetic substitutes for what Jesus offers us in Himself. The second letter of Peter tells us that through Christ’s divine power we may “come to share in the divine nature.” (II

Peter 1:4) We humans are meant to share in God's own nature! That is what the life of God's Kingdom is all about, letting Jesus into my life, so that I can share in His life. We're meant for union with God.

Our Gospel today is from the Bread of Life Discourse in John 6. Listen again to Jesus' words and promises in relation to the hopes of the transhumanists: "I am the living bread come down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever." Jesus is promising us eternal life – without any recourse to technology – in the Eucharist.

My point: Living out the sanctifying graces of the Kingdom of God is the true transhumanism! In Christ we will become new creations. St. Irenaeus said in the second century said, "the glory of God is Man fully alive." We become fully alive when we are one with God in communion with Him. That is what Corpus Christi has to say to the transhumanist movement.

Remember how the story of the Fall of Adam in the book of Genesis ends. "When [God] expelled the man, he settled him east of

the garden of Eden; and he stationed the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword to guard the way to the tree of life.” (Gen 3:24) I understand that to mean that humanity can’t get back into Eden, with its tree of life and immortality, by our own human power. That way is shut. Only God can save us now. The Pope is warning us in his encyclical that those worldly powers are seeking something they will never find in technology. They will only find there a twisted and ultimately destructive imitation of what Jesus offers in Himself. There is no salvation through technology – only in Jesus Christ.

The true human transformation they are searching for – even if they don’t know it -- is available in the Eucharist and the whole life of faith. That is why Jesus established the Eucharist at the Last Supper – so that we could eat His Flesh and drink His Blood and become one with Him, who is still among us in the sacraments and in the tabernacles of the Catholic Church.

But I'm afraid that even many Catholics don't understand what we have - that the goal of the spiritual life is not simply about being good or nice, following the Commandments, (although the moral life keeps us united to Christ). It's not merely about helping those in need, (although such love for others is part of how God reveals Himself to us – see Matthew 25 and the rest of Pope Leo's encyclical on social action). Reading the Bible and prayer are not ends in themselves. They are meant to be means to an end – like all these spiritual practices. The goal they point towards is union with God – beginning even in this life.

What would it be like to speak with the words of Jesus on our tongue? Think with His mind? Literally, love as He loves? That is what saints do and are, people fully alive in God because they have allowed God to live in them and change them. They are no longer the same people. They have at last become whom God wanted them to be all along.

The transhumanists of Silicon Valley and elsewhere have all the right longings, they just don't know that the fulfillment of their dreams is already available, not by trying to force their way back into Eden through the revolving sword of the Cherubim (that will fail horribly), but by faith in the One who came to die in Adam's place, and has already risen from the dead and holds the door to heaven open for us. He, Jesus, is right here in this church every day in the Eucharist. Let us allow ourselves to be truly transformed in Him.