

## CHAPTER THREE Abbreviated)

### THE GRANDEUR OF HUMANITY IN LIGHT OF THE PROMISES OF AI

90. Having recalled the principles that shine a light on Social Doctrine, I would now like to focus on certain challenges that profoundly shape our way of living today. The biblical image accompanying these reflections is that of a building project. On the one hand, there is the Tower of Babel, where collective effort follows a plan that dominates and ultimately dehumanizes (cf. Gen 11:1-9). On the other hand, there are the ruins of Jerusalem, which under Nehemiah's direction are rebuilt piece by piece as a project of shared responsibility (cf. Neh 2–6). We are called to reflect on the great “construction sites” of our era and ask: What are we building? As technological development rapidly transforms languages, relationships, institutions and forms of power, we believers must and can choose which projects to work on and in what manner, so as to safeguard and value the grandeur of humanity that has been given to us as a gift. This is a choice not only for our future but also for our present, since artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are already part of our daily lives.

#### The technocratic paradigm and digital power

92. In his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis denounced the growing dominance of a technocratic paradigm [119] in our globalized world: the tendency to let the logic of efficiency, control and profit alone shape personal, social and economic decisions. This makes it clear that technology is not simply a tool.

93. This paradigm has spread rapidly in recent years, fuelled in part by the expansion of artificial intelligence, cognitive science, nanotechnology, robotics and biotechnology. In themselves, these innovations can greatly serve integral human development and the care of our common home. Yet precisely because of their power, they can also hasten the expansion of the technocratic paradigm and therefore require a new spiritual, ethical and political framework.

94. The danger of humanity becoming a victim of its own achievements was already clearly recognized by Saint Paul VI, who warned that “the most extraordinary scientific progress, the most astounding technical feats and the most amazing economic growth, unless accompanied by authentic moral and social progress, will in the long run go against man.” [means without a growth in humanity: “having more” without “being more.” In such a scenario, there is a risk that individuals will be evaluated principally according to the outcomes they produce. [122]

95. Here, we must recognize another crucial aspect, which I have noted earlier. In many cases within the digital context, control over platforms, infrastructure, data and computing power does not rest with States, but with major economic and technological actors.

## Artificial intelligence

98. It is appropriate to preface this discussion with two considerations. First, any statement regarding AI risks becoming quickly outdated, given the remarkable pace at which these systems are developing. Second, all of us, including those who design them, possess only a limited understanding of their actual functioning

A valuable tool that requires vigilance

108. In fact, as with every major technological shift, AI tends to amplify the power of those who already possess economic resources, expertise and access to data. In light of the common good and the universal destination of goods, this raises serious concerns, since small but highly influential groups can shape information and consumption patterns, influence democratic processes and steer economic dynamics to their own advantage, undermining social justice and solidarity among peoples. For this reason, it is essential that the use of AI, especially when it touches on public goods and fundamental rights, be guided by clear criteria and effective oversight, grounded in participation and subsidiarity.

What must not be lost

117. From the perspective of the Church's Social Doctrine, the key issue is not the use of technology as such, but the vision that underlies it. If the human being is treated as something to be perfected or surpassed, it becomes easier to accept that some lives are less useful, less desirable or less worthy. In the name of progress, "necessary sacrifices" may begin to be justified, placing the burden on the most vulnerable in pursuit of a supposed optimization of the species. In this regard, the aforementioned warning of Saint Paul VI retains great foresight: indeed, scientific and technological advances, when detached from moral and social progress, end up turning against humanity. [130] For this reason, a clear distinction must be made. It is one thing to integrate technology within a human-centred, relational vision; it is quite another to be guided by an outlook that devalues human limits and promises a purely technical form of "salvation."

The limit, the heart and the grandeur of the human person

119. It is precisely within our limitations that the following find a place: compassion, as well as a sincere concern for the needs of others; a generosity that can emerge even in the midst of darkness and failure; spiritual experience and the worship of God. We see this at many

moments when our limits become tangible: when we face rejection, when we suffer the illness or loss of a loved one, when we encounter our own weakness or failure. Mysteriously, it is precisely in such moments that we can discover a new wisdom, tangibly experience the closeness of others and encounter the presence of the Lord.

130. Questioning this alternative path of progress and how we interpret and live it is ultimately a matter of examining our own hearts. The way we understand and shape relationships, work and institutions, in practice reveals our fundamental values. In the end, it all stems from what we hold most dear. This is a love that guides us as to what we truly cherish, both as individuals and as a society, and directs our lives and actions. Saint Augustine described human history as a struggle between two loves, which give rise to two ways of inhabiting the world and living together — or two “cities,” as it were: on the one hand, the love of God and neighbor; on the other, the exclusive love of self. “Two loves have built two cities: the earthly city, the love of self even to the contempt of God; the heavenly city, the love of God even to the contempt of self.” [139] As throughout history, these two loves continue to contend for dominance in our hearts today. The age of AI is no exception: the construction of Babel or the rebuilding of Jerusalem begins within each one of us. (