Fr. Joseph Fessio Reflects on Pope Leo XIV's Magnifica Humanitas

Faith & Mission

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Father Joseph Fessio recently brought timely wisdom to the Ave Maria Alumni Board with a thought-provoking reflection on Pope Leo XIV's new document Magnifica Humanitas. Drawing from the Holy Father's teaching, Fr. Fessio addressed one of the defining questions of our era: what does it mean to remain authentically human as artificial intelligence and other technologies reshape nearly every aspect of our lives? His talk offered a deeply Catholic framework for thinking about technology, not as something to fear or blindly embrace, but to thoughtfully engage with the lens of faith and reason that has always defined Ave Maria's intellectual tradition.

Throughout his remarks, Fr. Fessio emphasized a clarifying and ultimately reassuring principle: artificial intelligence is our servant, not our master. While acknowledging the remarkable capabilities of AI and the genuine benefits technology can bring, he reminded listeners that no computer system can replace what makes us truly human. AI cannot love, experience friendship, suffer, offer forgiveness, bear moral responsibility, or encounter the transformative grace of God. These distinctly human experiences and capacities, the very things that give life its deepest meaning, remain forever beyond the reach of machines built by human hands and trained on human data.

Equally important to Fr. Fessio's message was his insistence that technology is never morally neutral. Every system reflects the values, priorities, and assumptions of those who design it, which is why ethical discernment must accompany innovation at every stage. As society races forward with technological advancement, Fr. Fessio challenged us to ensure that progress always serves the common good and respects the inherent dignity of every person. This conviction, that human beings always come first, stands as a necessary counterweight to a culture that too often allows efficiency and capability to drive the conversation.

Perhaps the most hopeful moment of Fr. Fessio's reflection came when he reminded the alumni board that our deepest fulfillment has never depended on technological progress. Human flourishing is not achieved by surpassing our limits through machines, but by allowing God to transform us through His grace. As he concluded, only Christ enables us to transcend suffering, death, and our own limitations in ways that matter most. This message beautifully embodies the mission that has guided Ave Maria University since its founding: to form the whole person through the integration of faith and reason, preparing graduates equipped to meet the modern world with both intellectual rigor and spiritual conviction. We encourage alumni to view Fr. Fessio's full presentation and discover afresh why Ave Maria University's approach to education remains more vital than ever.

Read online for photos and videos:

https://alumni.avemaria.edu/news/fr-joseph-fessio-reflects-on-pope-leo-xiv-s-magnifica-humanitas