

America at 250: Blessings and Challenges

Session #3: America's Path Forward

A. The Benefits and Dangers of Technology

Back in 1974, in my second year in the seminary, our biology professor asked each of us in our sophomore class to examine a different science textbook from various publishers, telling us to find one interesting or amazing fact to mention in class. Mine was the book's statement that the sum of human knowledge was doubling every ten years, but the professor objected, "No, that can't be right" —so I read directly from the book, "Hard as it is to believe, human knowledge increases by 100% every decade," leaving the professor without a rebuttal or response. That was over fifty years ago; if anything, the increase in knowledge and discovery has increased exponentially since then. As far back as 2018—a lifetime ago in technological terms—a computer chess program called Alpha Zero amazed the scientific world when it taught itself chess from scratch in just four hours, without being programmed to play or win. The frightening aspect is that it not only learned from its mistakes, but also began improvising and using intuition, rather than just mathematical calculations—all without any human input.

Chess programs capable of beating the world's best grandmasters might harm humanity's ego, but pose no direct threat to our race—but that's not necessarily true in regard to other forms of artificial intelligence, or A.I. Computers increasingly control our travel, finances, communications, home appliances, security systems, medical treatment, and many other aspects of our lives. Is it wise to become so reliant on them? Where is this trend leading—to a world of glittering opportunities and advances, or one of frightening possibilities and potential dangers? Over twenty years ago author and futurist Ray Kurzweil popularized the concept of "singularity"—the point in history in which machine intelligence will surpass human knowledge, and become more powerful than all human intelligence combined. He originally predicted this would occur in the year 2045; however, he later claimed that by 2029 (just three years from now), computers would be able to match the versatility and capabilities of the human brain, and thereafter exceed human creativity in a wide variety of endeavors (such as creating art, writing music, and even programming other computers, to name just a few examples). The singularity point also refers to that terrifying time in history when A.I., nanotechnology, and biotechnology will all merge with human biology, almost turning men into machines; this will supposedly vastly increase our human intelligence and at long last overcome aging and death, ushering in a brave new world in which God is no longer needed.

All this inevitably brings to mind the serpent's false but alluring promise to Eve in the Garden of Eden: "the moment you eat of [the forbidden fruit] your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods" (Gn. 3:5). That is not to say that all technology and A.I. is sinister or evil, or that human progress is inevitably degrading and destructive. The Lord gave humanity dominion over the earth (Gn. 1:28), along with the ability to discover, invent, and create. Thus, technology and A.I. can be very beneficial—not only in work, education, and daily life, but even in religious ministry and in sharing the Gospel. (In fact, some of the research for this talk relied on A.I.-generated on-line articles.) However, the usefulness of technology must not blind us to its dangers; like any valuable resource or tool, it can easily be misused to deceive, distract, confuse, control, manipulate, enslave, or ultimately even destroy its targets.

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Pope Leo XIV's new encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* (Latin for "Magnificent Humanity") offers a very balanced and thought-provoking treatment of A.I., among various other subjects. The encyclical was officially completed and signed on May 15, 2026—the 135th anniversary of the promulgation of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* ("Of New Things"). The "new things" Leo XIII was referring to back in 1891 included labor unions, capitalism, and the industrial revolution; he taught that while the Church would cautiously support these developments, along with the right to private property and the honest accumulation of wealth, human dignity must never be compromised, and our duties toward God and neighbor must never be ignored or denied. *Rerum Novarum* greatly increased the prestige and influence of the Church among the working class at the end of the 19th century, and it can reasonably be hoped *Magnifica Humanitas* will have the same sort of reception among the technological class today—for Leo XIV is intentionally following the lead of his predecessor Leo XIII in acknowledging and addressing new realities with hope, prudence, wisdom, and restraint.

The Holy Father begins with the observation that "Humanity, created by God in all its grandeur, is today facing a pivotal choice: either to construct a new Tower of Babel or to build the city in which God and humanity dwell together" (1). He reminds us that technology is a useful tool, but not a solution to mankind's problems in and of itself (9). After reviewing the development of the Church's social doctrine, Pope Leo insists on the need to guard against new and unprecedented dangers or challenges to human dignity, which can reduce persons to "a resource to be used and exploited [based] on what they achieve or produce" (51). The Pope speaks of the moral principle of "the universal destination of goods" (65), which means avoiding an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, with the latter left behind in the march of human progress. Prior to the 21st century, access to this world's resources included adequate food, water, housing, clothing, education, health care, and security; today, however, the universal destination of goods also includes more abstract realities like patents, digital platforms, algorithms, and data (67). Human solidarity means decisions about these things must consider the needs of everyone—including future generations—and not just a few (76).

In regard to A.I., Pope Leo refers to it as "a valuable tool that requires vigilance" (100). He notes that A.I. inevitably reflects the biases of its designers (102), and thus we cannot simply consider it to be morally neutral (104). In this regard, Catholic author Ted Flynn recently conducted an experiment with the Google product Gemini A.I., in which he asked a series of fundamental questions about human life and the meaning of existence. Mr. Flynn writes, "On several topics, A.I.'s conclusions sided with the scientific community as opposed to scientifically-acceptable Catholic views. Every human being has a world view. The responses of 'Artificial Intelligence' patently indicate that those persons controlling its algorithms have assigned it a secular and humanistic view of God. . . . [this technology] is heavily manipulated, and is not a 'friend' of God" ("The Secrets of the Book of Revelation Revealed," *Signs & Wonders for Our Times*, Spring 2026, p. 46). This experiment clearly shows why Pope Leo is absolutely correct in stating that the creation and use of A.I. needs clear criteria and effective oversight (108); he states that its developers "bear a particular ethical and spiritual responsibility, for every design choice reflects a vision of humanity" (111). That's why, the Holy Father says, "the true alternative [in regard to A.I.] is not between enthusiasm and fear, but between two paths of development: a progress that serves individuals and peoples, or a progress that subjects them to the mentality of power" (129).

In *Magnifica Humanitas* Pope Leo carefully reflects on some of the ethical implications of A.I., including its ability to cause confusion, division, and manipulation (deepfakes being an example). He writes, “Disinformation [the deliberate spreading of lies or half-truths] did not begin with A.I., yet today it finds a powerful amplifier in A.I.” (132). Propaganda of this sort is a threat to humanity because communication, as the Holy Father notes, “is not only the transmission of information, but it is the creation of a culture” (133). If we live in a culture of lies, we undermine our own humanity and threaten our eternal salvation—as ultimately illustrated by Pontius Pilate, whose cynical question “What is truth?” (Jn. 18:38) led to his acquiescence to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. Truth must be preserved, for as Leo XIV writes, it is “a common good and not the property of those with power or influence” (137).

Along with these fundamental or philosophical concerns about A.I., *Magnifica Humanitas* list some possible problems of a more practical nature. For instance, having personal mobile devices at too early an age, or using them without adult supervision, may “exacerbate young people’s vulnerabilities, foster addiction and expose them to isolation, bullying and cyber-bullying, as well as pressure to share intimate images or sensitive information” (141). Also, contrary “to the advertised benefits of A.I., current approaches to technology can paradoxically de-skill workers, subject them to automated surveillance and relegate them to rigid and repetitive tasks. The need to keep up with the pace of technology can erode workers’ sense of agency and stifle the innovative abilities they are expected to bring to their work” (150). Worst of all, A.I. could theoretically make war easier, for it can “lower the threshold for the use of force, shield people from responsibility, and foster a culture in which the enemy is reduced to a statistic and the victim to ‘collateral damage’” (183). Pope Leo warns that “the growing ease with which autonomous weapons systems can be deployed makes war more ‘feasible’ and less subject to human control. This violates the principle that armed force should be used only as a last resort in cases of legitimate self-defense” (197). As if this point isn’t clear enough, the Holy Father then insists, it “is not permissible to entrust lethal or otherwise irreversible decisions to artificial systems. *No algorithm can make war morally acceptable*” (emphasis added; 198).

We must hope and pray that not only world political and military leaders, but also scientists, A.I. developers, online influencers, and technology and communications experts, take Pope Leo’s warnings seriously. Humanity has long been aware of the possible danger of the so-called “rise of the machines”—sometimes in an amusing way (as in a Ziggy cartoon in which the character is watching an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie on TV, only to have his parrot whisper, “Psst! Is it wise to watch ‘The Terminator’ with Alexa in the room?”), and more often in a prophetic manner, as in TV series like *Battlestar Galactica* and *Person of Interest*, or movies like *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Westworld*, *WarGames*, and *I, Robot*—all of which explore what could go wrong if computers and A.I. programs begin acting in ways their human creators never imagined or intended. These and other forms of technology can be wonderful and amazingly useful things—but only if used correctly. The Book of Revelation warns what might otherwise happen, for it describes how at some future point the second beast, or false prophet, will cause an image to be made of the first beast, or antichrist: “It was then permitted to breathe life into the beast’s image, so that the beast’s image could speak and have anyone who did not worship it put to death” (13:15). It stands to reason satan will try to use technology against us. Only by being spiritually prepared will we escape this trap.

B. The Scientific Case for Faith

In light of these potential dangers, one might assume that science itself is fundamentally opposed to religion, an enemy of the Church, and a threat to religious faith—but this is not the case. It's actually the Judeo-Christian worldview of an orderly, logical world with reliable and unchanging truths that makes science possible—for if everything were always changing in a random and unpredictable manner, there would be no basis for scientific experimentation and discovery. Also, the Catholic Church has been one of history's greatest promoters of scientific research and discovery; medieval cathedrals, for instance, were deliberately designed to allow for astronomical observations from their belltowers, and many of the greatest scientists were themselves Catholic priests (including Roger Bacon, whose approach to science was the forerunner of the modern scientific method). As author Rodney Stark writes, "Why did [the development of modern science] take root in Europe and nowhere else? Because Christianity depicted God as a rational, responsive, dependable, and omnipotent Being, and the universe as His personal creation. The natural world was thus understood to have a rational, lawful, stable structure, awaiting (indeed, inviting) human comprehension."

However, the Church teaches that while science and technology can be precious resources for humanity, they cannot in and of themselves disclose the meaning of human existence; moreover, Catholicism insists that scientific research always respect human dignity and freedom, in this way truly being at the service of humanity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 2293-2294). Many non-religious people today seem to believe that science will sooner or later discover all the secrets of the universe and solve all of humanity's problems, without reference to God or religion—but this foolish and short-sighted view ignores three very important facts. First of all, science is *not* an entirely objective, accurate, and impartial measurement of reality and the physical world; the human element inevitably enters in. Scientists must *use their minds* in making hypotheses, gathering and interpreting data, and drawing conclusions—and this allows for error or bias to be present. (In fact, in one survey of scientists, at least one-third admitted to some kind of research fraud; moreover, many researchers who had the honesty and courage to disagree with "politically correct" scientific beliefs suffered criticism, harassment, loss of funding, or loss of employment as a result.)

Secondly, there are many documented physical healings and other miracles which science can't explain. Even more importantly, science can't measure or pass judgment on the most important things in life that transcend our material world—including love, family, friendship, self-respect, honor, truth, and beauty. The crucial human experiences of morality, personal growth, and happiness are all beyond science's reach—and most people would agree that without these things, life has no real purpose. Thirdly, almost everyone assumes science is rooted in truth because it avoids assumptions and tests everything by means of experiments and observation. However, science itself rests on an unprovable assumption: namely, that if an experiment is repeated in the exact same manner and under the exact same conditions, the exact same results will always occur. It makes sense to *assume* this is the case—otherwise, science itself would be impossible—but no one can actually *prove* this is true, and that it will always remain so. Science takes this unprovable assumption as a matter of faith—and when it comes to *religious* faith, science actually supports the reasonableness of believing in God.

The average person is unaware of the incredible complexity and intricate fine-tuning of the universe, and the unimaginable odds against creation coming into existence by mere chance. Almost all scientists now agree the universe began at some point (a moment often called the “Big Bang”), but many still deny the need for a Creator—claiming that somehow the universe, and life itself, came into being by chance. However, there is strong scientific evidence contradicting this belief. In 1992, for instance, the Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) satellite revealed that “the background radiation of the Big Bang, though extremely even, had just enough irregularities (of an extremely minute amount) to account for the formation of the ‘clumps’ of hot matter that formed into our universe’s galaxies.” This led the great physicist (and agnostic) Stephen Hawking to credit the universe’s existence to what he called “the mind of God.” Hawking estimated that “if the expansion rate of the universe was different by one part in a hundred thousand million million one second after the Big Bang, the universe would have either collapsed back on itself or never developed galaxies.” Moreover, if the ratio between electromagnetic force and gravity was altered more than 1 in 10^{40} , the universe would not be able to exist. 1 in 10 to the 40th power is an incredibly narrow range of possibility. It would be roughly equivalent to covering all North America with dimes, stacking them until they reached the moon—and then doing that again on well over another *billion* continents the same size, after marking just one dime and hiding it in the piles, and then having a blindfolded friend successfully picking it out on the first try. As if that isn’t enough, another expert, Oxford mathematician Roger Penrose, calculated the allowable margin of error in the expansion of the universe after the Big Bang as being 1 in $10^{10,123}$ —a number far bigger than the number of subatomic particles in the universe.

One author writes, “The web of interconnected fine tuning [in the universe] is so stunningly precise that scientists are often at a loss for words to make it understandable to the non-expert. ‘The precision . . . is as if one could throw a dart across the entire universe and hit a bull’s eye one millimeter in diameter on the other side.’” The design of the Milky Way, the size and age of the sun, the existence of other planets, the earth’s distance from the sun, the size of the moon, and the thickness of the earth’s crust, are all *exactly* as they need to be in order for life to exist on our planet. Moreover, “One astronomer has estimated the odds of a life-friendly planet existing anywhere in the universe by chance to be less than 1 in 10^{129} —that’s one in one thousand quintillion quintillion, quintillion quintillion quintillion quintillion.” Almost all statisticians or mathematicians adhere to Borel’s Law (named after the French mathematician Emile Borel); it states that once the odds of an event occurring are greater than 1 in 10^{50} , it should be considered impossible. These numbers stagger the imagination; we can’t even begin to comprehend them—but those who insist there is no God must claim instead that these unimaginably incredible odds against the universe, and life itself, coming into existence were somehow overcome. It takes an incredible amount of faith to believe all this happened by pure chance; that’s why one Christian author (Frank Turek) stated, “I could never be an atheist—I don’t have that much faith” (paraphrased).

Everything we know about creation points to it being deliberately designed to make life possible. For instance, the Milky Way—unlike 95% of all galaxies—is an elegant spiral; if it weren’t, its nucleus would release destructive radiation harmful to the existence of life. The Milky Way is also just far enough away from other large galaxies to avoid interference from their gravity, and just the right size to allow for the formation of stars and planets. Our sun

has the right size and chemical composition to allow for photosynthesis, without poisoning or over-radiating our planet; if the sun were larger, it would burn too rapidly and erratically, but if it were smaller, the earth's orbit would be much closer to it—with devastating effects on our climate. The earth's rotation is also ideal; any slower, and our days would be too hot and our nights too cold; any faster, and wind speeds would be too extreme and deadly. If the earth's gravity were stronger, our atmosphere would have too much methane and ammonia to support life; if its gravity were weaker, our planet wouldn't be able to retain sufficient water. The earth's crust is also just right: a thicker crust would reduce the amount of oxygen in the atmosphere, but a thinner crust would lead to vastly increased volcanic activity. Also, our moon is exactly the right size to stabilize the earth's orbit and rotation, and prevent extreme variations in climate. Everything science has discovered points to an extremely carefully designed and amazingly well-balanced universe—most especially in the area of life itself.

Life is so complex and fine-tuned that it couldn't have evolved by chance over a long period of time; there are highly developed and specialized cells in even the simplest organisms that could only have come into existence as part of a larger design. To claim that life existed even as it was evolving into higher forms is as illogical as believing that you can build a fully functioning automobile from scratch, and *drive it successfully* even as you were in the process of constructing it. Human DNA is incredibly complex; Microsoft founder Bill Gates stated that it “is like a computer program but far, far more advanced than any software ever created.” Each human being's genome (an organism's genetic material) is written in DNA—and over *three billion characters long!* Even a one-cell amoeba has as much information as 1000 *Encyclopedia Britannicas*. How did all these elements of life miraculously come into existence without a Creator? Science has no credible answer or explanation.

Even so, some defenders of evolution and the belief that life came into being by chance use the analogy of a room full of typing monkeys: given enough time and paper, they claim, sooner or later a monkey hitting random keys on the typewriter will by chance supposedly produce the complete works of William Shakespeare. Is this possible? There will be, entirely by chance, some two, three, or four-letter words—but the longer the word, the odds of it being typed by accident increase geometrically. The word “possible” has eight letters. How many pages would the room full of monkeys have to type before this one, relatively simple eight-letter word appeared? About 100 million pages. If we change “possible” to “impossible”—an addition of just two letters—the number of pages needed for it to appear by chance rises to 100 *trillion*. As one author notes, by comparison, “to make the first living thing on a planet is, in effect, to hit upon a sequence not of just eight letters, but of forty thousand.”

One Christian author asks an interesting question: “If atheists are going to claim that things can pop into existence uncaused out of nothing, then why doesn't everything do so? Why don't iPads, [sports cars], and pizzas pop into existence out of nothing?” When we want a pizza, we don't shout “Pizza, appear!” and hold out our hands; no, we call a pizzeria. In the same way, believing in God is a rational choice, for it involves a high degree of logic and consistency; refusing to believe in Him, however, can lead to absurd theories, unanswerable questions, and logical contradictions. The choice comes down to having faith in an all-powerful and all-knowing God, or in chance occurrences that far exceed the odds of ever actually happening. The more science discovers, the more the universe points to its Creator.

C. Our Nation's Future: Ruin or Revival?

Technology cannot solve all the world's problems or reveal the meaning of life, but it can make life easier and better, and even be used as a tool to grow in faith and help spread the Gospel. Science cannot answer life's most important questions or take the place of religion, but it can point to the Creator and give us a greater appreciation for the amazing complexity and wonder of His creation. History cannot reveal what might have happened if humanity had made different choices, nor can it reliably predict the future, but it can help us discern the working of God in the world and offer important lessons as we help shape America's destiny. All these fields of human endeavor and study enlighten us, but history in particular also warns us of the urgent need to turn back to God. According to Jonathan Cahn, author of the best-selling book *The Harbinger* and its sequels, "the same biblical signs of national judgment that appeared in the last days of ancient Israel are reappearing on American soil. . . . America, as did Israel in its [time of] blessing, has been turning away from God, driving Him out of its public squares, bringing in idols in His place and calling what is evil good and what is good evil. And as Israel sacrificed thousands of its children on the altars of Moloch and Baal [false gods of the surrounding pagan nations], so America has also lifted up millions of its children on the altar of pleasure and self-indulgence, and their blood is on our hands."

In 1947, an American historian—Dr. Carle Zimmerman of Harvard University—wrote about the dangers to society when traditional marriage and family life start to decay or decline; he observed that before the fall of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, the following factors were present: (1) marriage was no longer regarded as sacred, and often ended in divorce; (2) traditional marriage was, many times, replaced by alternative arrangements or forms; (3) public disrespect for parents and other authority figures became widespread; (4) juvenile delinquency, promiscuity, and an overall attitude of rebellion increased significantly; (5) married couples in traditional marriages were less open to having children; (6) adultery became widely accepted; and (7) homosexuality was increasingly tolerated.

Furthermore, in 1994, Dr. Jim Nelson Black wrote the book *When Nations Die*, which identified ten common symptoms found in every civilization in history that eventually declined and fell into ruin. These are (1) an increase in lawlessness; (2) a loss of economic discipline; (3) rising bureaucracy; (4) a decline in education; (5) the weakening of cultural foundations; (6) a loss of respect for traditions; (7) an increase in materialism; (8) a rise in immorality; (9) the decay of religious belief; and (10) the devaluing of human life. The presence of as few as three or four of these symptoms or conditions could, under certain conditions, result in societal collapse. Dr. Black states that the United States is the first nation in recorded history *in which all ten factors can be found in the same society at one time*.

Pope St. John Paul the Great, during his 1987 visit to the United States, warned, "The very condition of your survival as a nation depends on how you treat the weakest among you—those yet unborn in the womb." Similarly, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen once said "that if the United States continued to kill life at its beginnings with *abortion*, at its mid-day with the *handicapped*, and at its twilight with *euthanasia*, it would lead to the catastrophic midnight of nuclear war." St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta agreed, saying "Abortion leads to nuclear war!"

If the United States does not undergo a widespread spiritual and moral renewal, our nation is quite likely living on borrowed time. It may well be that our scientifically advanced but morally deficient society has created a “technological Frankenstein’s monster,” an out-of-control electronic tidal wave threatening to deceive and distract the unwary, to trample the rights of those seeking to preserve privacy and personal liberty, and to erase all awareness of humanity’s Creator and eliminate any possibility of discovering and fulfilling His will. However, God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7); as a jealous God (Ex. 20:5), He will not allow the powers of this world to snatch away His children (cf. Jn. 10:28). As Pope Leo notes in his encyclical, humanity is now choosing whether to construct a new Tower of Babel or, guided by the Holy Spirit, build a new city of God—and his warning applies especially to America.

Both our nation, and the Church in the United States, have been richly blessed by God, especially in a material sense—but how have His gifts been used over the last sixty or seventy years? Has the Church in particular been a light shining forth brightly (Mt. 5:15) and a herald’s voice crying out, “Prepare the way of the Lord” (Mk. 1:3)—or have the leaders and members of American Catholicism been silent watchmen (cf. Ezek. 33:6ff), unwilling to risk unpopularity and perhaps persecution by sounding the alarm? When our nation is chastised by God, will we as a Church be in a position to say to American society, “We tried to warn you of the urgent need for repentance, but you wouldn’t listen”? Will not society be able to respond to us, “How could we be expected to listen when so many of your own leaders and members didn’t take your moral teachings seriously?” (as in the sexual abuse scandal).

Fortunately, there are some favorable signs and reasons for hope. For instance, America’s 250th anniversary may be unleashing a new wave of patriotism, especially among the young, and the tragic assassination of Charlie Kirk last year prompted large numbers of people to join his conservative movement Turning Point USA. Also, more young people are turning to Christianity than in previous years, especially younger men. Traditional religious orders are seeing increased vocations, and large numbers of dedicated lay Catholics are more involved than ever before in ministry, evangelization, and apologetics. On May 17, President Trump rededicated the United States to God, and a few weeks ago the U.S. Catholic bishops formally consecrated our nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Such acts of consecration have always resulted in heavenly blessings—perhaps even the blessing of a widespread religious revival in our Church and our country. In this regard, St. Pio of Pietrelcina—Padre Pio, who died in 1968—was asked if, as Our Lady of Fatima had prophesied in 1917, Russia would indeed one day be converted to the Catholic Faith. He answered that yes, it would be—very suddenly, and to the surprise of many. Then he added, “And Russia will give America a good example of what it means to convert.” Such an outcome would seem almost miraculous—but Jesus and His Mother readily perform miracles when necessary for the well-being of God’s people.

Each of us has a role to play in setting the stage for America’s return to God—whether through unprecedented miraculous events, or through a less-dramatic but equally important widespread moral and spiritual renewal. There are some specific things all of us should be doing (and urging others to do). (1) We must remain in a state of grace (or, if necessary, return to it through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.) When we fulfill our spiritual, moral, and religious obligations, God’s blessings and protection will be with us, and we will be given greater opportunities to influence and help others. (2) It’s important to attend Mass as often as

possible; this not only benefits us, but helps build up the Church—and our example may influence others. (3) We should pray the Rosary each day. This powerful prayer not only limits Satan's power and gains many graces for ourselves and those for whom we pray; there are also numerous historical examples of the Rosary helping change the course of world events. (4) Saying the Divine Mercy Chaplet—ideally at 3pm each day—is a powerful and effective way of praying for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of the dying. (5) We are urged to say the Prayer to St. Michael frequently, for this invites him and the other angels to guard us, our local parish and community, and our nation and the worldwide Church. (6) It's a wise and holy thing to consecrate our homes and our families to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary; doing so gives them "permission" to intervene on our behalf even more than usual. (7) We should wear or carry a blessed crucifix, scapular, or religious medal—especially the St. Benedict medal; these sacramentals can limit the power of evil and draw down heavenly blessings on ourselves and our country.

(8) We can make the Sign of the Cross throughout the day—not only as a public witness to our Faith, but also as a way of invoking God's blessing upon ourselves and those around us. (9) We must be informed and active citizens, writing or speaking out against immorality, injustice, and especially any political or cultural attempts to restrict religious freedom in our nation. This might involve joining organizations such as the Catholic League, Focus on the Family, Alliance Defending Freedom, and the American Family Association. (10) We need to form the habit of automatically praying for wisdom and guidance whenever we have decisions to make, or whenever we're unsure how to react or respond in difficult or confusing situations. (11) It's important to associate with others who share our beliefs and moral values; God often reveals, develops, and multiplies our strengths and abilities in this way. (12) Acts of fasting and penance are a powerful form of prayer for the world, while strengthening us for the spiritual battles ahead. (13) Attending Eucharistic Adoration will help us grow in holiness and fill us with that peace from Jesus which this world cannot give. (14) We need to deepen our devotion to all the angels and saints—especially Our Lady; they stand ready to intercede on behalf of our families, homes, and nation—but it's up to us to ask for this help. (15) Lastly, we should try to live in a spirit of reparation, offering all our prayers, acts of penance, joys, sorrows, and experiences as a prayer of reparation for America's sins; similarly, we should attend, if possible, Masses of Reparation offered for this purpose. St. Faustina Kowalska wrote, "I see clearly that chosen souls keep the world in existence" (*Diary*, 1533). We can be numbered among such "chosen souls," and our efforts can repair much of the harm done by sin and thus spare the United States from possible divine chastisements or judgment.

The future of America is not carved in stone, and there is still time for our nation to repent and turn back to the Lord—and working for this goal should be a priority of everyone here. As Scripture says, "I will call this to mind, as my reason to have hope: the favors of the Lord are not exhausted, His mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning, so great is His faithfulness" (Lam. 3:21-23). Even as the darkening clouds of Divine Justice gather around our country, we are invited to hope in Divine Mercy and to await the coming light of a new day of love and grace.

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A. The Benefits and Dangers of Technology

The sum of human knowledge is growing at an exponential rate, and computers increasingly control our travel, finances, communications, home appliances, security systems, medical treatment, and many other aspects of life. Over twenty years ago author and futurist Ray Kurzweil popularized the concept of “singularity”—the point in history when machine intelligence will surpass all human knowledge, and which he predicted would occur in 2045. He also foretold that by 2029, computers would be able to match the versatility and capabilities of the human brain, and exceed human creativity in a wide variety of endeavors. Singularity also refers to the terrifying time when artificial intelligence (A.I.), nanotechnology, and biotechnology will merge with human biology—turning men into machines, and supposedly overcoming aging and death without help from God. All this seems to point to the serpent’s temptation of Eve: “your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods” (Gen. 3:5).

Pope Leo XIV’s encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* (“Magnificent Humanity”) was issued on the 135th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* (“Of New Things”) by Leo XIII, and it offers a balanced and thought-provoking treatment of A.I. The Holy Father states that “Humanity, created by God in all its grandeur, is today facing a pivotal choice: either to construct a new Tower of Babel or to build the city in which God and humanity dwell together” (paragraph #1). He states that technology is a useful tool, but not the solution to all mankind’s problems (9). A.I. is “a valuable tool that requires vigilance” (100), for it inevitably reflects the bias of its designers (102); thus, clear criteria and effective oversight are required (108). Pope Leo warns against disinformation, which can be powerfully amplified by A.I. (132). Other potential problems of technology include young people having personal mobile devices at too early an age (141), the displacement of workers (150), and—worst of all—the possibility that A.I. will make war more likely. The “growing ease with which autonomous weapons systems can be deployed makes war more ‘feasible’ and less subject to human control” (197). Even so, the Holy Father insists, “No algorithm can make war morally acceptable” (198).

Movies and TV shows have often speculated about the “rise of the machines,” in which A.I. programs and computers act in ways their human creators never imagined or intended. Technology can be wonderful and amazing—if used correctly. The Book of Revelation hints at the opposite result (13:15), and so we must be spiritually prepared to avoid this threat.

B. The Scientific Case for Faith

The Judeo-Christian worldview of an orderly, logical world makes science itself possible, and the Catholic Church has been one of history’s greatest promoters of scientific research and discovery. (Indeed, many important scientists, such as Roger Bacon, were themselves Catholic priests.) However, the Church teaches that while science and technology can be precious resources for humanity, they cannot disclose the meaning of human existence, and they must always respect human dignity and freedom (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 2293-2294). Scientists are subject to bias, error, and fraud, and science itself cannot pass judgment on the most important things in life: love, family, friendship, self-respect, honor, truth, and beauty. Also, there are many documented healings and other miracles science cannot explain. Additionally, science rests on an unprovable assumption: the belief that experiments repeated under the exact same conditions will always have the exact same results (a reasonable and necessary assumption, but not one that can actually be “proven”).

The average person is unaware of the incredible complexity and intricate fine-tuning of the universe, and the unimaginable odds against creation coming into existence by mere chance. The great physicist Stephen Hawking estimated that “if the expansion rate of the universe was different by one part in a

hundred thousand million million [just] one second after the Big Bang [the instant of creation], the universe would have either collapsed back on itself or never developed galaxies.” Also, Oxford mathematician Roger Penrose calculated that the allowable margin of error in the expansion of the universe after the Big Bang as being 1 in $10^{10,123}$ —a number far bigger than the number of subatomic particles in the universe. Moreover, all mathematicians adhere to Borel’s Law, which says that once the odds of an event occurring are greater than 1 in 10^{50} , it should be considered impossible. Those who insist there is no God must claim instead that these unimaginably incredible odds against the universe, and life itself, coming into existence, were somehow overcome. Everything we know about creation points to it being deliberately designed to make life possible. Life itself is so complex and fine-tuned that it couldn’t have come into existence by chance over a long period of time; even the simplest organisms have highly developed and specialized cells that could only have come into existence as part of a larger design. Furthermore, each human being’s genome is written in DNA—and over three billion characters long. Even a simple one-cell amoeba has as much genetic information as 1000 *Encyclopedia Britannicas*. How did all these elements of life miraculously come into existence without a Creator? Science has no credible answer or explanation.

C. Our Nation’s Future: Ruin or Revival?

In 1947, Harvard professor Dr. Carle Zimmerman noted that before the fall of ancient Greece and Rome, (1) marriage was no longer sacred, and often ended in divorce; (2) traditional marriage was many times replaced by alternate arrangements; (3) public disrespect for parents and authority figures was widespread; (4) juvenile delinquency, promiscuity, and rebellion against authority greatly increased; (5) married couples wanted fewer children; (6) adultery became widely accepted; and (7) homosexuality was increasingly tolerated.

Dr. Jim Nelson Black’s 1994 book *When Nations Die* listed these symptoms of civilizations in decline: (1) an increase in lawlessness; (2) a loss of economic discipline; (3) rising levels of bureaucracy; (4) a decline in education; (5) the weakening of cultural foundations; (6) a loss of respect for traditions; (7) an increase in materialism; (8) a rise in immorality; (9) the decay of religious belief; and (10) the devaluing of human life. The United States is the first nation in history *in which all ten factors can be found in the same society at the same time*.

In 1987 Pope St. John Paul II warned America, “The very condition of your survival as a nation depends on how you treat the weakest among you—those yet unborn in the womb.” Similarly, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen stated that “if the United States continued to kill life at its beginning with abortion, at its mid-day with the handicapped, and at its twilight with *euthanasia*, it would lead to the catastrophic midnight of nuclear war.” St. Teresa of Calcutta agreed, saying “Abortion leads to nuclear war!” If the United States does not undergo a widespread spiritual and moral renewal, our nation is quite likely living on borrowed time.

All of us have a role to play in helping America turn back to God: (1) Remain in a state of grace (or return to it through Reconciliation). (2) Attend Mass as often as possible. (3) Pray the Rosary each day. (4) Say the Divine Mercy Chaplet. (5) Pray the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel. (6) Consecrate our homes and families to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (7) Wear or carry a blessed crucifix, scapular, or religious medal. (8) Make the Sign of the Cross as often as possible. (9) Become informed and active citizens, and join groups like the Catholic League, Focus on the Family, Alliance Defending Freedom, and the American Family Association. (10) Frequently pray for wisdom and guidance. (11) Associate with those who share our beliefs and values. (12) Perform acts of penance and fasting. (13) When possible, attend Eucharistic Adoration. (14) Deepen our devotion to the angels and saints—especially Our Lady. (15) Live in a spirit of reparation, offering all our prayers, acts of penance, joys, sorrows, and experiences as a prayer of reparation for America’s sins.

America’s future is not carved in stone; there is still time for our nation to repent and turn back to God. Scripture says, “the favors of the Lord are not exhausted, His mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning, so great is His faithfulness” (Lam. 3:21-23).