



THE FACE OF CHRIST IN A DIGITAL AGE

A pastoral letter on artificial intelligence
The Catholic bishops of Maryland | Pentecost 2025

The inherent dignity of each human being and the fraternity that binds us together as members of the one human family must undergird the development of new technologies and serve as indisputable criteria for evaluating them before they are employed, so that digital progress can occur with due respect for justice and contribute to the cause of peace.

— Pope Francis, Message for the 2024 World Day of Peace



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We write to you as your bishops on this holy solemnity of Pentecost, when the Church rejoices in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who breathes life into the Body of Christ and sends us into the world to proclaim the Gospel in every time, culture and language. Just as the apostles were filled with courage and clarity to speak the truth in new tongues (Acts 2: 1-11), so too must we as a Church discern how to speak and live the Gospel amid the new language and powers emerging through artificial intelligence (AI).

Pentecost reminds us that technology is not foreign to the Spirit's work, for God's Spirit moves through history, culture and human creativity. Yet we also know that the Spirit leads us to truth, justice, peace and communion — never domination, deception or dehumanization. As AI technologies transform our lives, workplaces, relationships and even our sense of identity, the Church must be a prophetic voice, calling the world to place the human person, made in the image of God, at the heart of this transformation.

This pastoral letter is offered to the faithful of Maryland and all people of goodwill as a framework for reflection, formation and pastoral response, rooted in the wisdom

of the Church and the inspiration of Pentecost — the Spirit who renews the face of the earth, not through machines, but through grace, truth and love.

The Human Person at the Center of All Development

At the foundation of Catholic social teaching is the enduring truth that every person is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). No matter how advanced machines become, they can never replicate the soul, the conscience or the eternal destiny that belongs to each human being.

The Spirit poured out at Pentecost unites us not through systems, code or data — but through communion, compassion and mission. AI must always serve the person, never diminish or replace human dignity.

Justice, Equity and the Common Good

Maryland, a land rich in innovation and diversity, experiences both the promises and the risks of new technologies. We recognize AI's potential to revolutionize healthcare, education and public service. Yet we are also concerned about:

- The displacement of workers and erosion of stable labor.
- Biases in algorithms that reflect and reinforce injustice.
- The manipulation of truth and distortion of democratic processes.
- The use of AI in lethal autonomous weapons, which remove moral agency from decisions of life and death.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of justice and peace. We must



ask whether the systems we design reflect these values — or whether they entrench inequity and violence.

We call upon Catholic institutions, business leaders and policymakers in Maryland to:

- Promote ethical AI development centered on the common good.
- Establish safeguards that protect vulnerable communities.
- Advocate for transparency, regulation and accountability in technological design and deployment.

Truth, Freedom and the Formation of Conscience

The Spirit who descended at Pentecost is also the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13). In an age where AI-generated content can fabricate images, voices and even historical events, the line between truth and falsehood grows ever thinner.

It is essential that we form consciences capable of discernment — especially among young people so that they may not be manipulated by algorithms but by truth and grace. Digital tools can inform, but they cannot form the heart.



The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of justice and peace. We must ask whether the systems we design reflect these values — or whether they entrench inequity and violence.

Catholic educators, families and parishes must renew their commitment to:

- Media literacy and moral reasoning.
- The cultivation of virtue, empathy and authentic relationships.
- Grounding digital engagement in Scripture, tradition and the sacramental life of the Church.

Solidarity and the Global Family

At Pentecost, people from every nation heard the Gospel in their own tongue. The Church is radically universal and so must be our ethical concern. AI development and deployment must not privilege the wealthy few while

extracting data and resources from the poor or violating the rights of others.

AI must never be used to deepen digital colonialism, surveil vulnerable populations or create weapons of oppression. We must act in solidarity with people across the globe, ensuring that the fruits of innovation are shared justly and used for peace.

AI in Service to the Church's Mission and the Good of Humanity

Despite the concerns we have mentioned, we also affirm that AI, when developed and used ethically, can greatly contribute to the mission of the Church and the common good. Like the printing press, radio or the internet, AI is a tool and tools can be directed toward holiness, healing and human development.

Evangalization and Accessibility

- Translate Church documents and homilies across languages, expand access to Scripture and bring the Gospel to isolated or marginalized communities through the use of AI-powered tools.
- Make liturgies and Catholic media more inclusive for persons with disabilities with AI-generated captions and voice assistance.
- Assist parish formation programs and help seekers grow in faith through personalized catechetical platforms.

Education and Formation

- Tailor educational experiences to individual student needs at Catholic schools, universities and seminaries, offer adaptive feedback and provide remediation for students who are struggling, while maintaining a commitment to virtue, wisdom and authentic human accompaniment.
- Assist professors, theologians and clergy in comparative text analysis, data synthesis and the study of Church documents across history, languages and cultures.

Healthcare and Humanitarian Aid

- Improve diagnostics and medical outcomes while upholding the dignity of the patient.
- Enhance disaster response and humanitarian logistics.



- Analyze data to better identify systemic needs in poverty alleviation, food distribution and refugee resettlement.

Care of Creation

- Monitor climate change and environmental degradation.
- Improve agricultural sustainability.
- Promote better stewardship of creation through real time, data-informed decisions.

Safeguarding Human Life and Promoting Justice and Peace

- Aid in the detection and prevention of human trafficking.
- Improve early warning systems for conflict and natural disasters.
- Increase access to legal aid and public services for the marginalized and most vulnerable.

The Moral Imagination of the Church in a Technological World

Just as the Holy Spirit sent the apostles into a diverse and complex world, the Church today must go forth into the digital continent with boldness and hope. We must form generations of Catholic leaders who can engage AI with both technical knowledge and deep moral imagination.

We are proud of the ways our Catholic communities in Maryland are already discerning the role of technology in education, healthcare, communication and service. But there is more to do. As your bishops we pledge to:

- Promote ongoing formation on AI ethics within our dioceses.

- Support Catholic technologists, thinkers and artists striving to bear witness to the Gospel.
- Ensure our institutions use digital technologies in ways that uphold human dignity.
- Work through the Maryland Catholic Conference to advocate for legislation that protects the common good in this new frontier.
- Prioritize AI use that expands educational access among Catholic schools, colleges and universities for underserved and marginalized communities, ensuring new technologies do not deepen existing divides.

Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Face of the Earth

The Church has faced many turning points in history — the printing press, the industrial revolution and the dawn of the internet. In each case, we have been called not simply to adapt, but to discern. As followers of Christ, we are called not to fear the future, but to shape it with courage and faith — proclaiming Christ in new ways, to new peoples, with new tongues.

Today artificial intelligence is a test of our humanity, our ethics and our faith. Will we allow technology to form us in its image — or will we shape it according to the Gospel?

Let us invoke the Holy Spirit, who “renews the face of the earth” (Psalm 104:30), to guide us in this time. Let us be wise, courageous and united — speaking truth in love and forming a society where the image of God in every person is revered and protected.

May Mary, Seat of Wisdom, and St. Joseph, patron of workers, intercede for us.



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