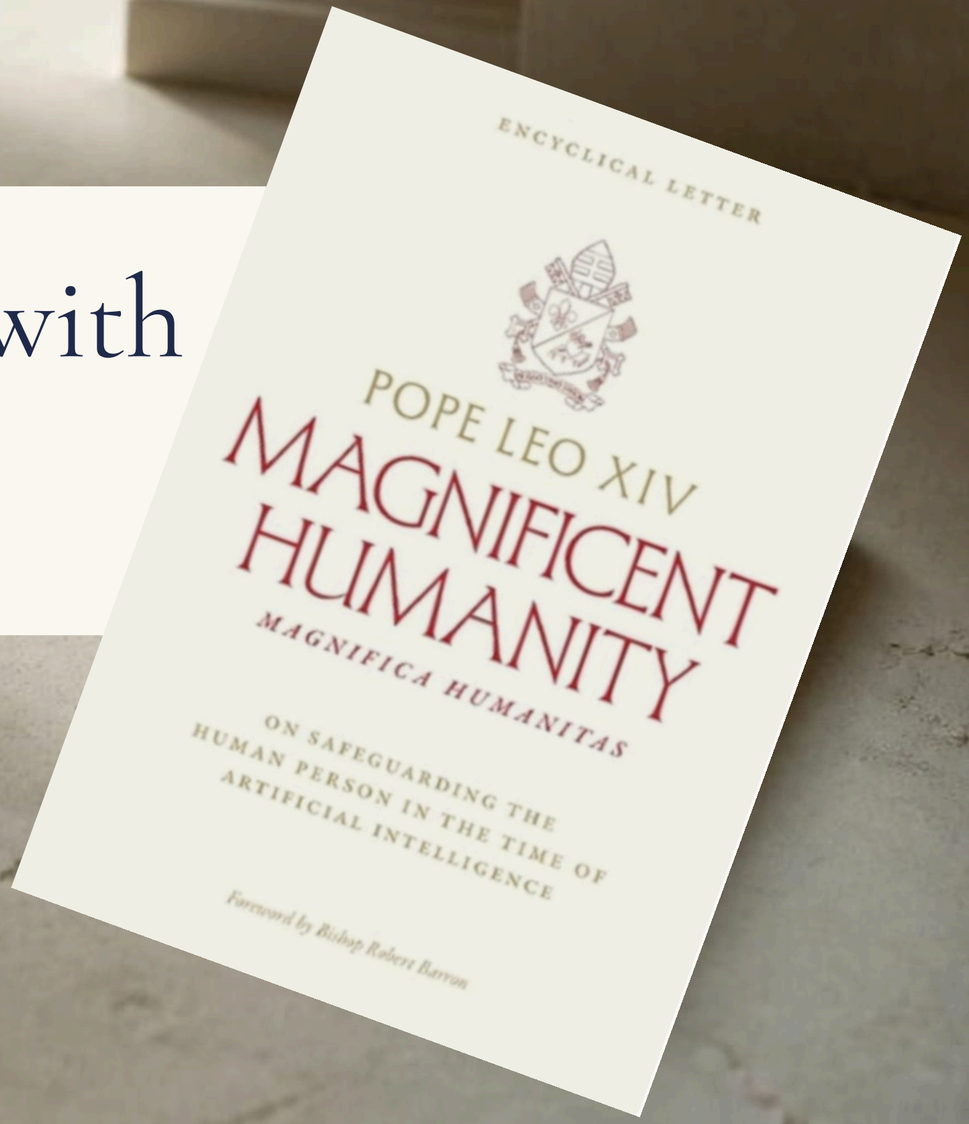
Prepared by:
Fr Rohan Dominic, CMF

Wise Builders: A Prayer with Magnifica Humanitas

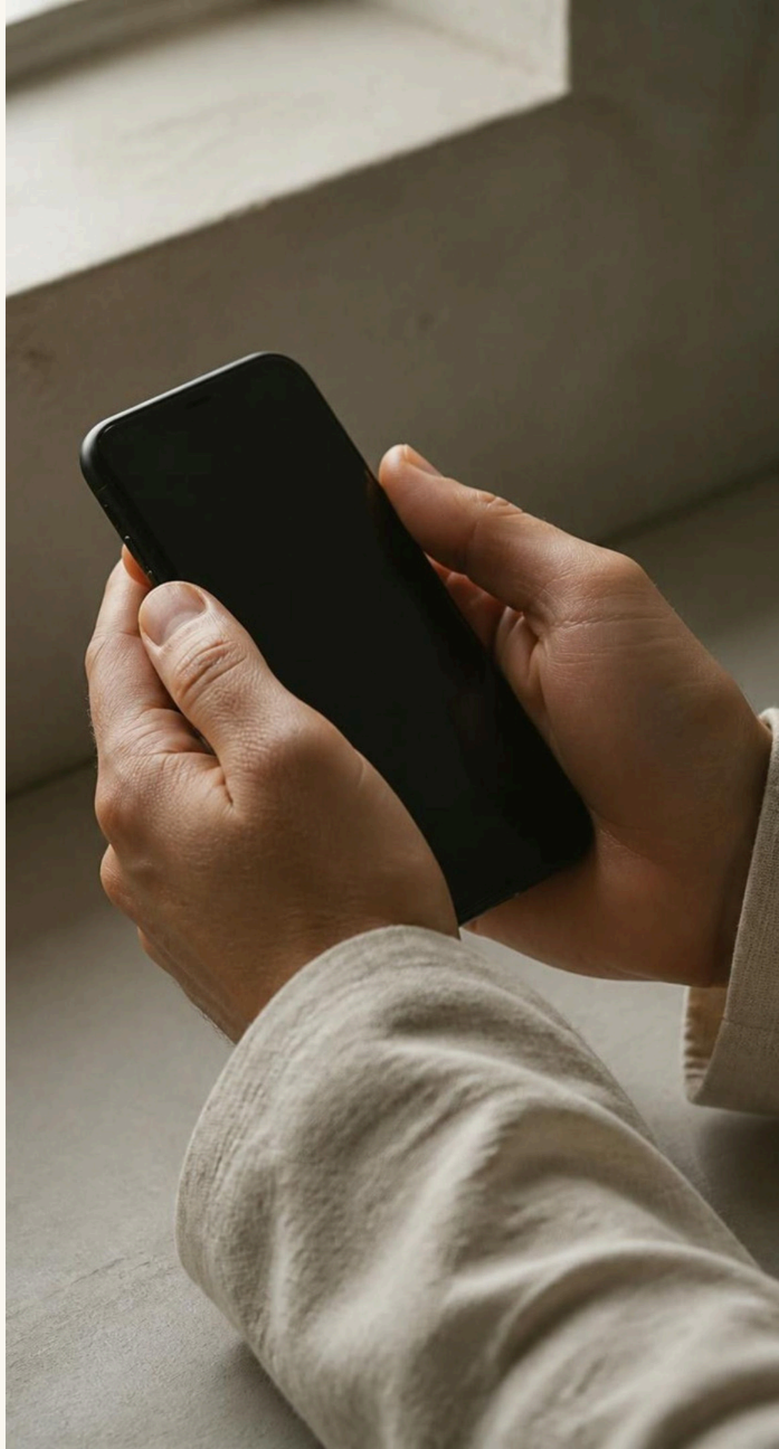


Coordinator, Claretian Missionaries Team @ the United Nations

Opening gesture

Leader: Before we pray, take out your phone. Hold it in your hands for a moment. Look at it.

This small thing knows where you have been today. It has suggested what you should read, what you should buy, perhaps even what you should feel. It holds the faces of people you love. It also carries systems that sort, rank and decide about millions of people who will never know they were judged.





A small gesture of disarmament

Pope Leo says that artificial intelligence must be disarmed: freed from every logic that turns it into an instrument of domination, exclusion and death.
So let us make a small gesture of disarmament. Switch your phone to silent, turn it face down, and lay it on the table in front of you.

Everyone lays their phone down. A pause.

Our hands are empty

Leader: Now our hands are empty. They are the hands God made, which can bless, build, heal and hold one another. With this feeling we begin our prayer for this morning.



1. Two cities: Babel or Jerusalem



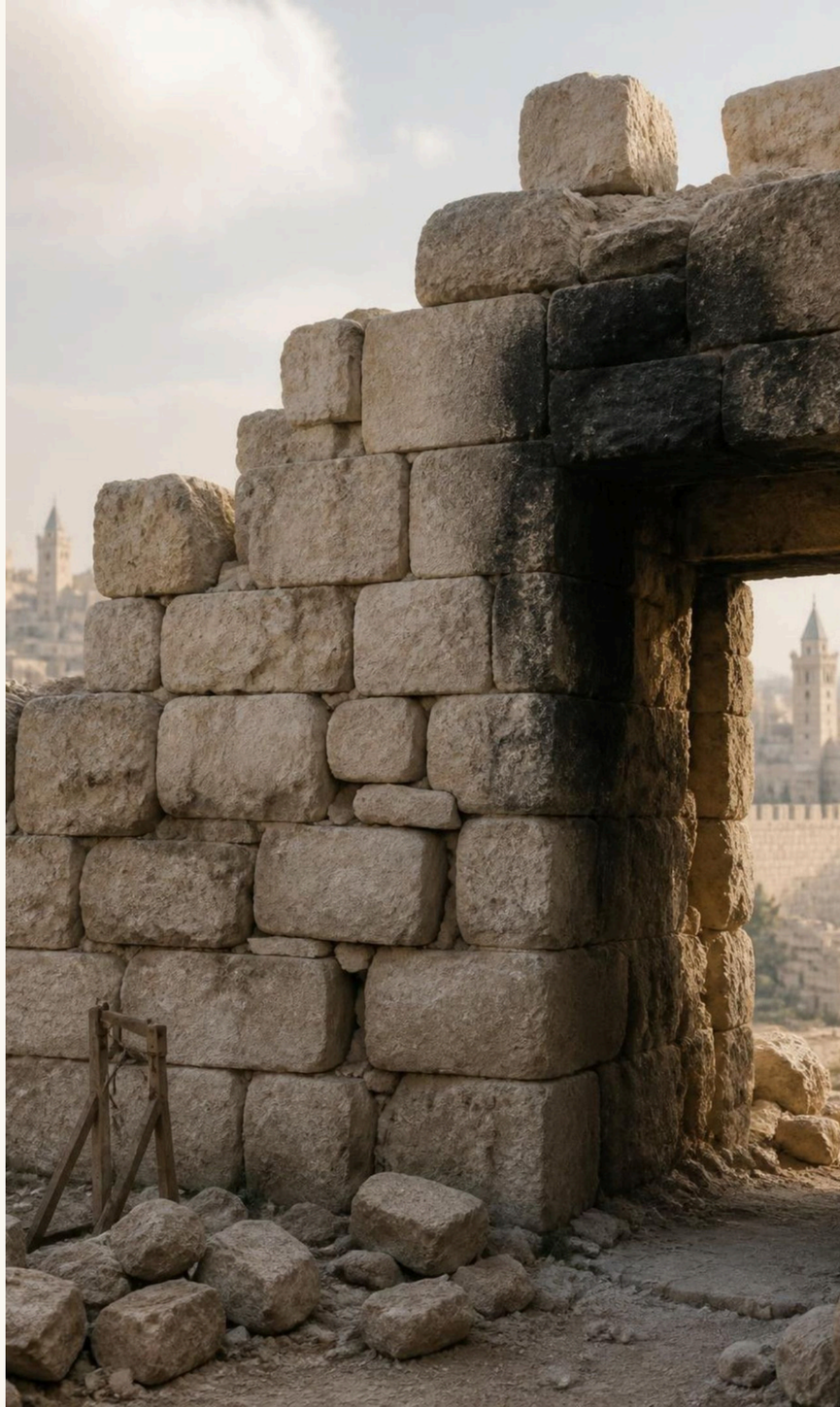
Two building sites

Leader: Pope Leo begins Magnifica Humanitas with two building sites from the Bible. Let us hear them.

Reader A: *From the Book of Genesis. They said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top reaches to the sky, and let's make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad on the surface of the whole earth." (Gen 11:4)*

Nehemiah’s wall

Reader B: *From the Book of Nehemiah. Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come, let’s build up the wall of Jerusalem.” They said, “Let’s rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work. (Neh 2:17–18)*



Babel or Jerusalem

Leader:

Babel was one language, one technology, one direction: a project built on pride, to make a name for a few. Nehemiah’s Jerusalem was rebuilt by many hands, each family restoring the stretch of wall beside its own house, with God at the centre (§§7–8).

The Pope says the real choice before us is not yes or no to technology, which is never neutral, but whether we build Babel or rebuild Jerusalem (§9). Both cities are being built here, in the UN, the house of nations: in the General Assembly Hall, in the conference rooms where texts are negotiated line by line, in the side events and the corridors where we share our experience and wait to speak with a delegate.



Our section of the wall

The Pope says that everyone is given their own section of the wall, and among the builders he names civil society and faith communities (§13).
Our congregations are present in villages, schools, clinics and shelters across the world; our section of the wall is to carry their voices into these rooms. Let us ask for the grace to build well.

Prayer: God of all wisdom

All:

God of all wisdom, you made humanity magnificent, in your own image, and entrusted to our hands the building of a common home. In this age of intelligent machines, keep us from building towers to our own name, and make us builders of your city, where the rejected stones become the cornerstone. Give us the heart of Nehemiah, who listened before he built, prayed before he planned, and never built alone. Amen.

2. Five paths of reflection

Five concerns, one response

Leader: Pope Leo does not fear technology, but he names clearly what worries him.
Let us walk five of his concerns.
There are five short readings from the text, each followed by a question for silent reflection. I invite you to **take turns reading the texts** aloud.

Path 1: Remaining human

Leader: The first path: machines can imitate us, but they cannot be human.

Reader 1: From Magnifica Humanitas, paragraph 99: "So-called artificial intelligences do not undergo experiences, do not possess a body, do not feel joy or pain, do not mature through relationships and do not know from within what love, work, friendship or responsibility mean. Nor do they have a moral conscience, since they do not judge good and evil, grasp the ultimate meaning of situations, or bear responsibility for consequences."

Path 1: The question

Leader: In short: AI can process and imitate, but it cannot love, suffer or take responsibility; only persons can.
In my work and in my community, where am I tempted to let a machine do what only love can do?

Silence.

Path 2: Truth as a common good

Leader: The second path: truth belongs to everyone, not to the powerful.

Reader 2: From paragraph 137: “Our first task is neither to demonize nor idolize technological tools, but to utilize them on the basis of a fundamental principle, namely that truth is a common good and not the property of those with power or influence. We must therefore promote an ecology of communication.”

Path 2: The question

Leader: In short: when truth is shaped by those with power, the poor lose even the right to know what is real.
Who shapes what the people I serve believe to be true, and do I help them tell the real from the manipulated?

Silence.

Path 3: Who decides, and who answers

Leader: The third path: when systems decide about people's lives, someone must answer for it.

Reader 3: From paragraphs 102 and 105: "Important and sensitive decisions — concerning employment, credit, access to public services or even a person's reputation — risk being fully delegated to automated systems that do not know 'compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and above all, the hope that people are able to change,' and can therefore give rise to new forms of exclusion. … For AI to respect human dignity and truly serve the common good, responsibility must be clearly defined at every stage."

Path 3: The question

Leader: In short: decisions about people’s jobs, credit and services are being handed to systems without mercy, and too often no one answers for them.
In the processes we follow at the UN, who is held to account when a system excludes the poor?

Silence.

Path 4: The hidden workers

Leader: The fourth path: behind every quick answer are hidden hands and wounded land.

Reader 4: From paragraph 173: "Nothing in the world of AI is immaterial or magical. … A significant part of the digital economy's functioning relies on the silent work of millions of people engaged in essential yet largely unseen activities, such as data labeling, model training and content moderation, often involving disturbing material. … In some regions of the world, children and adolescents work in dangerous conditions, crushing the materials from which rare earth elements are extracted."



Path 4: The question

Leader: In short: the clean screen hides a chain of exploited workers, children and wounded land. Whose hands and whose land lie behind the device in my pocket, and do I know their names?

Silence.

Path 5: Disarming AI

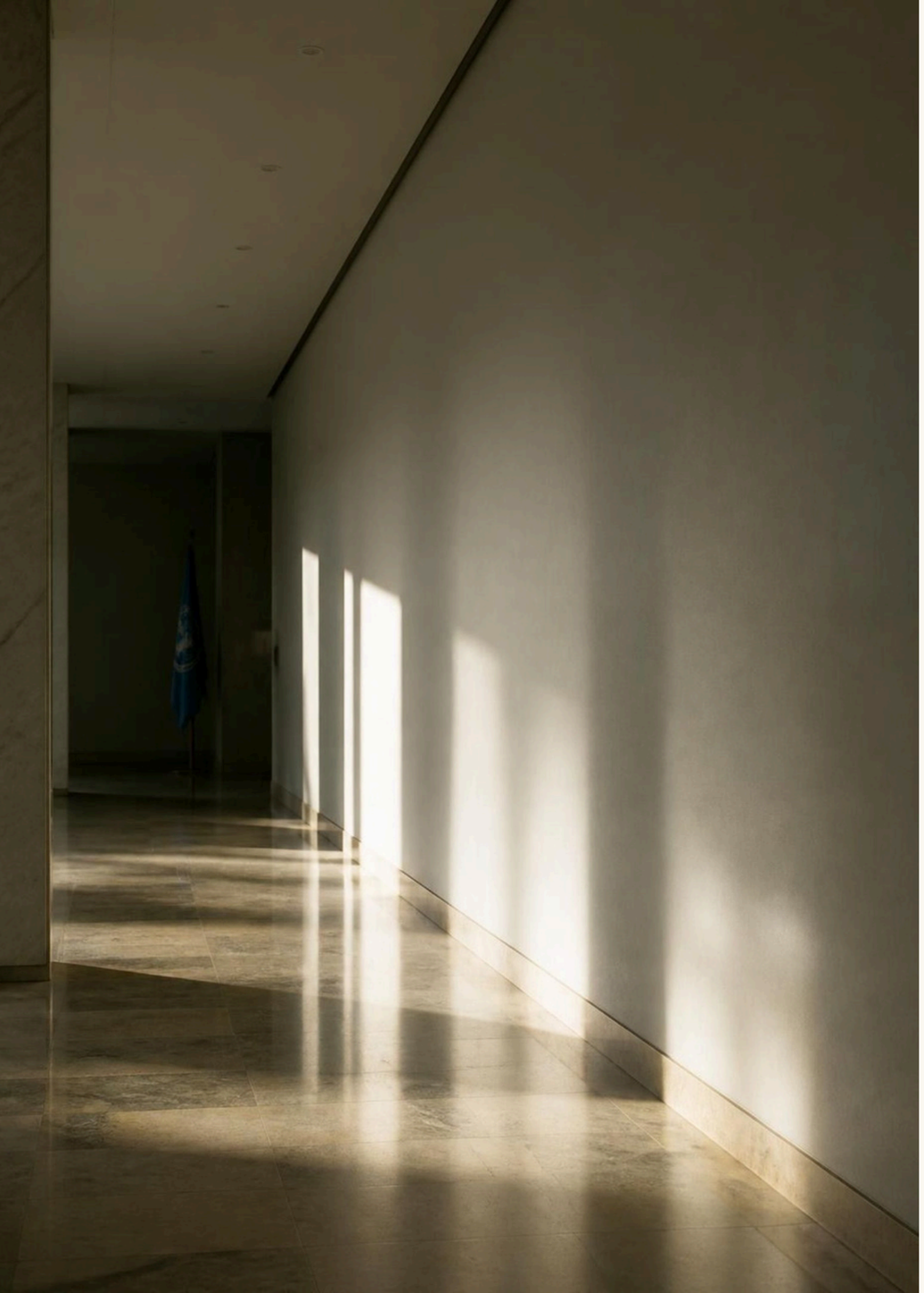
Leader: The fifth path: AI must be disarmed and placed at the service of peace.

Reader 5: From paragraphs 110 and 198: "To disarm means discrediting the assumption that technical power automatically confers the right to govern. To disarm does not mean rejecting technology, but preventing it from dominating humanity. … It is not permissible to entrust lethal or otherwise irreversible decisions to artificial systems. No algorithm can make war morally acceptable."

Path 5: The question

Leader: In short: AI is being drawn into a race for power and war, yet only human beings may decide over human life.
Sixty years ago, Saint Paul VI cried out in the General Assembly, “Never again war!” (§189). When delegations in this building debate autonomous weapons, who will carry that cry into the room?

Silence.



3. Silence (1 min)

Leader: Before Nehemiah rebuilt anything, he walked among the ruins in silence (Neh 2:12–16). We too walk a great deal: through security lines, corridors and meeting rooms, often in a hurry, between one meeting and the next, preparing statements. Let us stop walking for a moment, and stay with the path that touched us most.

About one minute of silence.

4. Sharing: experiences, anxieties, hopes

Leader: Nehemiah gathered the people and listened to their concerns before he organized the work (§8). Let us first go around the table with **a single word**: ***a hope, an anxiety or a fear you carry about AI.***

Each person says one word, without comment: for example “jobs,” “loneliness,” “truth,” “war,” “healing,” “schools.”

Open sharing

Leader: Now I invite anyone who wishes to share a little more: an experience from your mission, an anxiety you carry, or a hope for how our advocacy here might help shape the future of AI.



Closing the sharing

Leader: *Thank you. In these words we hear both the cry of the city and the first plans for its rebuilding. Let us bring them to God.*

5. Intercessions of the wise builder

Leader: At the end of the encyclical, the Pope commends the spirituality of the “wise architect” in four commitments (§§236–240). Please take turns to read the intercessions. Let us make them our prayer. After each, All respond:

All: Lord, make us wise builders of your city.

Truth and education

Reader 1: “Let us remain faithful to the truth!” (§237) May we love what is true more than what is appealing, and defend truth as a common good. Let us pray to the Lord.

Reader 2: “Let us invest in education, beginning with ourselves!” (§238) May every child have access to the education this age demands, and may we keep learning to live the digital world humanly. Let us pray to the Lord.

Relationships, justice and peace

Reader 3: “Let us cultivate relationships!” (§239) May we protect the places of real presence that no machine can replace: shared meals, community, time with the lonely and the poor. Let us pray to the Lord.

Reader 4: “Let us love justice and peace!” (§240) May we honour the hidden workers behind our devices, and help the house of nations replace the industry of war with the craft of peace. Let us pray to the Lord.

For the United Nations

Reader 5: For the United Nations, which the Pope calls an essential instrument of the civilization of love, and which he also says needs profound reform (§226). For the delegates, negotiators and staff who walk in the corridors with us, and for ourselves: may we bring into the rooms where texts are written the faces of those who will never enter them. Let us pray to the Lord.

6. A closing challenge: who is truly “super”?

Leader: One last question to take with us. At this year’s General Assembly, It was proposed that we stop saying “artificial” and speak instead of “superintelligence.” The next day, a top White House technology official told the Security Council that the United States will reject new global governance structures for AI. A week later came an executive order. It followed a White House summit with top tech executives and directs federal agencies to use "Super Intelligence" and "SI" in official communications.

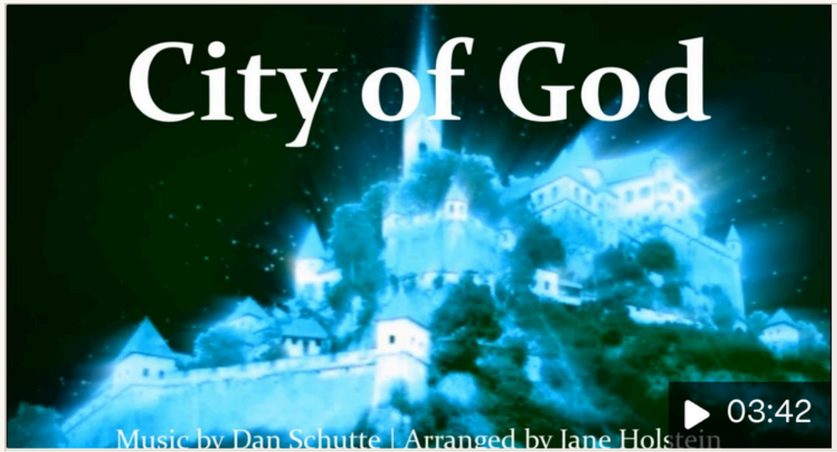
Only one intelligence above all

The builders of Babel also wanted to make a name for themselves. The encyclical reminds us that humanity must never be replaced or surpassed, and that the true “more than human” is not a technical promise but God’s grace (§§126–127).
For believers, like you and me, there is only one superintelligence above all others.

All: Yours alone is the wisdom, O Lord. Make us humble servants of your Wisdom, and never of our own towers.

7. City of God and sending

Leader: Pope Leo began his letter with two building sites, and he ends it by calling us to be “wise architects” of a civilization of love (§236). He even dares to say that the construction site is already open, thanks to many living stones joined to Christ the cornerstone.
Like Mary, who sang of a world turned toward the lowly (§243), let us now sing of the city we are called to build: not a tower to our own name, but the city of God, where the rejected stones become the cornerstone and no one is discarded.
As we sing, let us carry with us the faces and hopes we have shared this morning.



YouTube

City of God | Catholic Hymn with Lyrics | Dan Schutte & Jane Hols

"City of God" is a joyous, well-known hymn that is appropriate for the season of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and ordinary time. Its lively spirit



Blessing

Leader: May God, who made humanity magnificent, give us wisdom for this time of change. May Christ, the cornerstone, make us living stones of a city where no one is discarded. May the Spirit make us weavers of hope in the rooms where the future is decided.



Let us rise up and build!

Leader: The wall is broken and its gates are burned, but the construction site is open, and part of it lies along the UN corridors.

All: Let us rise up and build! (Neh 2:18)