



# Pope Leo XIV's Magnifica Humanitatis: The Tower of Babel and Nehemiah's Walls of Jerusalem



## The Human History of the Use of Technology

Most Rev. W. Shawn McKnight, S.Th.D.



## *Magnifica Humanitatis*

### Two biblical images

- The Tower of Babel
- The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in the Book of Nehemiah.



# The Book of Genesis

# Genesis Chapter 1



- The first story of creation
- Human beings as culmination/apex of creation
- Made in image and likeness of God
- Complementarity
- Dominion over the earth
- All of creation is a gift-it is good

# Genesis Chapter 2



- Without someone to till the soil, no point for shrubs and grass
- A more intimate depiction of creation
- Adam formed from God's ruah (breath/spirit)
- The garden and all animals for Adam

# Genesis Chapter 2



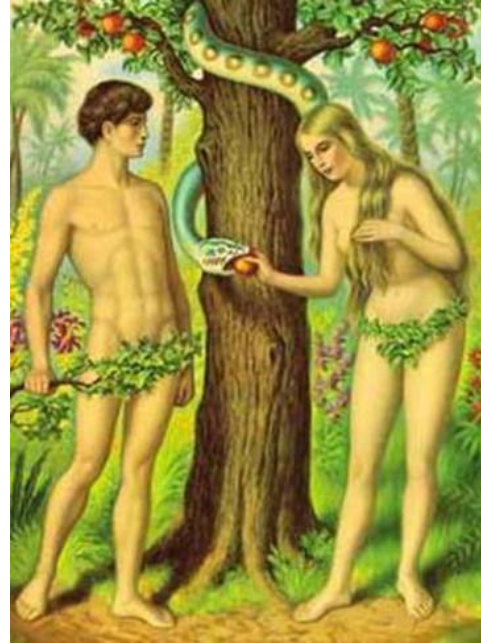
- Eve alone is Adam's companion
- Adam from mud; Eve from the flesh of a rational being
- Nakedness & lack of shame
- Perfect harmony



# The Fall

But the serpent said to the woman: “You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad.”

--Genesis 3: 4-5



# Original Sin as Original Ingratitude

Fall from grace by deception:

- From truth to falsehoods
- Looking at God with a sullen eye
- Leads to fear and shame
- A fractured communion
- A race of ingrates



# Genesis Chapter 4



- The explanation of the fractured state of society
- The story of Cain and Abel

# Original Sin as Original “Ingratitude”

Consequences of  
ingratitude:

- sense of entitlement
- resentment
- social injustice



# Genesis Chapter 11



- All of human history is an account of God dealing with humanity's ingratitude
- The story of the Tower of Babel illustrates this divinely revealed truth

# The Tower of Babel

What the story tells us:

- Use of technology in an ungrateful way
- To “make a name for ourselves”
- Result: confusion, strife, destruction
- Diversity as lack of unity
- How humans use technology today



# The Book of Nehemiah

## Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem



# *Magnifica Humanitatis*

## Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem (no. 8)

- After the Babylonian exile, a time of great vulnerability.
- Before taking action, Nehemiah fasted, prayed, and interceded for the people
- He did not impose solutions from above.
- He convened the families, assigned responsibilities and coordinated efforts.
- The city was reborn, not through the initiative of one man, but through shared responsibility of all.
- The rebuilding of relationships before rebuilding with stone.



# Salvation History



- Healing the original wound of ingratitude
- Every covenant is a structured way to remind us of our dependence on God for all good things
- The Old Testament covenants prepare for the New Covenant

# PENTECOST

## Acts 2

- God overturning the Tower of Babel
- “Speak in different tongues”
  - Unity in diversity
- Confusion, because they heard!
- Peter speaks of the works of God



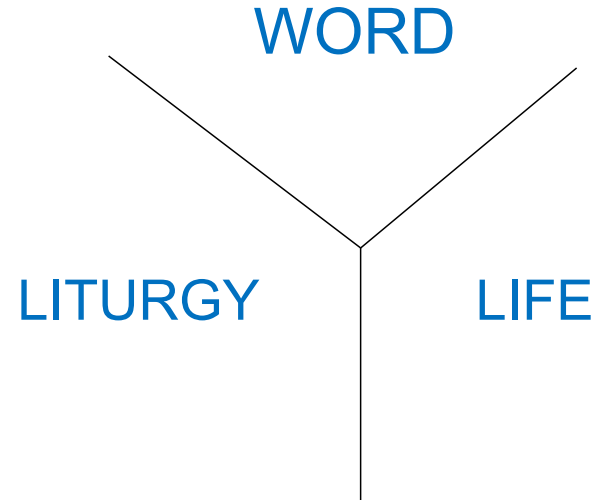
# The Mission of the Church

The healing of the original wound of ingratitude

- From arrogant pride, to humility
- From mere justice, to charity
- From blood sacrifices, to the sacrifice of thanksgiving

## Three Dimensions of Eucharistic Conversion

- Intellectual
- Moral
- Ritual



lex credendi : lex vivendi : lex orandi

# The Mission of the Church: The Eucharist

## The three “Eucharistic transformations”

- Transformation of mind / Virtue of Faith
  - Acceptance of the revelation of who we are and who we are not (humility)
- Transformation of will / Virtue of Hope
  - Our renewed relationship with God allows for “Christian optimism” (perseverance)
- Transformation of heart / Virtue of Love
  - Our active response in heartfelt gratitude (sacrificial love)



## *Magnifica Humanitatis*

The Central Role of Schools  
(nos. 143-147)

- The place where new generations can learn to seek and love the truth;
- To reflect on the meaning of life and to recognize the dignity of every person;
- To form relationships, develop critical thinking skills, and embrace solid values





# *Magnifica Humanitatis*

## Three Major Challenges

- Socio-political. Inequality of access to basic education and higher studies;
- Pedagogical. The struggle to keep pace with change and to support the integral development of students.
- Intellectual. Without love for truth, an incessant flow of information replaces the essential exercise of research, reflection and discernment.



# *Magnifica Humanitatis*

## Two biblical images



- In light of the two biblical images, the Holy Spirit challenges us today regarding our relationship with technology and the digital revolution.
- It can heal, connect, educate and protect; but it can also divide, exclude and generate new forms of social injustice





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