



Keeping Our Relationships Human

Pope Leo XIV and Elder Gerrit W. Gong insist that artificial intelligence must serve human dignity and sacred relationships.

By [Marianna Richardson](#)

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Earlier this year, I spoke at Georgetown University on artificial intelligence and faith. Around the same time, Pope Leo XIV's *Magnifica Humanitas*, an encyclical arguing that AI use must be guided by human dignity, was published. Elder Gerrit W. Gong, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, one of the highest governing bodies of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, spoke at the Athens Summit on Ethics and Artificial Intelligence. Shortly afterward, the Church of Jesus Christ released [the six-episode video workshop series Faith, Dignity, and Human Flourishing: Hearing God's Voice in an Age of Artificial Intelligence](#), featuring Gong.

Their thoughts touched my heart and helped me better understand my relationships with God and other people. Pope Leo focuses on the public systems governing AI, while Gong focuses on the relationships affected by it; both offer a similar warning: technology should support human dignity, moral responsibility, and healthy relationships. Reading and listening to the teachings of these religious leaders pushed me to examine my life and ask: Is my use of AI improving my relationships with God, my friends, and my family or weakening them?

Whom Will This Technology Serve: Insights from Pope Leo

Pope Leo places a distinctly human question at the center of the debate over artificial intelligence: Whom will this technology serve? In his encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* (a formal papal letter whose title means “Magnificent Humanity”), he argues that AI must advance human dignity and the common good rather than concentrate power in the hands of a few.

As we navigate a new technological world, Pope Leo asks us to “remain profoundly human.” He calls for robust legal frameworks, independent oversight, and shared ethical standards for AI development.

Pope Leo insists that “technology is never neutral” and that human responsibility must be clearly defined at every stage of AI development, from design to deployment. He highlights the risks of AI exacerbating inequality, unemployment, and social isolation. He urges governments and corporations to ensure fair access for all people and manage data as a common good rather than a commodity.

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The pope also addresses challenges in education and concerns about young people, emphasizing critical thinking, digital literacy, and moral discernment as safeguards against these risks. He warns against subtle forms of social control enabled by AI and calls for educating everyone about these dangers.

Understanding these concerns will strengthen freedom, truth, and our relationships with others. One of the encyclical's most striking warnings condemns delegating lethal decisions to AI systems. He asserts "no algorithm can make war morally acceptable."

Four Relationships AI Must Not Replace: Insights from Elder Gong

Like Pope Leo, Elder Gong approaches the same question through the lens of relationships. In [previous](#) AI discussions and in the church's AI video series, Elder Gong based his thoughts about AI around the four core relationships of human life:

1. With Deity (Thou): AI cannot answer prayer or offer divine truth on its own.
2. With Self (I): Each person is a child of God, not a data point.
3. With Others (They): AI should deepen, rather than diminish, our trusted human relationships.
4. With the Environment (It): Technology should honor the natural world. Individuals should seek communion with nature.

At the Athens Summit on AI Ethics, Elder Gong urged faith leaders, scholars, and technology experts to anchor AI with moral principles drawn from global ethical and religious traditions. This, he said, would ensure that AI serves the common good rather than privileging a small group of people or a single religion. "I want AI to have moral compass that can inspire and enable anyone anywhere with the gift of possibility to do good and become their best self," he said.

While in Greece, Elder Gong visited [Mars Hill](#), the same place where the Apostle Paul talked about the "unknown god." As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Elder Gong expressed his concern that AI was becoming modern society's unknown god. "In our day, too glibly, some people say that artificial intelligence is god or speak of god-like artificial intelligence, but God created man and man created artificial intelligence," he said.

Biblical Lessons

Both Pope Leo and Elder Gong reference the Tower of Babel as a cautionary tale. The downfall of the people of Babel revealed the limits of any effort, however grandiose, that arises from humanity's selfishness and pride. Aspiring to reach heaven, the people sacrificed human dignity for worldly goals without seeking God's blessing or the

common good. They used their tools and ingenuity to build something impressive, but their motives were self-exalting rather than God-centered. Because of their pride, their community fractured, their language was confounded, and they were scattered.

Elder Gong frames the Tower of Babel as an example of technology without a moral compass—a pattern that seems to be repeated today. In the Babel narrative, increased human capability led to fragmentation, not flourishing. Elder Gong warns that AI can do the same if we pursue power and magnify ego through AI. Babel is a warning about losing shared meaning. The people working on the tower experienced a confusion of languages.

Similarly, AI can distort reality, warp identity, and confuse the truth, creating a digital Babel where shared understanding breaks down.

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Religious devotions can offer an antidote to Babel while improving covenant belonging, divine communication, and human relationships grounded in love rather than algorithms.

Pope Leo uses the Bible story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls under Nehemiah as a foil to the lesson learned from the Tower of Babel. The builders of the walls of Jerusalem rediscover community and harmony. Even during trials, the Jews who came back to Jerusalem rediscovered community and harmony. Through humility and seeking the Lord's help in their work, these people recognized that their strength came from the Lord God. They looked to God for help, knowing that they could not accomplish their task without His support.

Becoming Weavers of Hope

Neither Pope Leo and Elder Gong reject AI, but they both ask how AI can be used as a positive tool for good.

Pope Leo invites us to become “weavers of hope” in our world, sharing who we are and what we have with others. Even the AI era can become a time where the Holy Spirit brings love into our lives. He invites us to be wise architects who are driven by hope for

the Kingdom of God and “committed to building the world for the common good.” He encourages all to be faithful to truth, invest in education, and love justice and peace.

Elder Gong focused on being present and experiencing the people and natural beauty surrounding us. Real experiences in the real world will bring us greater love for the world we live in. That love will improve our relationships with God and with others. Finally, he challenges us to rely on the Spirit rather than technology, practice wisdom by applying wise judgment, and choose trusted sources, anchoring our understanding in holy scripture.

My love in each of Elder Gong’s core relationships should be improved by my AI use. When it takes me away from that love or separates me from those relationships, then I need to stop and evaluate my AI use. I am grateful for religious leaders who are not afraid to teach how to keep life human. Their mandate for all of us is to use AI to further human dignity throughout the world.

About the author



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