

The Nathaniel Centre for Bioethics was established in 1999 as an agency of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference. In 2020, the Centre was formally affiliated with Te Kupenga – The Catholic Leadership Institute.

The key functions of The Nathaniel Centre include:

- developing educational opportunities in bioethics
- acting as an advisory and resource centre for individuals, and professional, educational and community groups
- carrying out research into bioethical issues, and promoting the study and practical resolution of ethical, social, cultural and legal challenges arising out of clinical practice and scientific research
- carrying out research and action to support the Church's pastoral response to bioethical issues taking into account the needs of different cultures and groups in society.

Our Philosophy

Rapid advances in science have moral, ethical, and spiritual implications at an individual and societal level. While Catholic bioethics deals with the same realities as secular bioethics, we are committed to bringing the light of the Gospel and the wisdom from the Church's moral tradition to the various issues under discussion.

Reason and faith do not exist in isolation; they guide our individual and collective search for truth and they complement each other when they meet in genuine service of those who suffer. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: "Only in charity, illumined by the light of reason and faith, is it possible to pursue development goals that possess a more humane and humanising value." In this way, the work of bioethics appears as a practical expression of the reverence we have for the gift of life.

For The Nathaniel Centre, the context of bioethics is pastoral, because the ethical issues arising in healthcare and the life sciences reflect the realities of people's lives.

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth...

POPE JOHN PAUL II

... faith consolidates, integrates and illuminates the heritage of truth acquired by human reason.

POPE BENEDICT XVI

An authentic faith ... always involves a deep desire to change the world ... to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.

POPE FRANCIS



IN THIS ISSUE...

This issue of the *Nathaniel Report* celebrates the publication of Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*.

In the editorial, **Dr John Kleinsman** places Pope Leo XIV in conversation with John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and its critique of "the machine man". Just as Steinbeck challenges the systemic mistreatment and marginalisation of refugees in early 20th century America and calls for new forms of solidarity and belonging, so too *Magnifica Humanitas* exposes how the effects of AI must be countered by inaugurating a "civilisation of love".

In the first article, **Michael Fitzsimons** asks whether AI can "deliver a common good". While acknowledging the potential technological benefits, the author warns that AI could produce mass unemployment and undermine the social fabric of communities. Drawing on *Magnifica Humanitas*, he argues that AI must be governed to protect human dignity.

In the second article, **Dr Katie Marcar** reflects upon Pope Leo's call to challenge and critique systems of dehumanisation. This critique, she argues, provides the basis for new kinds of "conversation" to take place on decolonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Several articles discuss the implications of AI for humanity from particular perspectives. In the third article, **Julianne Hickey** examines how *Magnifica Humanitas* foregrounds and amplifies the voices of women; in the fourth article, **Dave Moskovitz** provides a Jewish software engineer's perspective on AI that uses the Golem as a metaphor for soulless technological power; in the fifth article, **Rev Dr John Owens** asks what, exactly, constitutes the core anthropological problem of AI from a Catholic perspective.

In the sixth article, **Dr Lorenn Ruster** draws upon Ehsan Navai and Chris Browne's framework of "leverage zones" to explicate how *Magnifica Humanitas* provides a multidimensional critique of Artificial Intelligence.

Our penultimate article, "Never Just about War", discusses Pope Leo XIV's insistence that "just war theory" is now "outdated". The article traces the Christian tradition from the pacifism of the Early Church to the development of just war thinking in Augustine and Aquinas and beyond. A key insight is the tradition's continuity concerning the need for "just intention" in any legitimate conflict, as well as the centrality of a theological "peace" to this intention. This piece anticipates Support Life Sunday 2026 and its overall theme of peace.

In "Magnifica Humanitas: Rejecting Babel and Building Peace", **Dr Greg Marcar** further reflects upon how *Magnifica Humanitas* speaks of the plight of refugees and the displaced as the "litmus test" for our commitment to social justice.

This issue concludes with a review by **Most Rev Peter Cullinane** of *Under the Weather: A Future Forecast for New Zealand* by James Renwick.