

CHAPTER IV

Artificial Intelligence and the Concept of Catholic Church Leadership: Forming Moral Leadership Character

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Abstract

The dynamics of advances in artificial intelligence, or AI technology, today have changed many things in social interactions, including in religious communities. This article discusses the implications of advances in AI technology for church leadership, especially in ministry to God's people. The basis of Christian ethics is fundamental so that the Church can adapt to the dynamics of development while still showing its consistency as a spiritual leader who is a role model for Catholics. Wise use of AI advances helps to effectively improve the church's ministry to the people of God. Meanwhile, humanistic education to build strong character is crucial for future church leaders to integrate technological advances on the one hand with the spiritual and moral values of the church's heritage on the other hand.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), moral values, spiritual leaders, human dignity.

Introduction

The modern world is characterized by very rapid technological development. Included in this development is artificial intelligence (AI). Researchers see that AI has developed rapidly in recent years and is used in industries, organizations, and institutions (Hamari et al., 2016). The Catholic Church is one of the religious institutions affected by advances in AI. The question is, how does the church respond to this? Can the church use it to develop the kingdom of God in the world? The Gospel of Mark 16:15 states that the church has a mission to build and develop the character of its people, namely by making all

nations disciples of Christ. Becoming all nations disciples of Christ is an effort to develop the people's character. In forming this character, the church tries to shape the character of its leaders so that they have strong ethics and integrity as desired by the Creator (Fransiskus, 2013).

Technological advances such as AI are essential and relevant to the Church's mission to shape the character of its leaders because AI has changed how people, including leaders and Church members, communicate and interact (Boll et al., 2020). On the other hand, modern technological advances can create tension between the consequences of these advances and the demands of moral teachings, and this is where the Church must act, as emphasized by John Allen (2008). In other words, on the one hand, the Church is required to follow and even use technological developments so that the Church remains relevant, but on the other hand, the humanist, spiritual, and moral values that are unique to it must not be ignored.

The integration of AI technology and Christian moral values in church leadership is the focus of this article. Several researchers, such as Lewis (2001) and Bergeron (2021), emphasize that spiritual formation and human character will remain essential even though the Church lives amidst the progress of the modern world. This formation is essential so people, leaders, and prospective church leaders do not lose their true identity as Christians amidst technological progress. However, the principles of wisdom and moral considerations in adoption need to be considered, as Pope John Paul II (2005) and the Pontifical Commission for Culture (2020) emphasized. With this, synergy and harmony between Christian morality and advances in AI technology are maintained.

This article aims to understand the role and function of AI advances in the leadership mission of the Catholic Church with morals and integrity, such as the vision conveyed by Pope John Paul II (2003) that technology and morality can go together. The discussion will be aimed at providing answers to the following questions, namely: (1) pastoral care to the people; (2) community education and character development; (3) management and decision-making by leaders; (4) spiritual formation of the people; while still prioritizing Christian moral integrity. In this context, AI is analyzed for its function as a tool and not an end. This does not negate the moral, humanistic, and spiritual values at the core of church services.

Hopefully, this article can provide insight into how Church leadership can carry out the spirit of its mission amid ongoing changes and developments while

adhering to Christian values and using technological advances (such as AI) to help serve the people. This discussion is made by referring to the latest reputable literature from the church and researchers, presenting an in-depth discussion.

Literature Review

AI and its impact on the moral doctrine of the Catholic Church

The dynamic progress of artificial intelligence (AI) brings many benefits to human history, but on the other hand, it raises several challenges, especially ethical challenges and their consequences for humans. In the context of the Catholic Church, advances in artificial intelligence have given rise to in-depth reflection regarding this advancement, which has impacted people's understanding and appreciation of the Church's doctrines, especially the Catholic moral doctrines, which are its hallmark.

An article in the African Journal of Business Ethics, a journal of moral theology, reveals that the progress of AI has raised concerns regarding the disappearance of several jobs and the diminishing human social relations because they have been replaced by robots or machines (Munyaka & Motlhabi, 2009). The following consequence is the emergence of immoral acts such as fraud and manipulation of data and facts to get a job, which is contrary to human integrity and Catholic morals in particular.

Furthermore, research in the International Journal of Ethics and Systems revealed the threat that the development of AI technology poses to the concept of the human person itself if it is balanced by moral values that uphold interpersonal relationships and general welfare (Luetge, 2017). The Christian humanism movement emphasizes that every person, as the image of God (Gen. 1:27), has supreme dignity. This nobleness of human dignity cannot be erased or replaced by anything, including machines, resulting from the creativity of the human mind. For this reason, the Catholic Church reminds us that advances in AI technology should be directed towards the goal of serving humans, not conversely oppressing their dignity.

From a theological perspective, Sudarminta (2002), in her article in the Ledalero Journal, revealed the potential threat of developing AI technology and information technology to human relations with God. This analysis reveals the phenomenon of modern humans being trapped in instant comfort and happiness, which can obscure the true meaning of spirituality, namely total surrender to Allah

the Creator. Therefore, the church's task is to remind people not to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of advances in digital technology so that their relationship with God is maintained. Responding to ethical issues arising from the progress of AI, the leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, said in the Rome Call for AI Ethics that AI needs to be developed to achieve the welfare and happiness of all mankind by prioritizing values such as openness and exclusivity while maintaining the privacy of each individual (Rome Call, 2020). These ethical values are essential for ensuring that advances in AI align with the understanding of the Church's teachings about the human person.

The American Bishops (2023) see that advances in AI create both challenges and opportunities. They provide guidance, driven by the spirit of the Gospel and the social teachings of the Catholic Church, for church leaders and members in dealing with developments in AI technology. With this, the development of AI technology can create opportunities on the one hand and challenges on the other for the appreciation of Catholic spirituality and morality both by its leaders and the people of God. It is crucial for the Church today that the Church, through its figures, continues to build and renew its theological reflection and continuously analyze the implications of AI progress so that it can be helpful for humans and become a good tool in building the Church rather than bringing disaster to humans (Pope Francis, 2023).

Catholic Church communication ethics regarding AI

Advances in artificial intelligence technology have given rise to many innovations, especially in communication and social media. However, it must also be acknowledged that the progress accompanying it brings various challenges, especially ethical ones. The things that are in the spotlight are related to human freedom to express themselves, the use of personal data to create and spread fake news, and the spreading of various hate speech against other individuals or groups. Therefore, the Church wants to pay attention to communication ethics and the use of AI advances to serve and treat humans well by their noble dignity.

The Church's teachings, *Communio et Progressio*, are the basic guidelines for communication ethics in the Church. This document states that every form of social communication must be directed at serving the truth and dignity of the human person as the image of God (*Communio et Progressio*, 1971). The fundamental values in *Communio et Progressio* were then re-emphasized in the Ethical Considerations Regarding Digital Media by the Pontifical Council for

Social Communications (PCSC, 2021). In this new teaching, the Pontifical Communications Commission emphasizes explicitly that the use of AI and digital media continues to uphold the truth, respect everyone's rights, and prioritize accountability to create social justice for all.

Furthermore, in his digital ethics book, *Rome Call for AI Ethics*, Pope Francis reminded us of the importance of the principles of openness and inclusiveness in developing and implementing AI technology so as not to create discrimination that could harm vulnerable groups (Rome Call, 2020). This aligns with the Church's humanistic vision, prioritizing solidarity with others and equal dignity. In digital communication, AI should strengthen social relations that create harmony with others instead of creating division and even oppressing and bringing victims to vulnerable groups.

From a theological perspective, in the social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized that humans still need the truth amidst the flood of information created by digital communication. This truth is liberating, and it is a truth brought about by the Christian faith (Benedict XVI, 2009). Therefore, there is a great need for communication ethics that utilize advances in AI to strengthen evangelical values, namely love and justice for others. This will create peace for all people of goodwill.

With this, the communication ethics of the Catholic Church seek to create and ensure that the use of AI as a communication tool can continue to serve the truth of the Christian faith, safeguard and maintain human dignity, and not become a tool for destroying truth and human dignity that only benefits specific individuals. The Church continues to reflect on the importance of communication ethics so that technological advances, especially AI, can genuinely serve truth and human dignity.

The implications of technology, including AI, on human civilization

Modern technological advances, especially artificial intelligence (AI), have many societal implications. On the one hand, innovation born from human reason can improve the quality of life in various aspects. However, on the other hand, this progress has given rise to social disruption and challenges to initiating new ethics for civilization. A study published in the *Journal of Ethics and Information Technology* revealed that AI has two sides at once, namely that it can increase productivity and prosperity in society; however, if it is not managed correctly and well, it can cause mass unemployment, thereby creating economic inequality

(Pessoa, 2020). Over-reliance on technology can also disrupt social interactions and stifle human creativity and innovation.

In addition, research published in the same journal states that the digitalization of life and advances in AI have significantly impacted human understanding of the world and its values (Bostrom, 2006). For example, spiritual values and humanism that maintain and respect human dignity are often lost due to the dominance of instant culture and pragmatism. So the problem is how to use advances in AI technology to help humans while still maintaining universal humanist values.

From a philosophical perspective, Hanari (2018) reminds modern humans to be alert and wise when facing the technological revolution because technological progress can lead humans to a historical crossroads: whether technology helps the development of humanism or, on the contrary, destroys it. Therefore, according to Hanari, a movement is needed to create technological ethics relevant to the sustainability of a more humane civilization. Therefore, although technological advances, including AI, have made human life easier, they also have significant consequences for the values of civilization. For technology to truly help improve civilization, it must involve global wisdom and deep philosophical and ethical reflection. If not, it will give rise to new problems because it violates the principles of universal humanism.

Meanwhile, articles from P.N. Markham (2023) in the *Journal of Business Ethics* say that AI must be developed not to destroy or replace human dignity but to serve it. According to this researcher, the challenges to human dignity due to the application of AI are currently uncontrollable. The use of AI creates dehumanization. Because of this, there is a need for Catholic AI ethical principles such as justice, human autonomy, data privacy and security, transparency and accountability, etc.

Discussion

The Ethical Basis of Catholic Church Leadership

As stated in the Gospel of Mark 16:15 (Catholic Church 2001), leadership in the Catholic Church has a distinctive mission to develop the character and morality of its people. In contrast to leadership in general, church leadership emphasizes spiritual aspects as the basis of actions and policies. According to DuBrien (2013), the church leadership model is transformative. Such leadership

functions as a role model and helps its people develop better universal moral values.

Regarding the above, the leader of the universal church, Pope Francis (2013), stated that a church leader should be an example of moral appreciation for his people. Therefore, the moral basis of leadership comes from teachings passed down from generation to generation, originating from the Holy Bible and sacred teachings. As Pope John Paul II (1993) stated, ethical and moral truths result from the truth of the Christian faith itself. The core of Catholic moral teachings is the basis for church leadership, the essence of which is love and justice as taught by Jesus himself (Bible Gateway, 2023). Furthermore, in the scope of its implementation, Pope John Paul II (1993) emphasized that love is the main thing for church leaders, expressed in fair actions towards all people and communities entrusted to them. In addition, Pope Francis (2015) underscored the idea of servant leadership, which provides care and love to the flock of God's people.

Apart from the two things mentioned above, church leadership is also based on the principles of solidarity and the common good (*bonum commune*). As emphasized by Pope Francis (2013), social justice is the central pillar in his social teachings, which later became a reference for leadership in the church. This principle of solidarity and the common good aligns with the political goals (leadership) of the Church's greatest thinker, Saint Thomas Aquinas (2005).

The aim of such leadership is not only civil leadership but also church leadership. Apart from that, church leadership is also based on moral and ethical teachings that place human dignity as the most important thing, as taught by the Church's official teaching, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Catholic Church, 1997), which emphasizes the right of every person to be respected and upheld in dignity. And her dignity as the image of God. Furthermore, moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and openness are an inseparable part of the concept of church leadership, as stated by Pope John XXIII (1961), who said that honesty is the basis for upholding justice in society.

Pope Francis (2015) said that Church leadership is a call to collaborate with others, not to stand out and boast. Church leadership is not about power but devotion. Here, the concept of church leadership is demonstrated and creates its distinctiveness because it stands on a solid moral basis. This is what shapes the character of the leadership of the Catholic Church. R.J. Teske (2023), in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, explores the ethical challenges of AI for Christian

leadership, explicitly discussing the implications for the concept of the Divine Image (Image of God) included in Christian culture and education.

AI is believed to increasingly reflect aspects of the Divine Image in humans, for example, creativity, intelligence, awareness, and empathy. This raises fundamental ethical questions regarding the limits of AI and the meaning of being human. In general, it can be said that the moral or ethical basis in church leadership has a primary place. This is also related to loyalty to moral-ethical values rooted in the gospel and the example of Jesus Christ. Through this solid moral base, church leadership is expected to be able to set an example that can ultimately provide a positive transformation and become a witness in this modern world.

Challenges to the concept of moral leadership in the modern world

Technological developments in this modern era have changed many things and ways of viewing humans and reality. Pope Benedict In socio-religious terms, these conditions require church leaders to respond and adapt to them while remaining grounded in loyalty, moral integrity, and the religious values they espouse.

Furthermore, Pope Francis (2013) described that technological developments and the social changes they cause are inevitable that church leaders must face. An attitude of wisdom is critical, and loyalty to humanist values is crucial if the leadership model is to be promoted by the church. In line with this, Finkelstein (2021) stated that today's leadership styles and capacities must be contextual and adaptive to face fast development dynamics.

A real challenge resulting from the development of technology and information is the rise of incorrect information, which creates misdirection in society. Church leaders, on their part, must have strong moral character and be ethically wise to properly assess and recognize what information is accurate and what is not (Einstein, as quoted in Isaacson, 2007). Apart from that, the gap in access and technological literacy among social groups has created various economic and social inequalities. According to Marx (1818–1833), as quoted by Heywood (2007), this situation can potentially trigger conflicts and crises in social relations that threaten peace.

Regarding this matter, John Paul II (1991) emphasized the importance of creating social justice as a basis for creating peace, including the role of church

leaders in their ecclesiastical community. On the other hand, unstoppable technological progress is eroding humanist values and exploiting vulnerable groups. This triggered a moral-ethical crisis that tested the Church's leadership's ability to prioritize its spirit of religiosity and solidarity towards weak groups (Pope Francis, 2013). Another thing is the challenge of managing cultural plurality and ethical values. Castells (1997) describes the emergence of various new identities as a product of relationships and interactions between individuals and groups in a digital society. A spiritual leader is expected to be wise in assessing and responding to this new diversity, viewing it disproportionately as a threat but being able to manage it as wealth to create a harmonious community (Pope Francis, 2015).

The emergence of artificial intelligence due to technological advances has triggered the birth of various ethical probes that challenge traditional leadership concepts. AI and automation can erode the fundamental values of humanism, such as empathy and cooperation (Harari, 2016). Church leaders are expected to be wise in ensuring that the implementation of AI progress is in harmony with morality and human dignity. Therefore, today's church leaders must be able to adapt and be ready to face the dynamism of technological developments while remaining loyal to universal spiritual and moral values.

The importance of moral-ethical example in Church Leadership

Church leadership is crucial in providing a moral and spiritual example to its people. As stated by John Paul II, church leaders are not ordinary civil leaders but spiritual leaders (John Paul II, 1992). Thus, the essence of church leadership lies in exemplary or role modeling in spiritual and moral matters. This is the concept of servant leadership, which is rooted in the moral and spiritual values taught by Jesus. The Journal of Business Ethics notes that servant leadership is a leadership style in which the leader provides a role model to his subordinates by being humble and devoted to serving (Eva et al., 2018). This leadership style is based on Jesus' words in the Gospel of Mark 10:43–44 about being a servant and a servant to others. Therefore, the essence of this leadership is embracing its people with love, as Pope Francis (2013) said.

This ethical, moral role model can never be ignored for the credibility of church leadership. A leader should be able to bring and radiate love to his people. According to Pope John XXIII (1961), church leadership is not solely about being a role model or example in moral matters but also about moral and human virtues

such as courage, honesty, justice, patience, responsibility, etc. These values are what a church leader must actualize in carrying out his leadership duties and attitudes.

Furthermore, Pope Francis (2013) said that church leaders should be able to set an example and have a humble and straightforward attitude because this is an essential key to spiritual life. This humble and straightforward attitude manifests itself and reflects the people. Church leaders should also always be loyal and consistent between the policies they take as leaders and the moral-ethical teachings of the Church (Paul VI, 1965). This is important so that he remains faithful and becomes an example of practicing Christian values (John Paul II, 1992).

Church leaders' most prominent form of moral example is their pastoral service to the congregation. According to John Paul II (1994), pastoral service full of compassion and care is the highest form of servant leadership. That is where the concept of serving and being a Christian example is actualized. A heart that serves will radiate love for those served.

However, it should be noted that such leadership is not immune to criticism. An open, courageous attitude toward facing criticism shows the superiority of Christian morals lived by a leader (Francis, 2013). Leaders who can adapt and be responsive to the context of the times are needed by the church today and in the future. In this regard, a leader should be loyal to Christian values on the one hand and creative in assessing the dynamics of changing times that arise from technological developments to help the church's growth (Francis, 2013). However, the essential thing is the spiritual example. As Pope John Paul II (1992) said, A living faith is the greatest example for the people. Church leadership will lose its most basic meaning without a spiritual and moral example. That is what differentiates it from civil leadership.

Benefits of AI in Catholic Church Leadership

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has great potential for building social communication and creating new relationship networks (Paul VI, 1965). In the context of church leadership, the application of AI raises fundamental questions regarding how this technology can strengthen the mission and ministry of the church. According to an article in the Journal of Business Research, integrating AI in religious communities can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of church administration, help analyze congregational data, and provide a digital platform for deepening the congregation's faith (Marr,

2022). Therefore, the Church should understand AI to provide practical benefits for self-development. As Bill Gates said, Church transformation requires adopting technology for better understanding (Gates, 1995).

Examples of using AI for the church include analyzing data on people's needs so that church leadership can design service and pastoral care programs that are more appropriate and relevant to the people's needs. The Church can also utilize AI to provide materials and interactive digital platforms for faith education and catechesis, considering the limited teaching staff in the Church today (Francis, 2013).

In addition, data analysis through AI can help the church monitor developments in its internal and external situations. This information is helpful for strategic decision-making by Church leaders to remain adaptive, as emphasized by Peter Drucker, that performance measurement is the key to effective management (Drucker, 2008). Applying AI by the church can also increase administrative efficiency so that focusing on serving God's word to the people is more optimal under Biblical guidance (Acts 6:4).

Furthermore, AI can support the church's creativity in designing innovative pastoral and community development programs. According to Steve Jobs, creativity is the power to create new, valuable things (Jobs & Novaković, 2011). By utilizing AI, the spiritual experience and growth of people's faith can be further enriched. However, Lewis (2001) reminds us that technology is only a tool; the essence of spirituality is the spiritual experience itself.

However, the Church needs to be careful that the application of AI does not suppress human dignity (CDF, 1986), considering the potential for disruption and manipulation of data that can harm a person's privacy. Therefore, church leaders have an ethical responsibility to ensure that AI is used in harmony with human values that respect the dignity of every person (John Paul II, 2003). As John Paul II warned, humans must not become slaves to their technological products (John Paul II, 1979). The essence of AI is only a tool to support church services, not replace the personal touch of church leaders in serving their people.

Education and Character Development for Prospective Young Church Leaders

The Congregation for Clergy emphasizes the importance of formation education for prospective church leaders (Congregation of Clergy, 2016). This

education includes spiritual, intellectual, humanitarian, and pastoral formation to form personal maturity and the distinctive character of ecclesiastical leaders who can utilize modern technology for evangelization (Paul VI, 1965).

As stated in the theological journal *Religious Education*, Christian character education aims to form future ecclesiastical leaders who have moral integrity, consistency between faith and practice, and can actualize evangelical values in the context of the times (Shields & Edwards, 2005). It is essential to develop such character early, considering the complexity of leadership challenges in the digital era. As Saint Augustine emphasized, theological education, especially moral theology, is the key to opening the heart and mind to understand the truth of faith more deeply (Augustine, 1992).

Apart from theological education, character formation occurs in an educational ecosystem, allowing prospective leaders to internalize moral values, dedication to service, and responsibility. As Bennis (2009) said, character will shape leadership style, and vice versa; leadership will also shape character. Therefore, teaching methods in seminaries or ecclesiastical educational institutions also need to be adapted to the demands of the digital age. For example, utilizing information technology to provide materials and formative approaches that build readiness to face the complexity of modern leadership challenges.

An essential issue in equipping prospective ecclesiastical leaders is the development of mental and spiritual readiness for adaptation and innovation in ministry. This is where bioethics education is essential for young leaders to respond wisely to technological developments and their impact on people in line with evangelical values (Aquinas, 2005). As Darwin emphasized, an entity's survival is not determined by its physical strength but by its ability to adapt to change (Darwin, 2010). They must be ready to serve people in the digital world without losing their personal touch because the spirit of contextual service remains at the core of ecclesiastical leadership in every era.

Furthermore, character education for prospective church leaders must also be balanced with in-depth spiritual formation. The ultimate goal is to be a shepherd of God's people, not just an organizational manager. A closer personal relationship and attachment to God is needed as a source of inspiration for pastoral care. As Pope Francis emphasized, We cannot become spiritual leaders without continuing to grow in our relationship with God (Francis, 2013). This spiritual unity will form a Church leader's authority and moral example.

Conclusion

Church leadership has unique characteristics because it aims to foster and develop the morality of its people, as is the mission of the gospel to develop character and virtue. Therefore, the foundation of church leadership lies in the moral integrity of its leaders in providing an example to the congregation. The moral foundation of the Church originates from the noble values of Christian teachings such as love, justice, respect for human dignity, solidarity with others, responsibility, honesty, humility, etc. By adhering to moral principles, it is hoped that Church leadership can continue to provide good benefits amidst rapid changes in times, mainly due to technological advances.

It must be acknowledged that advances in technology and information in the current era have given rise to various new challenges that need to be addressed wisely by church leaders. The phenomenon of massive misinformation and disinformation, the destruction of religious values, and various economic and social inequalities due to unequal access to technology are some examples of problems that trigger moral and spiritual crises today. In such conditions, adaptive church leadership is needed to respond to changes intelligently and in solutions while maintaining the essence of morality and spirituality as the center of orientation for the people amidst the turmoil of the times.

One of the latest technologies that is now being widely applied is artificial intelligence (AI). The church has begun to adopt AI to increase its administrative systems' efficiency while enriching the congregation's spiritual and moral experience through interactive digital platforms. However, the application of AI technology by religious institutions still requires caution and wisdom so that it does not negate the essence of human values, empathy, and personal touch in the Church's tradition of service.

Therefore, character formation based on Christian morality is fundamental for future cadres of future church leaders to integrate advances in science and technology with the legacy of ancestral faith traditions in harmony. Through an educational curriculum that is continuously updated and rich in nuances of digital ethics, it is hoped that young church leaders will have spiritual maturity as well as intellectual agility in navigating the inevitable dynamics of today's challenges. With a balance between the moral vision of religion and the implementation of humanist and wise technology, the Church can continue to advance in realizing its mission to serve the people and build an increasingly civilized civilization amidst the waves of change.

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