



By Florida Catholic staff - Florida Catholic

By Rose Lugo

As artificial intelligence rapidly reshapes the economy, Catholic leaders across career sectors face a dilemma that extends beyond technology. How can innovation serve people without diminishing the dignity of the human person?

In South Florida, that question has taken on new urgency following [Pope Leo XIV's encyclical, *Magnifica humanitas*](#). Released in May, the pope's message challenges societal leaders to ensure that advances in AI remain rooted in ethics, accountability and respect for human dignity.

- [Beyond Babel: Pope Leo XIV's vision for the age of artificial intelligence](#)

For Mary Jo Frick, president and CEO of [Catholic Health Services of the Archdiocese of Miami](#), the Holy Father's message has arrived at a pivotal moment. The archdiocesan ministry recently drew attention beyond Catholic circles when *South Florida Hospital News and Healthcare Report* featured Catholic Health Services' efforts to review AI governance and examine the ethical implications of emerging technologies in healthcare.

"As Catholic leaders, we cannot simply ask whether a technology works," Frick said. "We must also ask whether it serves the person, respects human dignity and helps us fulfill our mission. Those are very different questions."

Founded in 1986, Catholic Health Services is celebrating 40 years of service this year as the Archdiocese of Miami's healthcare ministry. Every day, its nearly 2,500 employees care for over

7,000 individuals across Miami-Dade and Broward counties through a continuum of services that includes rehabilitation hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living communities, home health, palliative care and hospice.



Photographer: Courtesy Catholic Health Services - Residents of St. John's, a Catholic Health Services senior living center, celebrate Grandparents Day during a special event honoring the important role of grandparents in family life.

The breadth of the organization's impact extends beyond healthcare to include Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Miami, Centro Mater Child Care Services, and affordable housing for nearly 2,500 seniors.

Like virtually every healthcare organization in the country, Catholic Health Services increasingly relies on technology to support clinical documentation, operational efficiency, communications, workforce management and patient care. AI is becoming a growing part of that landscape.

Catholic Health Services aspires to be a pioneer in the ethical use of AI in healthcare – and beyond.

Upholding a legacy: respecting humanity in the AI age

According to Frick, evaluating technology through the lens of human dignity is not merely prudent leadership – it is an essential responsibility of Catholic stewardship. While she has long embraced this obligation, Pope Leo XIV's recent encyclical brought renewed urgency to the work.

"In healthcare, there is always a temptation to focus on efficiency," she said. "Technology can help us work smarter, but if we are not careful, we can lose sight of the fact that every patient is a child of God with a story, a family, fears, hopes and needs that cannot be reduced to data."



As Catholic Health Services had already embarked on a review of its AI governance framework and policies, Pope Leo XIV's encyclical provided a timely affirmation of the work, elevating its significance and prompting a deeper examination of how AI intersects with human dignity, ethical decision-making and Catholic values.

Among the questions Catholic Health Services is reviewing are how AI-generated recommendations should be evaluated, how transparency should be maintained when technology contributes to decision-making, and how the organization can identify and prevent algorithmic bias that could unintentionally harm vulnerable populations.

Frick believes these are conversations every Catholic organization should be having.

Photographer: Courtesy - Mary Jo Frick, president and CEO of Catholic Health Services of the Archdiocese of Miami, has lead the ministry in reflecting on healthcare ethics in light of Pope Leo XIV's May 2026 encyclical on AI, "Magnifica humanitas."

"We are living through a period of extraordinary technological change," she said. "The Church has always embraced tools that help people flourish, but we must also recognize that every new technology carries ethical responsibilities."

Catholic Health Services' review of AI usage is not intended to slow innovation, but instead to ensure that technology is used as a tool to improve professional input – rather than as a substitute for human judgment and human connection.

- **"Magnifica Humanitas": Pope Leo's AI encyclical warns of temptation to build future excluding God**

"The patient is a person, not a number in a bed," Frick reflected. "Artificial intelligence can help analyze information, identify patterns, and provide data that supports decision-making. What it cannot do is replace the compassion, discernment and personal encounter that are at the heart of Catholic healthcare."

Real-world applications, not just for Catholics

For Catholic Health Services, evaluating AI usage is particularly relevant in rehabilitation settings, where healing often depends on understanding the individual needs of each patient. At Catholic Health Services' rehabilitation hospitals, physicians, nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists and other clinicians work closely with patients recovering from stroke, surgery, serious injury and complex medical conditions.

"Technology may recommend a course of treatment," Frick said, "but our clinicians still need to look at the patient in front of them and determine what is best for that individual person. No algorithm can fully understand a patient's motivation, fears, family circumstances or spiritual needs."

The same principle applies throughout the ministry's continuum of care.

In skilled nursing centers, caregivers support residents living with chronic illnesses and advanced medical needs. In assisted living communities, staff help older adults maintain independence while providing support with daily activities. Home health clinicians bring care directly into patients' homes. Hospice teams accompany patients and families during some of life's most sacred moments.

In each setting, Frick believes technology should support caregivers rather than create distance between them and those they serve.

"The most important moments in healthcare happen between people," she said. "They happen when a nurse sits at a bedside, when a therapist encourages a patient to take another step, when a hospice caregiver comforts a family, or when someone simply takes the time to listen. Those encounters can never be automated."



Photographer: Courtesy Catholic Health Services

A Catholic Health Services caregiver assists a senior resident, reflecting the organization's mission of providing compassionate, faith-centered care to older adults.

Whether in education, social services, communications, businesses or parishes, Catholic leaders increasingly encounter AI in their daily work. Frick hopes the Holy Father's encyclical will encourage organizations across the Church to thoughtfully examine how these tools are being used.

"We should not be afraid of technology," she said. "But neither should we accept it uncritically. The question is not whether artificial intelligence will become part of our future. It already is. The question is whether we will guide its use in a way that reflects our values and protects the dignity of every person."

Regarding the July 2026 *South Florida Hospital News and Healthcare Report* coverage of Catholic Health Services' work on AI, Frick views the attention as an opportunity to extend the Church's witness beyond healthcare. Her hope is that leaders across the business, education, government and nonprofit sectors will undertake the same examination of how emerging technologies can be used to respect the dignity of the human person.

"As we celebrate 40 years of serving South Florida families, our mission remains unchanged," she said. "Technology will continue to evolve. Healthcare will continue to change, but every decision we make must begin with the same fundamental belief: that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and deserves to be treated with dignity, compassion and love."

In a time increasingly shaped by AI, Frick believes the Church's witness to upholding human dignity may be the most important lesson Catholic leaders can offer the world.

Editor's note: The author, Rose Lugo, Ed.D., is employed by Catholic Health Services as senior director of marketing and communications.