Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich and Freising / CAPPF International Award Jury Chair:

Laudatio on the book by Paolo Benanti, *Human in the Loop. Decisioni umane e intelligenze artificiali* and on the winners of the scholarship 2024/2025

on the occasion of the International Award Ceremony 2025

Roma, Istituto Maria Bambina, 24th October 2025

I am delighted to announce the winner of the 7th edition of the International Prize "Economy and Society" of the Pontifical Foundation *Centesimus Annus – Pro Pontifice*. **Professor Paolo Benanti** has won the prize for his book, "*Human in the Loop. Human Decisions and Artificial Intelligence*," published in Milan in 2022.

The social doctrine of the Church is not static; it can and must address ever-evolving issues. The Church must always respond to the pressing needs of its time. Benedict XVI said that "the social doctrine of the Church illuminates with an unchanging light the ever-new problems that emerge" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 12). Given the variety of topics covered, the books awarded over the years by the *Centesimus Annus – Pro Pontifice* Foundation are a beautiful illustration of the truth of this insight. Since 2012, they have addressed the issues of the common good, immigration, the development of the financial system, the principle of sustainability, Thomas Aquinas's vision of the market, integral ecology, and vulnerability. This edition's winner discusses the current issue of artificial intelligence, which Pope Leo XIV, already on the first day of his pontificate, announced as one of the most urgent issues to address in our day.

Professor Benanti is a well-known figure. He teaches moral theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and is a visiting professor at Seattle University. He serves as a consultant to various bodies of the Roman Curia, the Italian government, and the United Nations, where he is a member of the New Artificial Intelligence Advisory Board. Since his doctoral thesis, "*The Cyborg. Corpo e corporeità nell'epoca del postumano*", published in 2012, Professor Benanti has written

approximately twenty books, many of which address the problem of Artificial Intelligence. Some have been translated into various languages.

In today's award-winning book, "*Human in the Loop. Decisioni umane e intelligenze artificiali* " the author aims to help readers avoid becoming too accustomed to the instinctive use of artificial intelligence, and to continually marvel at the tool at their disposal, in order to remain free. Those who use it indiscriminately run the risk of being dictated by the tool, becoming not the master but the slave. Only a critical distance allows man to remain master of this powerful medium. The book is a great read because it is full of concrete examples and meaningful short stories that intuitively explain, even to one without expertise on the subject, the broad outlines of the historical evolution of new technologies and the issues associated with their use.

The first three chapters of the book summarizes the history of applying algorithms from the early days, explaining in clear terms the meaning of fundamental concepts such as causation, correlation, algorithm, neural networks, machine learning, deep learning, big data and so on. In these pages, Benanti aims to retrace the history of how machines somehow became intelligent.

The second part of the book aims to explain why it is important for humans, using artificial intelligence, to remain involved in decision-making processes and under what conditions this is possible.

Chapter 4 presents the question of "tragic choices," an interesting and much-discussed ethical topic: "would you kill one man to save five?". Four ethical options are presented and exemplified in detail to justify the option:

- Thomas Aquinas's principle of double effect,
- consequentialism,
- Kantian ethics of duty
- and utilitarianism.

Benanti concludes that there is probably no ethical system that can be satisfactory to everyone. If no perfect ethical system exists, it is not possible to formalize it and solve such problems using artificial intelligence exclusively. Here lies the importance of a new ethical imperative for our time:

> "It is first and foremost a question of always leaving space for man and his world of values with which to judge: this act may at times be precarious and uncertain but it is irreplaceable and cannot be replaced by the machine … keep man in the loop" (p. 126).

Chapter 5 postulates a code of ethics for artificial intelligence (*algorethics*). Artificial intelligence must be designed and programmed to cooperate with humans, whose role, as mentioned, cannot be replaced. Benanti postulates four conditions: intelligent machines must be able to intuit the purpose humans want to achieve; humans must be able to understand what the machine tends to do; the machine must adapt to the personality of the human it serves; and it must be able to adjust its assistance to the specific circumstances in which the human finds himself.

In the final chapter, Benanti proposes that the development of artificial intelligence must be governed and controlled. It is urgent to create bodies or institutional forums in both politics and economics where the ethical issues related to these questions are discussed. It is important to create a culture, an *ethos*, where questions related to the use of artificial intelligence can be openly addressed. It is not so much a matter of providing immediate answers to specific problems, but of asking questions and carefully observing developments. It is one of the most important tasks of leaders to "clearly express the underlying values and ethical assumptions that guide the company's actions and the functioning of its products." (p. 146) Only where the purpose is clear can one judge the appropriateness or inadequacy of the tool.

The great merit of Professor Benanti's reflection lies in the fact that he has long been an observer of developments related to artificial intelligence, constantly asking new questions. Today's award therefore seeks not only to recognize this single book, but Professor Benanti's entire career. With his research and publications, he has acquired a fundamental role in today's society, primarily in Italy, but also globally. Unfortunately, society seems increasingly drawn to simple answers–in our case: artificial intelligence yes or no? Benanti, on the other hand, asks questions as an informed interlocutor in a complex process. The book is an invitation to participate in this process.

Many publications are currently being released on the topic of artificial intelligence. Pope Francis also emphasized the great importance of this topic when he participated in June 2024 the *G7 Session on Artificial Intelligence*. In his speech, he pointed out various "effects of artificial intelligence on the future of humanity" and concluded that "it is up to everyone to make good use of it but the onus is on politics to create the conditions for such good use to be possible and fruitful."[1]

In January 2025, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, together with the Dicastery for Culture and Education, published a comprehensive document on the subject: *Nota Antiqua et Nova on the*

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[1] Adress of his Holiness Pope Francis: An exciting and fearsome tool: Participation of the Holy Father Francis at the G7 in Borgo Egnazia (Puglia) (14 June 2024) .

Relationship between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence.[2] Artificial intelligence must be evaluated for both its opportunities and its dangers. The document first illustrates the difference between artificial and human intelligence. While the former is very powerful in solving certain analytical tasks, the latter has a holistic nature, involves all dimensions and activities of the person, also has a contemplative function and enjoys truth. As Benanti points out, the document states: "technological products reflect the worldview of their developers, owners, users, and regulators, and with their power they shape the world and engage consciences on the level of values" (n. 41).

The document *Antiqua et Nova* lists many areas where artificial intelligence can have an impact: it can change society, human relationships, the economy and work, healthcare, education, information (through deepfakes), privacy, ecology, warfare, and relationships with God. The document invites us to "critically evaluate individual applications in particular contexts, in order to determine whether or not they promote human dignity and vocation, and the common good" (n. 110).

What we need now is a public and democratic debate on the opportunities and risks. It is time to understand what artificial intelligence means for the future of humanity. This is not just about the "technical side" of AI, but above all about who controls it, for example via the major platforms in the USA, who profits from it, and how this power is controlled. This is where the Catholic Social Teaching comes into play. The Church faces this task "of vital importance", as Pope Leo XIV explained earlier this year. In his message on the occasion of the Second Annual Rome Conference on Artificial Intelligence in June 2025, Pope Leo XIV clearly stated, that "the Church wishes to contribute to a serene and informed discussion of these pressing questions".[3]

History teaches us that only time allows us to arrive at a clearer global vision. When Galileo Galilei placed the sun at the center of the universe, thus contradicting the literal meaning of the biblical accounts of creation, he implicitly posed questions to both faith and science. Today we know that the judgement of the Church – but also Galileo's findings – did not correspond to the state of later science. Therefore, caution is required when making final judgements or even condemnations. Rather, we need a movement of thought 'in progress' in dialogue with the sciences, as Pope Francis exemplified in "*Laudato si'*" and as Pope Leo XIV continues to do.

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[2] Cf. Antiqua et nova. Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence (28 January 2025). Deutsche Fassung vgl.: Verlautbarungen des Apostolischen Stuhls Nr. 243, hg. vom Sekretariat der DBK: Antiqua et nova. Note über das Verhältnis von künstlicher Intelligenz und menschlicher Intelligenz. Bonn, 28.01.2025.
[3] Message of the Holy Father to participants in the Second Annual Conference on Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, and Corporate Governance [Rome, 19–20 June 2025] (17 June 2025) .

Pope Francis has emphasized several times that the problem of ecology can only be adequately addressed if we view the world as a gift from God to humanity. Faith always maintains its purifying function with regard to scientific discoveries. The same is true for the topic of artificial intelligence, clearly illustrated in this book by Professor Benanti. We thank him for his help in understanding the importance of the problem.

Winners of the Scholarships

I am also pleased to introduce the two winners of a *Centesimus Annus – Pro Pontifice Foundation* scholarship for the current academic year 2024-2025. The two winners are:

- Enrico Frosio
- Father Raman Susha

The first candidate, **Enrico Frosio**, is a doctoral student at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. The scholarship was awarded to him for his research on the topic "Cultivating Vulnerability: The Benedictine Paradigm of Reclamation as a Proposal for the Integral Development of the Human Person." The research addresses a topic dear to Pope Francis and is also closely related to the research that won the 2023 International Prize: Carolina Montero Orphanopoulos for her work "*Vulnerabilidad. Hacia una ética más humana*".

Mr. Frosio explores how monks addressed the problem of vulnerability in medieval monasteries to demonstrate how the experience of illness fosters, in both caregivers and those cared for, an awareness of their own insufficiency and the need to build an alliance with others, marked by the filial solidarity that comes from having a common Father.

Father Raman Susha comes from Ukraine and currently studies at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. He received a scholarship for his research on *"Mythodesign in the Digital Age: An Ethical and Psychosocial Investigation of Political Technology."*

Father Susha has a background in digital techniques and intends to further his study of modern technologies of hybrid conflicts of warfare. The role of the mythodesigner, the specific object of his research, is to create a civilization through the development of ideas, history, symbols, anthems, and messages. Father Susha intends to examine this new technology through the lens of the Social Doctrine of the Church.