DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

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01 What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

Artificial Intelligence refers to systems that perform tasks resembling certain forms of human intelligence. It is classified into two main types – traditional AI and generative AI. Traditional AI analyzes data, identifies patterns and provides a decision or output. Spam detection, biometric recognition, Siri or Alexa are all examples of traditional AI.

Generative AI is a type of AI that can create new content rather than just digging through data and recognizing patterns. It can create new text, images, audio and video. ChatGPT, Copilot, music AI tools, Canva AI are all examples of applications that use generative AI.

02 What is the purpose of AI?

In practical terms, AI is intended to solve problems, automate repetitive tasks, improve communication and interaction between human beings, and analyze data.

Advocate Perpective

Advocates have stated it can serve humanity by improving our functioning in productivity, creativity, health and well-being and other important areas.

Critic Perspective

Critics have stated that AI was created to provide economic stimulus, generate wealth and create competitive advantages among nations.

03 What happens to the information I enter into AI?

The AI breaks down text that is entered into a prompt or question into smaller parts (often called tokens) and assigns numerical values to them. It then compares those values to patterns it learned during training. Based on this comparison, the AI generates a response using probabilities—selecting what it determines is the most likely or relevant output. Because of this, AI does not have personal awareness, memory, or true comprehension. Its responses are based on statistical patterns rather than human-like understanding.

VERIFICATION & PRIVACY

Accuracy & Security

04 How accurate is content generated by AI? Is it always correct?

Because AI content is based on pattern analysis and probability, it is not always accurate. AI does not verify facts in the way a human would. If the AI's training data contained errors, gaps, or biases, those issues can carry over into its output. In some cases, AI can also generate fabricated information, often referred to as hallucinations. These may include realistic sounding but incorrect:

- Citations
- Book titles
- Articles
- Legal cases

AI is best used as an assistant—not a decision-maker. The user is ultimately responsible for verifying accuracy and making informed judgments based on the information provided.

05 Are all AI tools equally safe or appropriate to use?

No, AI tools are not equally safe or appropriate. They vary significantly in how they handle data privacy, bias, age-appropriateness, and factual accuracy. To understand the risks, consider these key differences:

Data Privacy: Public tools (like the base versions of ChatGPT or Gemini) may use your conversations to train their models unless you opt out. Enterprise or paid tiers generally offer stricter data confidentiality.

Content Moderation: Tools geared toward general audiences have strict guardrails against generating hate speech or explicit content. Uncensored or open-source models lack these safeguards, making them unsafe for younger users.

Accuracy & Hallucinations: AI can confidently present false information as fact. Tools specialized for coding or academics are not immune to errors, meaning outputs always require human verification.

Age Appropriateness: Some platforms are designed specifically for K-12 students with heavy moderation, while others allow mature themes unsuitable for minors.

Who Owns Your Data? Safeguarding Privacy in the Age of AI

06 What safeguards can be used to protect our data and personal information in the world of AI?

Protecting data and personally identifiable information (PII) is most important while using generative AI applications. These AI apps are programmed to process and store data from user inputs, and this stored data could be visible to future users of the AI app.

Mandatory Data Rule:

Never input sensitive data like passwords, keys, PII, or financial details into generative AI. In evaluating what information to provide to an AI app treat each input as if it could be reviewed by other users.

The AI app's data retention and privacy policies should be reviewed first and it should be determined whether or not the input is used for training. Be mindful when uploading files into a generative AI app. These files could contain hidden metadata or sensitive information. It is generally more secure to paste plain text into the app.

CATHOLIC DISCRENMENT & PAPAL TEACHING

Ethics, Formation & Common Home

07 As a Catholic, how do I write a prompt for AI to get the best results?

It is best to begin by invoking Catholic values, asking that the content serves people, builds community and respects human dignity.

1. Clear Context
It is important to provide the AI with clear context: tell it what the goal is and give it all important background information that is available.

2. Specify
Be as specific as possible in the prompt as to the tone, length and format that is desired.

3. Source Verification
Once the response is presented do not hesitate to ask the AI to verify its sources and do any additional fact checking to ensure maximum accuracy and integrity of the content.

08 What are Pope Leo and other Church leaders saying about AI?

From the inception of his papacy, including his very choice of a name, Pope Leo XIV has called on the Catholic faithful and all people of goodwill to take a broad and reflective view of AI, considering its moral implications and its potential impact on humanity in many important areas including work, health, education, family, the environment and truth and democracy.

First Encyclical: His first encyclical, Magnifica Humanitas, "On Safeguarding the Human Person in the time of Artificial Intelligence," contains many powerful insights on the meaning, potential benefits and potential harms posed by AI. Prior to its release, Pope Leo approved the creation of the new Interdicasterial Commission on Artificial Intelligence to coordinate the ongoing response of the Church to developments in AI.

The Vatican began to voice interest and concern about AI during Pope Francis's leadership of the Church. The Pontifical Academy for Life published the Rome Call for AI Ethics in 2020 and in January of 2025 the Vatican Dicasteries for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Culture and Education published the definitive document Antiqua et Nova, on the relationship between artificial intelligence and human intelligence. With the emphasis placed on AI by the Holy Father and the many Church documents that have already been published on the subject, there is a rich and deep reserve of information and guidance on AI from the Universal Church.

NOT JUST A TOOL

Catholic Ethics and the Use of AI

09 What are some moral considerations when using AI as a Catholic?

In deciding how to use AI, Catholics are called to a discernment that is grounded in the principles of Catholic Social Doctrine. Considerations might include:

- Is human life and dignity prioritized and respected?
- Is the common good being served in the use of AI, and not just my specific task or purpose?
- What is the impact of my AI use on our common home?
- Does my use of AI reflect reverence for the truth of the Gospel, or does it distort reality and serve to misrepresent truth?
- Is there equal access among all brothers and sisters, including the poor and those in underdeveloped nations, in the use and decision-making around the continued development of AI?

The documents of the Universal Church, including Antiqua et Nova and Magnifica Humanitas, offer in-depth and formative insights on the moral dimensions of AI.

10 What is the impact of AI on education?

AI has great potential to improve education by enhancing instruction and creating more personalized learning experiences for students. Nonetheless, it must be implemented thoughtfully and prudently, with continued commitment to promoting academic integrity, developing students' critical thinking skills, protecting privacy, and ensuring the fairness and reliability of AI-generated information.

11 What is the impact of AI on the environment?

AI data centers require massive amounts of natural resources and energy to build and maintain, including water, land, precious minerals and fossil fuels.

100,000 Homes
Electricity equivalent consumed by just a single hyperscale data center

5 Million Gal/Day
Water used by a large data center, equivalent to a city of 30k–50k people

These data centers already account for over half of all new electricity demand growth in the United States and just one hyperscale data center can consume as much electricity as 100,000 homes. A large-scale data center can use up to five million gallons of water per day, the rough equivalent of a city of 30,000 to 50,000 people. Because of this significant energy and resource usage, many, including Pope Leo and other church leaders, have raised concerns about the impact of AI on our common home. The economic and productivity benefits of AI must be weighed against the major impact on natural resources and ecological conditions that are needed for human flourishing.

LOCAL CHURCH APPLICATION

Diocese of San Bernardino

12 What is the policy of the Diocese of San Bernardino on the use of AI in ministry?

The diocese does not presently have a formal policy on AI use in ministry. It recognizes the value of AI as a tool to enhance many areas of ministry and authorizes its use on a case-by-case basis.

Contracted Resource: Magisterium AI

The diocese has contracted with Magisterium AI app as a resource for local church ministers because it has been determined to be the most accurate AI tool for referencing information and documents of the Catholic Church.

At the same time, the diocese echoes and affirms the guidance of Pope Leo XIV and leaders of the Universal Church that Catholics should view and utilize AI with moral discernment that measures its impact to the dignity of the human person, the common good and all tenants of Catholic Social Teaching.