

Child Dignity in the Artificial Intelligence Era

"Developments in the field of artificial intelligence pose new challenges for the defense of human dignity, justice and labor... this powerful technology risks turning human relations into mere algorithms."

— Pope Leo XIV, May 2025

Opening Reflection

At a moment when artificial intelligence is reshaping human life in profound ways, we are called to reflect upon its meaning for the youngest among us. The era of artificial intelligence is not only a technological event — it is a moral moment. It compels us to ask who we are, what we value, and how we will preserve the sacredness of every human being, especially of every child. Safe and trustworthy AI should be seen as a right, being a revolutionary technology that will help people unlock their potential and shape their future. In our pursuit of progress, we must not lose sight of the most fragile, the voiceless, the unseen. Young people deserve technology that expands opportunity and protects their well-being.

Human Dignity and the Child

The digital environment was not built having children in mind, while offering extraordinary possibilities for children, such as access to knowledge, opportunities for creativity and tools for learning, it has also become a space where children's innocence is threatened and their dignity is tested. As AI systems are increasingly imitating care, and becoming human-like, simulating affection and attachment, we must ask what is a stake for children and their emotional and cognitive development. When used well, artificial intelligence can support literacy, expand access to tutoring, help children discover new interests, and empower young people to learn safely at their own pace. However, AI is also being used to create and distribute child sexual abuse material, to manipulate images and to violate fundamental rights of the most vulnerable users. These global challenges require a global solution: protection and safety must be placed at the center of an international effort.

An Ethical Responsibility for the Digital Age

We affirm the right of every child to live, grow, and dream in safety. Innovation and creativity must walk hand in hand with ethical responsibility. Artificial intelligence, like every human creation, must remain at the service of humanity — not above it. Governments, industries, educators, and faith communities share a sacred duty: to ensure that technology protects rather than endangers, uplifts rather than degrades, enlightens rather than exploits.

A Call to Action

In this spirit, we, gathered under the guidance of Fondazione Child and the Child Dignity Alliance, united with partners across faiths, nations, and disciplines, call for a new human covenant for the digital age — one that places the dignity of every child at its heart. We commit ourselves to the following six pillars of action:

- **Protection and Safety:** Establish robust safeguards and mechanism that seek to prevent and respond to online and AI facilitated abuse, exploitation, and manipulation of children.
- **Education and Empowerment:** Promote digital and emotional literacy so that children parents, and educators can navigate technology with awareness, wisdom, and resilience.
- **Ethical and Transparent Technology:** Encourage the development of AI systems grounded in human values — transparency, accountability, fairness, and compassion.
- **Global Governance and Accountability:** Strengthen international cooperation to ensure that laws, standards, and institutions uphold children's rights across nations and digital platforms.
- **Research and Innovation for Good:** Foster collaboration among academia, civil society, and the private sector to harness AI for child well-being, health, education, and inclusion.
- **Interfaith and Intergenerational Solidarity:** Unite voices across generations and beliefs to renew our shared commitment to protect and nurture the humanity of every child.

This declaration is a call to conscience and to action. The age of artificial intelligence must not be an age of moral indifference. Each innovation must be in pursuit of advancing the common good. We invite leaders, institutions, and citizens of every nation to join this covenant of responsibility — to ensure that technology, guided by wisdom and love, becomes a means of protecting what is most precious: the dignity, imagination, and hope of our children.

Signed and adopted at the High-Level Meeting on Child Dignity in the Artificial Intelligence Era, Vatican City, 13 November 2025

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