



St. Luke's East Hampton Reflections from Fr. Ben

Just over one million cars – many from Boston and some from New York City - drove up the Maine turnpike over Memorial Day weekend. In the old days, traffic going into the first toll plaza would back up for miles. Now with EZ-Pass, you can go through that Toll Plaza at 65 miles an hour or faster. The only thing that slows you down is that Subaru in front of you with a canoe on the roof or the occasional moose that wanders onto the road. I love the technology and efficiency of EZ-Pass. I, however, also love Bob, a member of my former congregation who worked as a toll-collector on the Maine turnpike for his entire career who got great joy by making change, smiling at and saying hello to customers, and offering advice to those who were lost or looking for help. I love the technology and efficiency of the robots who mow the St. Luke's lawn. I wonder, however, about the guys who used to get paid to mow our lawn and, unlike my toll-taking friend, were not ready for retirement when their jobs disappeared. I wonder about their kids, left behind in a world with fewer and fewer opportunities for meaningful blue-collar work.

It has been interesting to hear responses to the Pope Leo's *Magnifica humanitas* from Silicon Valley. Many feel that the Pope is somehow against AI. Those comments are interesting because if you read the briefest summaries, you quickly see that the encyclical isn't about technology or even about God. It is about people, about the dignity of people and the dignity and meaning of work. I know that EZ-pass and our Robotic lawnmowers are not the same as AI. Their stories, however, give the briefest glimpse of Leo's message.

In the same way that Pope Francis used *Laudato Si* to help people reflect on the impact of climate change on other human beings, particularly the poor. Pope Leo uses *Magnifica humanitas* to help people look at the impact of AI on everyone, not just those who will profit from its use. One comment this week said the church is threatened because AI gives people the power to become like gods or could even become like a god itself. This sounds intriguing until you realize that there have always been other gods out there. People have always had the power to be like gods themselves. We have the ability to create and destroy, to bless and to curse, and to change not only our destiny but that of the world itself. We can seek a higher purpose, work for the common good, and follow the rule of law. We can also throw all those things out and work only for ourselves. The coming of AI has brought us to a hinge moment when we can choose to model "magnificent humanity" or not.

I am not suggesting that we go back to pre-EZ Pass or pre-robotic mower days or that we "make work" to give people jobs. The AI genie is out of the bottle. We need to use it and make sure that the next generations will use it even more fully and wisely than us. How we do so will determine what happens next.

On the Trinity - Wisdom with a little humor

This Sunday is Trinity Sunday. You will hear more on Sunday morning but sometimes a little humor gets through better than a sermon. Want to understand or at least see why most metaphors don't work? Check out the Youtube video "St Patrick's Bad Analogies" [here](#).