



DICASTERIUM PRO EVANGELIZATIONE
*SECTIO DE INSTITUTIS EVANGELIZATIONIS
IN MUNDO*

MESSAGE
47th WORLD TOURISM DAY
“Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to redesign tourism”

27 September 2026

World Tourism Day, which each year on 27 September invites the entire global community to reflect on the meaning and value of this extraordinary form of encounter among peoples, proposes this year a challenge of historical significance: to understand the role that artificial intelligence and digital transformation can play in imagining the tourism of the future.

The Dicastery for Evangelization welcomes this theme with interest and pastoral responsibility. It is not merely a technical or economic issue: rather, we are called to reflect on how the human person is to be promoted through tourism, and how new technologies can truly serve the dignity of every person in view of the common good, as Pope Leo XIV affirms in the recent Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas*: “Technology has the power to heal, connect, educate and protect our common home; but it can also divide, exclude and generate new forms of injustice. In the abstract, technology in and of itself is not a solution to humanity’s problems, just as it is not inherently evil. In practice, however, technology is never neutral, because it takes on the characteristics of those who devise, finance, regulate and use it.” (*Magnifica Humanitas*, 9)

1. We live in a time of profound transformation. Artificial intelligence is not merely a tool; it generates a new culture, with a new form of mediation between the person and the world. Like every mediation, it carries extraordinary possibilities, but also challenges that must be interpreted with wisdom and discernment. As Pope Leo XIV stated: “Artificial intelligence has certainly opened up new horizons for creativity, but it also raises serious concerns about its possible repercussions on humanity’s openness to truth and beauty, and capacity for wonder and contemplation. Recognizing and safeguarding what characterizes the human person and guarantees his or her balanced growth is essential for establishing an adequate framework for managing the consequences of artificial intelligence.” (Address to participants in the Conference “Artificial Intelligence and Care of Our Common Home”, 5 December 2025). Therefore, the answer is not rejection of technology, but its human use. Artificial intelligence can become a valuable ally of sustainable and accessible tourism, provided it remains a tool at the service of the person and does not become a system of control, discrimination, or exclusion.

2. Tourism arises from a desire as old as humanity itself: to know the other, to discover new horizons, to be surprised by the beauty of creation and the richness of cultures. This desire is deeply human and also carries a spiritual dimension. It echoes the thirst for the infinite that dwells in every human heart. Today, artificial intelligence can certainly facilitate travel: making information more accessible, personalizing experiences, optimizing routes, and reducing environmental impact. All this is valuable. But no technology can ever replace the gaze that rests for the first time upon an unseen landscape, the handshake between strangers, the emotion before a work of art or a sacred place. Encounter with the other, with cultures different from one's own, can become an opportunity for growth. It is not about erasing differences or standardizing cultures, but about fostering an exchange that enriches everyone. We therefore invite all actors in the tourism sector—institutions, operators, travelers—to safeguard this irreducibly human dimension of tourism. Pope Leo reminds us that “new technologies open up a horizon extending in directions that are imaginable but not yet fully predictable. This complicates the assessment of their potential impact and the long-term effects they may have on both the dignity of individuals and the common good” (*Magnifica Humanitas*, 4). Digital platforms and artificial intelligence systems must be designed and used in such a way as to foster authentic encounters between people and peoples, and not reduce them to mere virtual experiences or consumption of images. There is a human and personal dimension that cannot be nullified without losing the deeper meaning of travel itself. This dimension should always be recognized, especially by those working in tourism, so that a heritage passed down from generation to generation is not lost.

3. There are, nonetheless, good reasons to look with healthy realism and positivity at the potential of artificial intelligence applied to tourism. When guided by an ethical vision that places the dignity of the person and respect for creation at its center, technology can contribute significantly to making tourism more equitable, accessible, and sustainable. Consider persons with disabilities, who through intelligent digital systems can now access places and experiences previously closed to them. One may also think of local communities in developing countries, which can find in digital platforms new channels to promote their cultural and natural heritage. At the same time, it is possible to monitor and reduce the environmental impact of tourist flows, contributing to the care of creation, as Saint John Paul II affirmed: “science and technology are a wonderful product of a God-given human creativity, since they have provided us with wonderful possibilities, and we all gratefully benefit from them” (Address to scientists and United Nations representatives, Hiroshima, 25 February 1981). In this sense, artificial intelligence can become an instrument of fraternity and justice, not only of efficiency—provided that technological choices are guided by an authentic orientation toward the common good and not merely by profit.

4. Pastoral clarity also requires us to look at the challenges accompanying this digital transformation. The first is the lack of humanistic depth when the tourist is treated as a mere object, travel as a product to be optimized, and cultural encounter as a spectacle to be consumed. In such cases, something essential is lost. The tourist experience risks being flattened into what the algorithm predicts as desirable, preventing the discovery of the wonder of personal encounter, which is often the most precious discovery. Wonder at

beauty is, in fact, a perception that always goes beyond, leading one personally to discover new destinations that technology does not allow. Astonishment is a true form of knowledge that also opens to the spiritual dimension and leads to contemplation of God, source of beauty and Creator of the world. There is also the challenge of digital exclusion. Those without access to technology, those unable to use it, and those living in regions with poor connectivity risk being further marginalized in a sector—such as tourism—that for many communities represents an essential source of livelihood. An unjust digital transformation can deepen inequalities rather than reduce them. Finally, the challenge of surveillance cannot be ignored. The massive collection of traveler data, if not adequately regulated, can become a tool of control incompatible with human freedom and dignity. It is therefore desirable that international institutions promote clear and binding regulatory frameworks that guarantee respect for fundamental rights in the age of artificial intelligence. In this context, the words of Benedict XVI remain highly relevant: “The key to development is a mind capable of thinking in technological terms and grasping the fully human meaning of human activities, within the context of the holistic meaning of the individual's being ... But human freedom is authentic only when it responds to the fascination of technology with decisions that are the fruit of moral responsibility (Caritas in Veritate, 70).

5. We are called to rediscover the profound meaning of travel: not as an escape from reality, but as a journey toward creation, toward the other, and toward God. Tourism, when lived with authenticity and responsibility, can become a school of fraternity—an experience that expands both heart and mind, educating toward the richness of diversity and solidarity. Those working in the tourism sector, as well as those engaged in the pastoral care of tourism, are therefore called to vigilance. Artificial intelligence can redesign tourism and make it more attractive. Yet it is our responsibility to ensure attention to every person who sets out on a journey. It is necessary to preserve the vision of the human person as relational, free, capable of wonder, and bearer of an inalienable dignity that no algorithm can ever fully capture.

✠ Rino Fisichella
Pro-Prefect

26 May 2026
Memorial of St Philip Neri

This translation into English is not an official document; the Italian text is the official reference