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Artificial Intelligence and the Church's Social Teachings in Addressing Poverty and Promoting Justice in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract: The potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to address important societal concerns, like poverty and inequality, is growing in importance as it continues to influence society's future. Currently, there is no existing knowledge to showcase the interaction of AI and the Catholic Social Teaching in addressing poverty and promoting social justice. Therefore, this essay examines the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Catholic social teachings, particularly in addressing poverty and promoting justice in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. It explores how AI can support the Church's mission to help marginalized communities while aligning with key principles such as human dignity, solidarity, and a preferential option for the poor (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.). The study assesses AI applications in healthcare, education, and social services, addressing ethical concerns like bias, privacy, and the potential to exacerbate societal inequalities (Pope Francis, 2020). It offers suggestions for leaders, developers, and faith-based organizations on how to guarantee that AI is created and applied ethically, in line with the moral principles of the Church. The objective of this study is to evaluate how AI can align with Catholic social teachings to address poverty, promote justice, and ethically support marginalized populations while mitigating challenges like bias and privacy concerns. To collect data, the study shall apply a mixed methods approach. Qualitative interviews with various stakeholders and Google surveys for quantitative input shall be used. Future studies on the use of AI in communication networks in the Catholic Church will be necessary.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Social teaching of the Church, poverty, justice

1.1 Introduction

The Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi is a vast diocese in the metropolitan region of Nairobi. Covering Nairobi City and Kiambu County, it spans approximately 3,721 square kilometers and includes 120 parishes serving around 4.03 million Catholics (Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, ND). Like any other Catholic diocese, the Archdiocese fulfills an integral evangelization role in the lives of its population

while also caring deeply about the temporal needs of those entrusted to it. Concern for the poor population of society is an integral part of the Church's ministry in the world. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming a cornerstone of technological advancement globally. From automating routine tasks to enabling complex data analysis, its potential goes far beyond mere convenience; it can profoundly shape how societies address fundamental human issues. One of the most pressing areas where AI can be both transformative and controversial is in addressing poverty and social injustice. This presentation explores the intersection between AI and Catholic Social Teaching (CST), particularly in how this interaction can contribute to alleviating poverty and promoting justice in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

The 21st century is witnessing unprecedented technological advancements, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerging as a powerful tool capable of transforming nearly every aspect of human life. From healthcare and education to agriculture and social welfare, AI is increasingly used to optimize service delivery, analyze complex data, and improve human decision-making. While these developments hold great promise for addressing persistent social challenges such as poverty, inequality, and exclusion, they also raise profound ethical, moral, and theological questions, especially within faith-based institutions such as the Catholic Church. This study explores the intersection between Artificial Intelligence and Catholic Social Teaching (CST), with particular focus on the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. Rooted in principles such as human dignity, solidarity, the common good, and a preferential option for the poor, CST offers a moral framework that calls for inclusive, compassionate, and just responses to human suffering. As the Church continues its mission to serve marginalized communities through healthcare, education, and social outreach, the integration of AI presents both opportunities and challenges that must be examined critically and ethically. Globally, the Church has begun to engage with these issues, as seen in the *Rome Call for AI Ethics* (2020), which outlines key values transparency, inclusion, responsibility, impartiality, reliability, and privacy that should guide AI development. Regionally, many African nations are beginning to adopt AI in development, though often without strong ethical oversight or inclusion of faith-based perspectives. Locally, the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi remains a key actor in social transformation, yet there is little documented engagement with AI to enhance its work with the poor and vulnerable. This document aims to assess how AI can be ethically aligned with Catholic Social Teaching and practically applied within the Archdiocese of Nairobi to support its mission in healthcare, education, and social services. It also seeks to identify existing gaps, ethical concerns, and opportunities for the Church to responsibly engage with technology in promoting justice and alleviating poverty. By offering a theological and ethical lens on AI integration, the study contributes to both academic scholarship and practical ministry within the Kenyan and global Catholic context.

1.2 Background of the Study

The 21st century is marked by rapid technological change, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerging as a transformative force capable of reshaping human life across economic, social, political, and spiritual spheres. Globally, AI has been applied in sectors such as healthcare, education, finance, agriculture, and governance to improve efficiency, access, and equity. Yet alongside its promise, AI introduces ethical concerns related to data privacy, bias, exclusion, and the threat of deepening social inequalities (UNESCO, 2021). The Catholic Church, recognizing both the risks and opportunities of AI, has taken a proactive stance in ensuring that emerging technologies align with human dignity, solidarity, and the common good. Through initiatives like the *Rome Call for AI Ethics* (Pontifical Academy for Life, 2020),

the Church urges developers and institutions to adopt ethical AI principles that protect the vulnerable and uphold justice.

In the African context, countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya are increasingly investing in AI to accelerate development. However, the digital divide, limited infrastructure, data governance challenges, and ethical oversight pose obstacles to inclusive implementation (AUDA-NEPAD, 2021). African faith-based organizations though central to community development, have largely been left out of national technology strategies. Yet they remain vital stakeholders, especially in marginalized areas where the Church is often the primary provider of education, healthcare, and social welfare.

In Kenya, AI adoption is rising through applications like digital agriculture, mobile health solutions, e-learning platforms, and government e-services. The Catholic Church, particularly the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, plays a significant role in serving vulnerable populations through its hospitals, schools, Caritas programs, and the Catholic Justice and Peace Department. However, there remains a lack of structured integration of AI technologies into Church-based services. While national policy acknowledges AI's importance in transforming Kenya into a digital economy (Kenya National Digital Masterplan, 2022–2032), faith-based contributions and ethical reflections rooted in Catholic Social Teaching have not been fully explored in these strategies.

The Catholic Church's Social Teaching, founded on principles such as the dignity of the human person, solidarity, subsidiarity, the common good, and the preferential option for the poor, offers a moral compass for how AI should be adopted and used, especially in a society where inequality, unemployment, and poverty persist. In informal settlements such as Kibera, Mathare, and Dandora, where the Archdiocese ministers to many vulnerable groups, AI could enhance healthcare delivery, improve educational outcomes, support economic empowerment, and make Church services more responsive and inclusive. Therefore, there is a critical need to examine the intersection of AI and Catholic Social Teaching in the Kenyan context, particularly within the structures of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. Doing so can illuminate how technology can ethically support the Church's mission to alleviate poverty, promote justice, and care for the marginalized. More critically, many faith-based organizations in Africa, despite being deeply involved in social services, have not yet meaningfully engaged with AI. This represents a missed opportunity for the Church and its institutions to use technology to amplify their mission of social justice, especially as the continent continues to struggle with deep poverty and inequality. Ethical and pastoral concerns must also be considered in a context where digital literacy is uneven, and technological solutions risk reinforcing the digital divide if not implemented inclusively.

At the local level, the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, covering both Nairobi City and Kiambu County, serves a large and diverse population through more than 120 parishes and a wide network of schools, hospitals, and charitable programs (Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, n.d.). The Archdiocese has played a key role in supporting the poor and vulnerable through initiatives in education, healthcare, microfinance, refugee support, and women and youth empowerment. These efforts are deeply rooted in Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which emphasizes the dignity of the human person, the common good, solidarity, and a preferential option for the poor (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.).

Despite its active involvement in social transformation, the Archdiocese has yet to fully embrace AI technologies as tools for enhancing its mission. There is no public record of AI being implemented in its healthcare facilities, schools, or community outreach services. Yet, the potential for AI in this context is significant. AI-powered diagnostic tools could improve medical care in under-resourced mission hospitals. Personalized AI learning platforms could support students in low-income communities. AI-enabled data analysis could enhance the efficiency and impact of social services, allowing Church-based organizations to better understand and meet the needs of the communities they serve. However, without proper frameworks and ethical guidelines, the integration of AI could also bring challenges. Concerns such as data privacy, algorithmic discrimination, and unequal access to technology must be addressed to ensure that the adoption of AI aligns with CST values and does not worsen existing inequalities. There is a need to critically examine how AI can be ethically applied in the Archdiocese of Nairobi to uphold the dignity of all, especially the poor, while promoting justice and inclusion.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming how societies address issues like poverty, education, and healthcare. However, its ethical application within faith-based contexts such as the Catholic Church remains limited. The Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi continues to face widespread poverty and social inequality. Yet, there is little evidence of how AI is being used to enhance its mission of justice and service to the poor (Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, n.d.). While Catholic Social Teaching (CST) promotes values like human dignity, solidarity, and a preferential option for the poor (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.), the lack of guidance on integrating AI in line with these principles presents a major gap. Without ethical frameworks and practical strategies, the Church risks missing the opportunity to use AI as a tool for social transformation. This study seeks to explore how AI can be ethically aligned with CST to help address poverty and promote justice in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

1.4 Justification of the Study

This study is justified by the urgent need to bridge the gap between technological innovation and ethical, faith-based responses to poverty and injustice in Kenya. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) rapidly transforms various sectors such as healthcare, education, and governance, there is growing concern that its integration may overlook vulnerable populations, deepen inequality, or violate fundamental human rights, especially in regions like Nairobi, where poverty and marginalization are pervasive. Despite the Catholic Church's active involvement in social outreach through hospitals, schools, and justice programs, there is limited evidence that AI technologies are being meaningfully integrated into these efforts in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. Catholic Social Teaching (CST) provides a well-established moral and theological framework for addressing issues of poverty, justice, and human dignity. However, there is a notable absence of literature and practical models that explore how CST principles can be applied to guide the ethical use of AI in pastoral and social ministries. This study addresses this gap by evaluating how AI, when aligned with CST, can enhance the Church's mission to serve the poor, uphold justice, and safeguard human dignity in an increasingly digital society. Moreover, in Kenya's rapidly digitizing environment, where AI is being adopted by the public and private sectors alike, the Church risks falling behind if it does not actively engage in these technological developments. Faith-based institutions have historically been key players in community development, and integrating AI into their mission can further their impact. This study is, therefore, timely and essential in ensuring that as technology evolves, it does so in harmony with the values of compassion, justice, inclusion, and

ethical responsibility. By focusing specifically on the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, a region with deep social disparities and a vibrant Catholic presence, this study will provide contextual insights that can inform Church leadership, policy development, and social innovation not only locally but also in other dioceses facing similar challenges. It is a critical contribution to ongoing global conversations about the ethical deployment of AI and the prophetic role of the Church in shaping technology for the common good.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be ethically aligned with Catholic Social Teaching (CST) to address poverty and promote justice within the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the potential role of AI in augmenting the Church's efforts in the healthcare, education, and social services sectors, which directly impact marginalized communities. It aims to evaluate how AI technologies can support the Church's mission of upholding human dignity, advancing the common good, and providing preferential care for the poor, while also identifying and addressing ethical concerns such as bias, data privacy, and access inequality. The study ultimately seeks to offer practical recommendations for Church leaders, developers, and faith-based organizations on the responsible and inclusive use of AI in pastoral and social outreach.

1.6 Methodology

This study adopted a desktop research approach, relying primarily on the review and analysis of existing literature, Church documents, official reports, and scholarly sources related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Catholic Social Teaching (CST). The desktop method enabled the researcher to explore a wide range of perspectives and identify emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities at the intersection of technology and faith-based social action. This approach was suitable due to the conceptual nature of the study and the lack of extensive primary research on this topic within the local Church context.

1.7 Findings on the Catholic Social Teaching

1.7.1. What is Catholic Social Teaching?

Catholic Social Teaching refers to the body of doctrine developed by the Catholic Church on matters of social justice, economic development, and the common good (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). It is a teaching to be embraced by all who care about the well-being of human society. Rooted in both scripture and tradition, CST is built around seven core principles:

Life and Dignity of the Human Person: Every person is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has inherent dignity and value. Human life is sacred, and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of all CST principles.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation: People are not only sacred but also social. The family is the central social institution and must be supported. All people have a right and duty to participate in society and seek the common good.

Rights and Responsibilities: Every person has fundamental human rights (e.g., food, shelter, education, health care) and corresponding responsibilities to others, to their family, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: The needs of the poor and marginalized must be given special attention. A moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers: Work is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. The rights of workers, fair wages, safe conditions, and the right to organize must be respected and protected.

Solidarity: We are one human family, regardless of national, racial, ethnic, economic, or ideological differences. Solidarity means standing with and for others to promote peace and justice globally.

Care for God's Creation: We are called to protect people and the planet. This environmental stewardship is a moral and spiritual responsibility that reflects our respect for the Creator. At the heart of Catholic social teaching is an effort to make the actions and words of Jesus real again today to transform and uplift social life for all people in light of the gospel. For this to happen, there is a need to have at the center of society the need to preserve peace along which justice is lived. However, the fact remains that peace involves a just ordering of society. This just order of society also includes solicitude for the poor. Not only the direct or indirect effects of individual actions, but also wise social policies are necessary for a just ordering of society, social policies that must take into account the likely effect on the poor. These principles provide a strong framework to guide not only humanitarian and pastoral efforts but also technological development, particularly in AI, which increasingly influences human lives in subtle and powerful ways.

1.7.2 The Catholic Church and the Use of AI

The use of artificial intelligence in the Church circles is both appreciated and utilized in many ways to spread the Kingdom of God. Its use, however, is guided by certain principles that we in this section.

AI Must Uphold Human Dignity: The foundation of Catholic teaching is the belief that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). This belief underlies all aspects of Catholic ethics and is central to the Church's view on AI. AI systems must be designed and used in ways that respect the inalienable dignity of the human person, not reduce individuals to data points or mere users. The Church strongly cautions against the dehumanization that can occur when decisions about people, such as hiring, healthcare, or criminal justice, are handed over to machines without human oversight. When algorithms make choices about individuals based solely on probabilities or statistical models, there is a risk of ignoring the uniqueness, worth, and moral agency of each person. *"Artificial Intelligence must never be allowed to replace human beings in decisions that affect human lives and moral judgments."* Pope Francis, 2020. This concern is especially pressing in contexts like healthcare or social welfare, where AI can help identify needs but must not override compassionate and individualized pastoral care.

AI Should Serve the Common Good: Catholic Social Teaching emphasizes the common good, meaning the conditions that allow every person and community to thrive (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). The Church encourages the development of AI in ways that benefit all people, particularly the poor, marginalized, and excluded. AI can be an agent of the common good when used to: Expand access to medical diagnosis and treatment in rural areas; Improve education for students with disabilities and Strengthen social protection programs for vulnerable families. However, the Church warns that without ethical oversight, AI can instead deepen inequality, concentrate power among the wealthy, or ignore the needs of developing regions. Therefore, Church teaching insists on inclusive and participatory AI development, where the voices of those most affected, especially the poor, are heard and respected.

"The progress of science and technology is not neutral. It must be guided by justice and care for the least among us (Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 2020)."

Ethical Principles for AI: The “Rome Call for AI Ethics”. In February 2020, the Pontifical Academy for Life launched the *Rome Call for AI Ethics*, a landmark Church initiative advocating for globally agreed ethical standards for AI. It was co-signed by major tech leaders like Microsoft, IBM, and representatives from the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The Rome Call promotes six core ethical principles, which align closely with Catholic moral reasoning: **Transparency:** AI systems should be understandable and explainable. People should know how decisions are made. **Inclusion:** Technology must be available and accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic background. **Responsibility:** Developers, policymakers, and users are morally accountable for AI’s outcomes. **Impartiality:** AI must avoid reinforcing bias or discrimination, especially against the poor, women, or minorities; **Reliability:** Systems must be safe, stable, and tested to minimize harm and **Security and Privacy:** Personal data must be safeguarded and not exploited for unjust profit. These values offer a moral compass not only for Catholic institutions but also for secular governments, businesses, and developers seeking to create AI that respects human and ethical boundaries.

AI Cannot Replace Human Relationships or Moral Agency: A recurring theme in Church teaching is that AI is a tool not a substitute for human presence, empathy, or conscience. The Church emphasizes that while AI may aid in decision-making, it can never replicate human discernment, moral reasoning, or spiritual care. This is especially relevant in: Pastoral ministry, where digital tools may assist evangelization but cannot replace face-to-face relationships; Counseling and confession, which require personal interaction, confidentiality, and compassion; Ethical decision-making, such as in end-of-life care, where AI should assist but not decide based on algorithms alone. *“Technology must never strip us of the ability to look one another in the eye, to see the face of Christ in the suffering, the poor, the abandoned.”* (Pope Francis, 2019). The Church warns against technological determinism, the belief that what is technologically possible is always good or necessary. Catholic ethics insists that moral judgment belongs to people, not machines.

AI and Evangelization: The Church recognizes that AI and digital technologies offer new avenues for evangelization, catechesis, and community building, especially among youth and in remote or conflict-affected areas. Examples include: AI-powered apps for Scripture study, automated translation of Church documents, or virtual reality tours of sacred sites; Chatbots and voice assistants that answer basic faith questions or guide prayer routines; and Predictive analytics is used by dioceses to understand pastoral needs and deploy resources more efficiently. However, the Dicastery for Communication (2023) warns that digital evangelization must avoid turning faith into a product, reducing prayer to content, or replacing real community with virtual connection. *“Digital tools can support evangelization, but cannot replace the warmth, struggle, and grace of real encounter”* (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). AI should be used to build communion, not isolation, and to amplify and not to replace the Church’s pastoral voice.

1.7.3 The Role of the Church in AI Implementation

Faith-based institutions, especially in the Catholic tradition, can ensure that technology is developed and deployed ethically and inclusively. Some proposed roles include: Creating AI-driven platforms to link unemployed youth with job opportunities. Using AI to monitor human rights violations in slums such as Kibera, with real-time reporting; Supporting smallholder farmers via AI-based weather forecasting and

crop advice; Building simple AI chatbots (available via SMS for those without smartphones), sharing information on healthcare, legal rights, or Church programs; Advocating for ethical standards and inclusive design in AI; Educating communities on AI and its implications; Collaborating with developers and policymakers to promote justice-oriented, people-centered technology; and Exploring AI in internal Church communications to improve outreach, transparency, and efficiency within Archdiocesan structures. For these efforts to succeed, several steps are needed: ethical training for AI developers and implementers; inclusive participation; publication of guiding principles on AI aligned with local realities and Vatican documents such as *Rome Call for AI Ethics*; pressing for investment in digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved rural areas; and further research into AI use within Church communications, evangelization, and institutional management (Pope Francis, 2020).

1.7.4 The Archdiocese of Nairobi's Application of AI

This section highlights the relevance of AI in areas directly impacting marginalized populations in Nairobi Archdiocese. Catholic Social Teaching underscores the intrinsic value of every individual, including the entitlement to healthcare, and advocates for societal frameworks that facilitate human development. It stresses caring for the vulnerable, building community, and working toward a just healthcare system. This framework supports ethical decision-making and advocacy in healthcare (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). some areas of application include:

(a) Healthcare

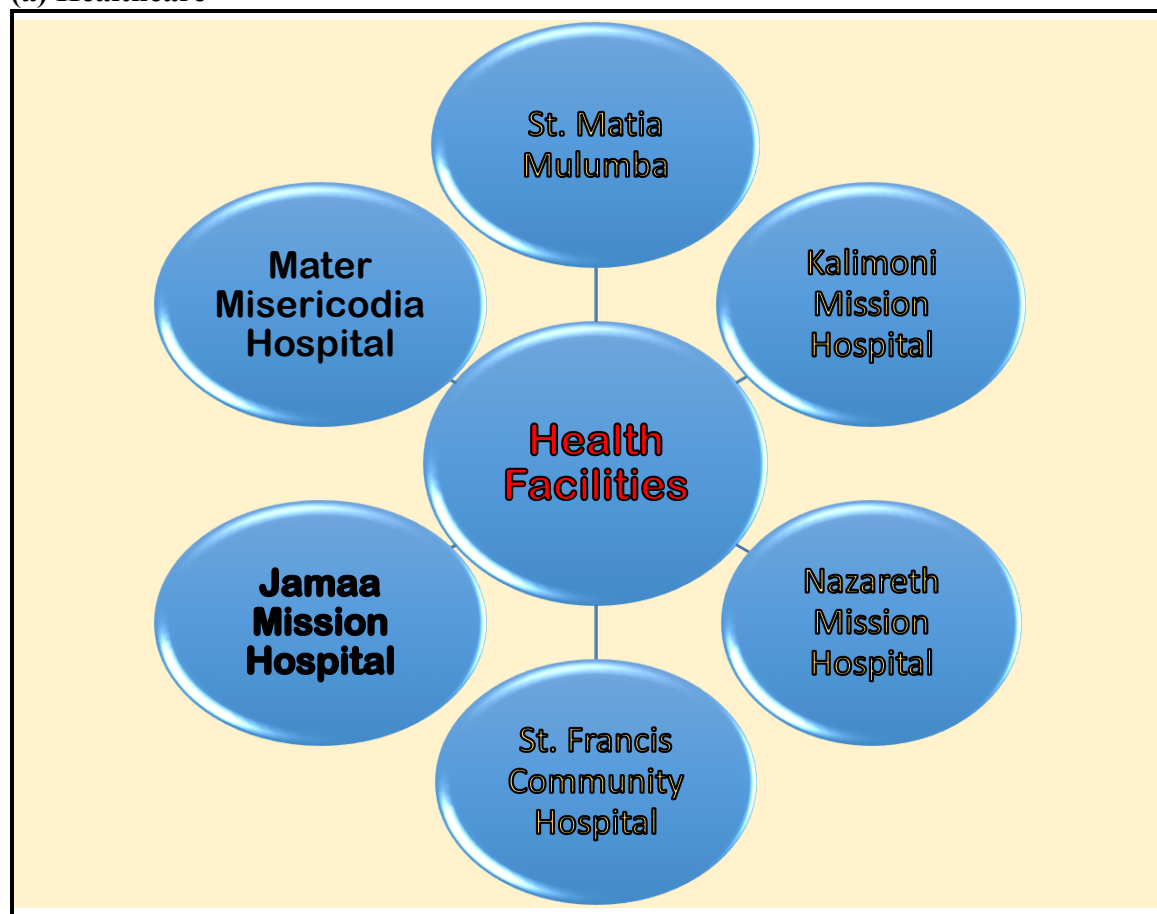


Fig. 1: Examples of health facilities in the Archdiocese of Nairobi

Source: Researcher, 2025

The Catholic Social Teaching underscores the intrinsic value of every individual, which encompasses the entitlement to healthcare, and advocates for societal frameworks that facilitate human development. It stresses the significance of caring for those who are vulnerable, the invitation to build community, and the responsibility to engage in creating a healthcare system that is fair and just. This framework serves as a basis for ethical decision-making and advocacy within the healthcare domain.

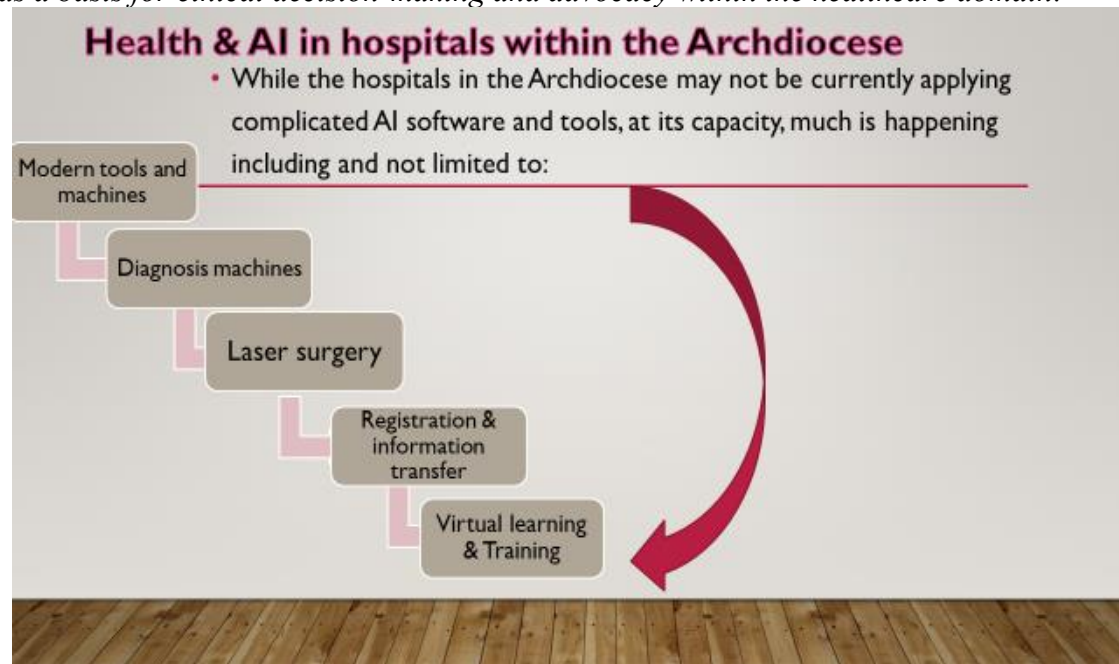


Figure 2: showing some AI services in hospitals within the Archdiocese

Source: Researcher, 2025

As of now, there is no publicly available information indicating that the Archdiocese is directly implementing AI technologies within its medical services (Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, n.d.). The Archdiocese operates a healthcare network of 62 facilities, delivering curative, preventive, promotive, and rehabilitative services in line with Catholic social teachings (Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, n.d.). AI-powered diagnostics and telemedicine could expand access to care in underserved communities, potentially reducing mortality and disease burdens among the poor. The Archdiocese of Nairobi runs several healthcare units serving God's people, including Kalimoni Mission Hospital, Jamaa Mission Hospital, Reinha Rosary Mission Hospital, Nazareth Hospital, Mary Help of the Sick Mission Hospital, St. Matia Mulumba Mission Hospital, Our Lady of Lourdes Mutomo Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, and St. Francis Community Hospital. These operate largely in low-income vicinities such as Kibera, Hunters, Mwiki, Githurai, and Dandora (Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, n.d.). Although some of these health care facilities do not operate under the Archdiocese, they nevertheless serve the same population, strengthening the ministries of the church by providing health care to God's people.

(b) Education

Christians are called to foster the well-being of family, friends, and the broader community. This dedication to the welfare of others is expressed in various ways, including active participation in community, social, and cultural organizations that strive to enhance society. Education serves as one

such initiative. For Christians, genuine education (at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels) seeks to shape young individuals in virtue and encourage human flourishing. All educational institutions should aspire to this goal. In a Catholic school, the body of knowledge referred to as Catholic social teaching, which focuses on the welfare of individuals, families, and society at large, should not merely be an aspect of the broader curriculum but should ideally form the foundation of the school's mission, aims, and objectives (Grace, 2013).

The Archdiocese's concern over the education of the populace is overt. All the schools have the main purpose as to provide affordable and quality education to the people. Many institutions within the Nairobi Archdiocese are mission schools, which are managed by religious groups and frequently include religious teachings and principles in their educational agendas. Examples of such institutions are St. Mary's School, La Salle Catholic School, Mt. Larvena schools and St. Augustine School Mang'u. These schools provide various curricula, encompassing both national and international choices, and strive to offer a comprehensive education that supports spiritual, intellectual, moral and physical growth of the young people.

Integration of AI in education

Personalized Learning: AI tools can tailor educational content to individual student needs, especially under the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) that emphasizes digital literacy, leading to digitalized learning programs. **Interactive Learning Tools:** Schools are beginning to adopt AI-powered tools like coding platforms and virtual learning environments to enhance engagement. While these advancements show promise in the use of AI in the education sector, challenges such as infrastructure limitations, teacher training, and data privacy concerns remain top concerns. While some schools within the Archdiocese of Nairobi are catching up with digital learning efforts, the majority of schools especially in slum areas are still struggling to embrace technology. This is due to the lack of digital equipment, lighting, and exposure, among other shortfalls. If implemented, Intelligent tutoring systems and adaptive learning platforms can enhance educational access and outcomes for students in resource-constrained schools.

(c) Social Services

The Archdiocese displays a soft heart for the poor and vulnerable members of society. One of the most outstanding services is by CARITAS concentrates on initiatives in sectors such as microfinance, assistance for refugees, agriculture, aid for individuals with disabilities and HIV/AIDS, as well as empowering women and youth. Other services are by the Life Office, which provides familial support, resources, and pastoral care. When the poor are treated with dignity as children of God, true justice is attained. Catholic Social Teaching (CST) provides a framework for designing and implementing social services. It emphasizes human dignity, the common good, and preferential concern for the vulnerable (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.). While explicit AI implementation in these services is not documented, potential applications include: Data Analysis for Community Needs: AI could help analyze socio-demographic data to identify priority areas for intervention, enabling better resource allocation (Ngundo, 2025); Enhanced Communication: AI-powered tools could improve outreach and engagement via digital platforms; and Streamlined Administration: AI could assist with record management, scheduling, and other logistical tasks, freeing staff to focus on direct community support. Overall, AI in social services can streamline welfare delivery, detect fraud, and distribute resources more effectively to those in greatest need.

1.7.5 The Catholic Framework for Justice and Dignity

Catholic Social Teaching, grounded in scripture and tradition, promotes values such as human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and the preferential option for the poor (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). The Catholic Justice and Peace Department (CJPD) of the Archdiocese works to foster social justice, peace, and Catholic values. Its activities include: Conducting training and workshops on democracy, human rights, and peaceful coexistence to reduce electoral violence and promote accountability; Advocacy on issues related to human dignity, fairness, and unity and Partnerships with entities such as the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services to strengthen social cohesion and peace efforts (Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, n.d.). As AI is adopted in both public and private sectors, it is essential to assess whether such technologies align with CST values or risk undermining them (Pope Francis, 2020).

1.7.6 Ethical Challenges and Concerns about AI

AI reflects societal advancement, yet raises ethical issues in Catholic contexts: Bias and Discrimination: AI systems trained on biased datasets may reinforce existing inequalities rather than resolve them, especially problematic in education, where diverse learners still face uniform examinations (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004); Privacy and Data Ownership: AI usage in healthcare and education introduces questions about who owns and controls personal data, and how privacy is protected, especially when patient information is transmitted through multiple devices accessed by different personnel (Pope Francis, 2020); and Access Inequality: The digital divide may exclude those CST prioritizes, particularly children in marginalized communities who lack exposure to digital tools like laptops or social media platforms through which others access information and academic support. Catholic ethics calls for AI deployment that safeguards dignity and promotes justice, avoiding harm and exclusion (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004).

1.8 Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence represents a transformative force in modern society, with far-reaching implications for how communities respond to poverty, inequality, and human suffering. As this technology continues to evolve, it brings both promising opportunities and serious ethical challenges, especially for faith-based institutions committed to justice and human dignity. The Catholic Church, through its rich tradition of social teaching, offers a compelling moral framework for guiding the ethical application of AI. Principles such as the inherent dignity of the human person, the common good, solidarity, and the preferential option for the poor provide a necessary compass in the digital age. In the context of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, AI has the potential to strengthen the Church's mission in areas such as healthcare, education, and social services. However, this potential can only be realized through intentional and values-driven adoption that safeguards the rights of the poor, promotes inclusive access, and upholds moral responsibility. While the Archdiocese has not yet fully embraced AI, the groundwork is present for integrating digital tools into its pastoral and social ministries in ways that are both ethical and effective. As the Church continues to navigate this technological frontier, collaboration with policymakers, developers, and local communities will be essential. Faith-based institutions must not only adopt emerging technologies but also shape their use with a prophetic voice grounded in Gospel values. If guided by Catholic Social Teaching, AI can serve as a tool for advancing justice, uplifting the marginalized, and reaffirming the sacredness of every human life in a rapidly changing world.

1.9 Recommendations

This primarily desktop study recommends helpful items to consider as agents in the Archdiocese of Nairobi continue their mission of expanding the Kingdom of God.

(a) For the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi and Church Leadership

Develop a Catholic Ethical Framework for AI Use: Establish diocesan guidelines on ethical AI usage based on Catholic Social Teaching to ensure that any technological integration aligns with human dignity, justice, and the common good.

Incorporate AI into Social Ministries: Integrate AI tools in healthcare, education, and pastoral services such as diagnostic support in mission hospitals, personalized learning in schools, and digital evangelization platforms.

Invest in Digital Infrastructure and Training: Equip Church institutions, especially those in underserved areas, with the necessary technology and train staff to use AI responsibly and effectively.

Establish a Technology and Ethics Committee: Form a diocesan advisory team composed of theologians, technologists, and social workers to assess AI projects and ensure they serve vulnerable populations ethically.

(b) For Catholic Institutions (Schools, Hospitals, Caritas, Justice & Peace Offices)

Use AI to Improve Service Delivery: Apply AI for early detection of community needs, streamlining record-keeping, and predicting outreach priorities in areas such as poverty mapping, food security, or school performance.

Protect Data Privacy and Security: Develop strong policies for managing personal data, particularly in healthcare and education, to ensure respect for human dignity and confidentiality.

Promote Equity in Access to Technology: Prioritize AI tools that are accessible to low-income communities (e.g., SMS-based chatbots, low-bandwidth learning apps) to bridge the digital divide.

(c) For Policymakers and Technology Developers

Collaborate with Faith-Based Organizations: Engage Church institutions as partners in AI development to ensure systems are designed for inclusion and reflect community values.

Design AI with Ethical Safeguards: Ensure AI systems are explainable, non-discriminatory, and developed with the participation of marginalized voices, including women, the elderly, and the poor.

Create Public Awareness Campaigns: Promote ethical literacy around AI through public education that integrates religious, cultural, and human rights perspectives.

(d) For Theological and Academic Institutions

Integrate AI Ethics in Seminary and Religious Formation: Educate future priests, religious, and lay leaders on the ethical implications of AI through theology, social doctrine, and digital literacy.

Support Research on AI and Catholic Social Teaching: Encourage interdisciplinary studies on how technology intersects with faith, justice, and pastoral care in the Kenyan context and beyond.

(e) General Recommendation

Adopt the Principles of the Rome Call for AI Ethics: All stakeholders should consider adopting the six ethical principles outlined by the Vatican: transparency, inclusion, responsibility, impartiality, reliability, and security as a foundation for AI use in Church settings. By combining technological innovation with the Church's moral vision, it is possible to cultivate more just, compassionate, and

inclusive societies demonstrating that modern technology can be a true ally in advancing Christ's mission in the world (Pope Francis, 2020).

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