

# Catholic Courier

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## Catholics, even at Vatican, are cruising the Net, Web

Interested in finding out what the pope had to say today? Or how about what time Masses are scheduled in the Archdiocese of Singapore?

Hungering for some written-word battle with Catholics who don't like the direction the church is taking? Or for some friendly communication with those who do?

All this and more awaits Catholics who wish to join millions of people around the world who use the Internet, the global network of computer networks destined to revolutionize the way the planet's inhabitants share information.

Linked by high-speed data lines and wireless systems, the Internet — or "Net," as it is often called — grew out of a U.S. military project begun in the late 1960s. However, the government has little role in its operation now, and the Net is mostly unregulated and international.

"The Net is no longer a medium just for computer specialists or technically inclined people," wrote Quentin J. Schultze in his 1995 book *Internet for Christians*.

"(The Net's) being used by people in government, education, business, ministry and practically all other areas of work ...," Schultze continued. "Thousands of libraries, research centers, health-information institutes and periodicals are now on the Internet (or 'online,' as some people say)."

Schultze strongly advocated that as many Christians as possible become familiar with the Net and its uses.

"Each of us has special gifts and talents that may be very applicable to the Net, including writing, graphics, schmoozing, technical computer networking, site design, teaching, data-base management and all the rest," Schultze wrote.

"If we all used such abilities as Christians on the Net, the Christian presence would be a magnificent testimony to the Lordship of Christ!"

According to Schultze and several other observers, much of the communication on the Net takes place via electronic mail, or "e-mail," in which computer-users send messages to one another's computers.

"(But) if the opportunity to use e-mail ... lures many people to the Internet, the Web gets them hooked," Schultze wrote.

Probably the best-known part of the Internet, the World Wide Web is a storage system linking information from around the world that uses text, sound, graphics and video. The Web does not encompass all of the Internet, but most observers agree that it's the user-friendly nature of the Web that will attract most of the Net's future users.

Every "site" on the Web is made up of "pages," which contain relevant information about that site. Such sites on the Web can be accessed by computer-users armed with "browsers." Available through such commercial online companies as America Online and CompuServe, browsers are programs that allow a user to move around on the Web with a "mouse."

A mouse is a hand-held device that enables users to retrieve files and perform various functions on the computer screen by pointing to and "clicking"

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