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Internet

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on representative words and symbols.

To get on the Internet, users need a computer and a modem, which connects computers to one another via a phone line. Many users link up with other computers on the Internet by subscribing to a commercial online service, but they also may use linkups available through such institutions as universities, government offices or employers.

A user can get on the Web either through one of the various online companies, or through a local computer network. Once on the Web, he or she can find thousands upon thousands of pieces of information, including hundreds of pages devoted to Catholic concerns.

Just a couple of hours on the Web can introduce the casual computer-user to a wide variety of pages addressing Catholic topics, ranging from the origins of the Catholic Worker movement to the latest scientific information on the Shroud of Turin, the alleged burial cloth of Christ.

In fact, there's so much information on the Catholic Church out there in "cyberspace" that some computer-users are trying to corral it all into more user-friendly Web sites.

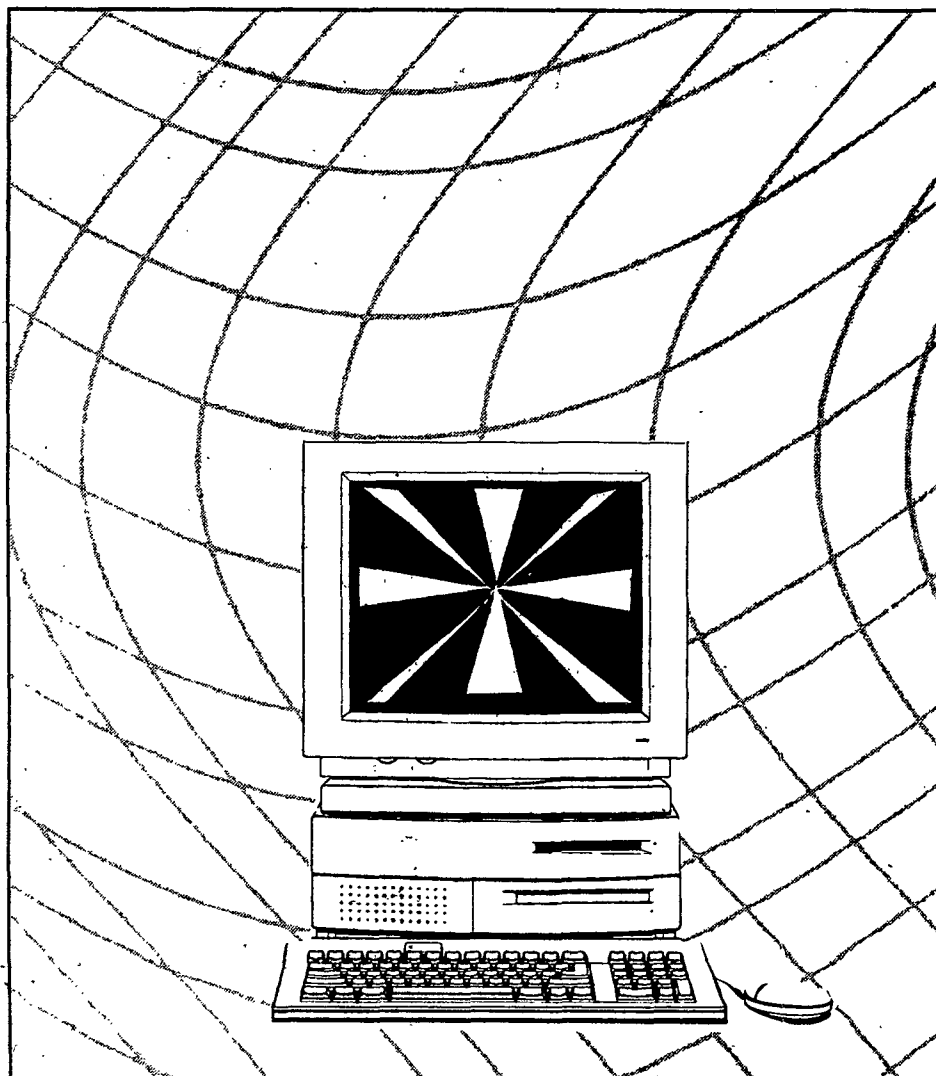
In Cincinnati, Ohio, for example, Michael S. Rose and his wife Barbara founded Aquinas MultiMedia Design Studio, which has created "Catholic Kiosk" on behalf of the Cincinnati archdiocese. Catholic Kiosk gathers many of the available Catholic Web-sites into one location on the Web.

Everything from the British version of the church's new catechism to a calendar of the saints is available at Catholic Kiosk, Rose said in a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier*.

Even the Vatican has joined millions of Internet users, creating its Web site which was swamped with online traffic over the Christmas holidays.

More than 300,000 people from 70 countries logged into the site on the World Wide Web in the 48 hours after its inauguration Dec. 25, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said. At its peak, the user rate was more than 20,000 people per hour, he added.

The Vatican opened its Internet "home page" by offering the pontiff's Christmas message and greetings in more than 50 languages. Visitors to the



interactive electronic bulletin board were also welcomed with a color graphic of a painting of the Nativity and a Christmas card written in the pope's own hand.

The Web site will expand over coming months, eventually offering documents, research material and graphic images from dozens of Vatican departments.

Eventually the Vatican plans to create separate home pages for each Vatican department, including the Vatican Museums and Library, which would make a wealth of information available to the online public.

Gradually, papal and other documents will be made available, along with statistical and research information. An electronic mail service for each Vatican office will complete the project.

Here in the Diocese of Rochester, the possibility of creating a home page on the Web has been examined, according to Joan A. Zaia, diocesan director of information systems. However, she noted that the diocese must first consider such factors as how it would han-

dle answering e-mail inquiries to the pastoral center.

Other dioceses — and individual parishes — both in the United States and abroad have already created pages on the Web, listing Mass schedules, public programs and other church-oriented services.

David Higbee, director of adult and religious education at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Irondequoit, said his parish has used such online services as the Catholic Resource Network to retrieve papal speeches and documents. "This is a marketplace of ideas," Higbee said of the Web. "All the parishes in the next few years will begin dabbling in this."

That point was echoed by Jeffrey Mirius, whose company, Trinity Communications, created Catholic Resource Network.

In a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier* from his Manassas, Va., office, Mirius contended that most U.S. dioceses and parishes will not only cruise the Internet someday, but will become part of that world of information themselves through the creation of Web pages.

"I think most of them will produce some online media," he said.

Meanwhile, *The Observer*, the official newspaper of the Diocese of Rockford, Ill., became a daily publication Jan. 2 through a new computer online service, Catholic Connect!

In addition to the contents of *The Observer*, published twice a month in print format, Catholic Connect! offers several features from Catholic News Service designed for the worldwide church: daily news briefs; weekly video, movie and TV reviews; book reviews, including religious and popular fiction and nonfiction titles from the electronic "Catholic Review of Books"; text and story on Pope John Paul II's weekly audience; and a 12-month calendar of church events around the nation.

Another publication, *Catholic Family Media Guide*, is offered exclusively on Catholic Connect!

Catholic Connect! is also offering free "help wanted" ads to dioceses, parishes, schools and other church-related nonprofit entities as a way to encourage them to use the service.

What unites all these Catholic Net aficionados is not only love for a burgeoning technology, but a love for spreading the Gospel. Whereas so many recent news articles on the Net have focused on its less appealing aspects — such as its use by consumers of children's pornography — Catholic Net users see such phenomena as the World Wide Web in a far more positive light. Indeed, they view the Net as the latest vehicle available to Christians desiring to proclaim the Gospel.

"I think there are people out there who want to direct it in a positive way," Rose, creator of "Catholic Kiosk," said. "We sort of see ourselves as Internet missionaries."

EDITORS' NOTE: This article contains information from Catholic News Service.

The Vatican's Web address is:

<http://www.vatican.va>

People can subscribe by credit card or open an institutional account to Catholic Connect! by calling 1-800-817-4455 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Central time Monday through Friday.

Catholic Resource Network's home page address is <http://www.crn.net>.

Catholic Kiosk's home page address is <http://www.ernet.com/aquinas/arch/>.

Gospel Films, Inc., publisher of Internet for Christians, can be reached at its toll free number 1-800-253-0413, or on the Net at <http://www.gospelcom.net>.

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