

Vatican encourages Catholics to use Internet

The Vatican yesterday issued two documents, to both point out opportunities provided by the Internet and warn the faithful of its dangers.

But Archbishop John Foley, head of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, stressed that the Internet "is an opportunity and a challenge and a not a threat."

Foley, speaking with reporters, acknowledged that Internet's power is not always used for noble ends, even by those within the church.

A priest in rural Spain was arrested in early February as a suspect in an Internet child pornography ring that also served as an electronic forum for child abusers to exchange experiences.

Foley called such conduct by clergy "absolutely scandalous" and noted that today's aspiring seminarians are supposed to be examined to see that they are "not only healthy physically but also healthy mentally" and morally.

"Unfortunately, the Internet contributes to these problems that exist not only within the church but even more in society in general," Foley said.

The Vatican's message about the Internet aims to "emphasise that the Catholic church, along with other religious bodies, should have a visible, active presence on the Internet and be a partner in the public dialogue about its development."

The Vatican said it was encouraging its flock, from bishops to parents, to monitor the quality of Internet content and guide young people in their eager embrace of it.

LINKS Ethics in Internet (Pontifical Council for Social Communications) The Church and Internet (Pontifical Council for Social Communications)

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