

**Proposal of Church Resources  
on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference  
for the creation of catholic.au**

14 June 2002

*"The Internet is certainly a new "forum" understood in the ancient Roman sense of that public space where politics and business were transacted, where religious duties were fulfilled where much of the social life of the city took place, and where the best and the worst of human nature was on display. It was a crowded and bustling urban space, which both reflected the surrounding culture and created a culture of its own. This is no less true of cyberspace, which is as it were a new frontier opening up at the beginning of this new millennium. Like the new frontiers of other times, this one too is full of the interplay of danger and promise, and not without the sense of adventure which marked other great periods of change. For the Church the new world of cyberspace is a summons to the great adventure of using its potential to proclaim the Gospel message. This challenge is at the heart of what it means at the beginning of the millennium to follow the Lord's command to "put out into the deep": Duc in altum! (Lk 5:4)."*

*His Holiness Pope John Paul II  
From His Message for the 36th World Communications Day  
Sunday, 12 May 2002*

As recognized by His Holiness Pope John Paul II, the Internet holds great promise as an engine of community reflection, promotion, and development. Church Resources believes that the .au Domain Administration's (auDA) request for proposals for new .au second level domains (2LDs) represents a unique opportunity to demonstrate and foster the creation of community in the Australian Internet environment. Therefore, Church Resources, on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference, is pleased to submit its proposal for the creation of **catholic.au** as a service to the community of the Catholic Church of Australia.

As noted in Bishop Finnigan's letter, the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference is engaged in efforts to bring the Church into the on-line environment. Church Resources is committed to the development of **catholic.au** in furtherance of this mission. In addition, we also believe that successful deployment of the domain would benefit the auDA and the broader Australian Internet community by serving as a possible model for the development of future community-based, "closed" 2LDs.

For ease of review, Church Resources has generally organized its proposal according to the requirements set forth in *Section 3.2 New "closed" 2LDs* of auDA's 24 April, 2002 request for proposals.

**About the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference and Church Resources**

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference is an assembly of the hierarchy of the Australia who jointly exercise leadership of pastoral functions on behalf of the 4.8 million

Catholic faithful of Australia. The purpose of the Conference is to promote the greater good that the Church offers humankind, especially through forms and programs of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of time and place. This purpose is drawn from the universal law of the Church.<sup>1</sup> The Australian Catholic bishops constitute the membership of the Conference and are served by a General Secretariat that, among other tasks, serves as a liaison with the Apostolic See, the Commonwealth Government and other national bodies.

Church Resources, a charitable trust, was launched in 1997 under the auspices of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference with the support of Congregational leaders of Religious Institutes. The beneficiaries of the trust are the institutions and members of the Catholic Church in Australia. The mission of Church Resources is to 1: provide a national Church telecommunications infra-structure to facilitate Church participation in and contribution to the era of on-line and digital communication for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel and building community and 2: combine the buying power of Church institutions and members to achieve savings and improved levels of service, for the purpose of increasing Church resources and effectiveness for core mission activities of a religious, social and pastoral nature.

The founding aim of Church Resources was to form a voluntary buying cooperative for telecommunications products and services and other products. At present, Catholic Telecommunications, a division of Church Resources, has 98% of Catholic institutions and 90% of landline spend as part of the Telstra Catholic Plan. Based on its success in the telecommunications environment, Church Resources has initiated a number of broader information technology buying programs, including for example computer hardware and data management services, aimed at bringing the Catholic community on-line.

#### **A. Name of the 2LD**

catholic.au

#### **B. Purpose of the 2LD**

Church Resources proposes to establish **catholic.au** as the preeminent on-line environment for resources and information related to the Catholic Church of Australia. Our vision is to serve the Australian Catholic community through the development of a unique space on the Internet dedicated to the information and communication needs of parishes, diocese, orders, hospitals, social welfare agencies, aged care facilities, schools, Catholic organizations and other related Catholic institutions. Registration by these entities in **catholic.au** will create a common on-line identity for the Australian Catholic community and facilitate the communication between the Australian Catholic Church and the 4.8 million Australian Catholic faithful that it serves.

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<sup>1</sup> The 1983 Code of Canon Law, drawing on *Christus dominus*, defines Conferences in this way: “The Bishops conference, a permanent institution, is the assembly of the bishops of a country or a particular territory, exercising together certain pastoral offices for Christ’s faithful of their territory. By forms and means of the apostolate suited to the circumstances of the time and place, it is to promote, in accordance with the law, that greater good which the Church offers to humankind.” (Can. 447: cf. *Christus dominus* 38).

Over the last several years, Church Resources has been following a step-by-step program to bring the Catholic community into the digital age. These steps include:

- The negotiation of whole of church voice and data telecommunications contracts offering church institutions a very significant cost saving. At present Catholic Telecommunications, a division of Church Resources, has 98% of Catholic institutions and 90% of fixed line spend and over 6,000 mobiles as part of the Telstra Catholic Plan.
- The offering to institutions and members of the church of low-cost computers through its association with Virtual Communities
- The provision of a low-cost, whole of Church offering of telephone hardware to Church institutions in partnership with Commander
- Currently in discussions with Mytek Pty Ltd to offer whole of Catholic Church computer support services and help desk services.
- Working with Myinternet to provide intranet solutions to Church networks in education, pastoral care, health, aged care and welfare through modifications of their SINA product
- Through partnership with FulfilNET, providing website services to all Catholic institutions and working with the dioceses and religious orders to supply integrated content on these sites. The next phase of this project will move to interactive communications between those institutions and the associated 4.8 million Catholic faithful with whom they interact.

**Catholic.au** is a natural extension and organizing concept for this on-line program being undertaken on behalf of the Australian Catholic community.

We recognize and understand that auDA's open call for 2LD proposals is a significant step in developing a robust and responsive .au space for the benefit Australian Internet users and user communities. Therefore, we are committed to developing the **catholic.au** 2LD in a responsible and effective manner that could serve as a model for future community-based uses of the Australian domain name space.

### **C. Intended Users**

Catholic parishes, orders, hospitals, social welfare agencies, aged care facilities, schools, Catholic organizations and other related institutions.

### **D. Estimated Number of Potential Registrants**

Church Resources estimates the number of potential registrants at approximately 8,000. The following is a breakdown of major categories of potential registrants:

Hospitals: 60

Aged Care Facilities: 480

Parishes: 1,380  
Schools: 1,717  
Social Welfare Agencies: 2,000 (estimated)  
Other Organizations and Institutions: 2,000 (estimated)  
Special Programs (e.g. holyweek2003.catholic.au): 400 (estimated)

## **E. Funding Model and Registry/Registrar Provisioning**

Church Resources proposes to operate **catholic.au** on a cost recovery basis though per domain name registration fees. Upon receiving provisional approval for **catholic.au** by auDA, Church Resources will immediately engage domain name infrastructure providers to discuss terms for registry services in support of the 2LD. At this time, we anticipate that Church Resources would act as the registrar for **catholic.au**. Given the relatively modest scale of projected **catholic.au** domain registrations and potential attractiveness to registries of participating in a unique, community-based 2LD project, Church Resources will seek to secure registry services and a registrar enabling component on a *pro bono* basis. We believe that establishing an agreement on *pro bono* terms will further the **catholic.au** concept by helping to keep costs to registrants low.

Of course, Church Resources first priority will be to procure registry services and a registrar component that will ensure the soundest, most stable, and secure operation of the **catholic.au** 2LD. Should Church Resources be unable to find a qualified registry provider that can ensure confidence and integrity in the 2LD on a *pro bono* basis, Church Resources would seek to enter into a registry/registrar service agreement on a per-domain name registration basis or other acceptable commercial terms. Any such registry fees and associated costs would be factored into the **catholic.au** pricing model.

The history of Church Resources' provision of telecommunications, IT and web services to Catholic institutions is a successful one of offering low-cost, but sustainable prices. Church Resources has over 10,500 Church customers paying it regularly for these services. Its staff includes experienced account managers who manage different institutions accounts and ensure positive cash flow. Church Resources is confident that it will be able to structure a low-cost but financially sustainable model for **catholic.au**.

To assist it to prosecute the engagement of appropriate registry/registrar services, Church Resources is presently confirming the services of an internationally well-recognized expert in the area of Domain Name System management, registry negotiations and project management. This person will add unique depth and experience to both Church Resources activities, and conceivably, to the broader Australian Internet community's capabilities.

As part of our final operational planning, Church Resources will submit further detail regarding the **catholic.au** funding model and registry/registrar arrangements based on provisioning discussions with registry service providers and other management cost estimates.

## F. Selection Criteria

1. *The TLD must be robust, sustainable and viable. For example, in the case of closed 2LDs there should be a clear, long-term commitment from the body, which it is proposed would manage the 2LD.*

As indicated in the attached letter from Bishop Finnigan, the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference considers the Internet an essential means to further the mission of the Church in Australia. This is a position consistent with proclamations of The Pontiff. Furthermore, Conference is the formal authorizing body that approves all registrations of any business name that contains the word Catholic and is the proper authority for handling registrations of the 2LD **catholic.au** should that be granted. Moreover, Conference is pursuing a strategy to create a Catholic portal linking all recognized Catholic sites in Australia.

The Catholic Church is one of the most stable institutions in Australia. It has been present in Australia since the first European settlement. As the history of its parish founding, school building and hospital establishment has shown, the Catholic Church enters into spiritual and pastoral activities for the long term. This is also the case in its decision to pursue a broad-based on-line presence. AuDA can have confidence that the Australian Catholic Church, as represented by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Church Resources, is committed to the long-term sustainability, robustness and viability of **catholic.au**.

The pursuit of **catholic.au** has been a matter of discussion within Church Resources over several years and is fully consistent with its stated Mission and with the on-line program for the Church being pursued by Church Resources. Furthermore, The Pontiff's recent call for the Church to enter into the on-line environment has underscored the spiritual importance of this project for Church Resources and serves only to reinforce our commitment and dedication to its successful implementation.

In addition, Church Resources has also arranged to procure the services of an internationally well-recognized expert in the area of Domain Name System management, registry negotiations and project management in support of the **catholic.au** project.

2. *The 2LD should serve the needs of users, or a community of users, that are not well served by the existing 2LDs. For example, a proposal should define the user group and indicate clearly why its needs are not well served at present as they would be with the proposed 2LD.*

Presently, Church institutions are poorly served by the second level domain structure of .au. Institutions that clearly identify with the Catholic Church are forced to utilize domain names across a number of disparate 2LDs, with no real recognition of their sense of common identity and community. For instance, religious orders like the Jesuits or the Sisters of Mercy, operate schools, hospitals, social and refugee welfare agencies, social research bodies, aged care facilities, and specialized media entities. Their on-line presences are a scattering of .com.au; .edu.au; .asn.au; .org.au; as well as in the generic TLDs. None of these domain names reflect the reality of all these entities and their peoples' primary identification with the Catholic Church in Australia. This present on-line reality is inconsistent with the way these

institutions identify themselves and operate in the off-line world. Further, the lack of an identifying community 2LD creates a barrier to going on-line among members of a Church that mostly approach change cautiously and with a commitment to operate within the clearly established identity of the Church.

3. *There must be clear support for the 2LD, in particular among the users it is intended to serve, and in general terms from the wider community. Strong evidence of this support should be provided (e.g. letters of support, the resolution of a governing body, or survey evidence). There should be clear evidence that user community support is broadly representative of that community.*

This proposal is submitted with the support of Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. As indicated, the Conference is an assembly of the hierarchy of the Australia who jointly exercise leadership of pastoral functions on behalf of the 4.8 million Catholic faithful of Australia. The purpose of the Conference is to promote the greater good that the Church offers humankind, especially through forms and programs of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of time and place.

Through Conference resolution and by the incorporation, Catholic Resources Ltd (with Archbishops of Australia as Directors) was made Trustee of the Catholic Resources Trust in 1997. It has two divisions, one of which is the Catholic Telecommunication Division. This division is responsible for advancing the mission of the Catholic Church nationally in online communications and acts with the authority of the bishops in this area of activity.

4. *The 2LD should widen the choice of domain names available to users of the Australian DNS. For example, a proposed 2LD that simply duplicates and existing 2LD will generally not be considered to widen the choice of available domain names.*

As stated above, Church institutions are poorly served by the second level domain structure of .au. Institutions that clearly identify with the Catholic Church are forced to utilize domain names across a number of disparate 2LDs, with no real recognition of their sense of common identity and community. None of these domain names reflect the reality of all these entities and their peoples' primary identification with the Catholic Church in Australia. This present on-line reality is inconsistent with the way these institutions identify themselves and operate in the off-line world. Further, the lack of an identifying community 2LD creates a barrier to going on-line among members of a Church that mostly approach change cautiously and with a commitment to operate within the clearly established identity of the Church.

There is no existing 2LD that will be a duplicate of **catholic.au**.

## **G. Value of the Closed 2LD**

Church Resources believes that the **catholic.au** should be a "closed" 2LD for several reasons.

First, the **catholic.au** domain is intended in order create a common on-line identity for the Australian Catholic community and facilitate the communication between the Australian Catholic Church and the 4.8 million Australian Catholic faithful that it serves. As such, the operation of a “closed” 2LD is consistent with its intended purpose to serve a clearly defined community of Internet users.

Second, by ensuring that entities registering in **catholic.au** are recognized institutions or organizations of the Catholic Church, the Catholic community and Australian Internet users generally will be able to trust and have confidence in the source and authenticity of information contained on **catholic.au** sites. We believe that this factor will help facilitate the adoption of the Internet in more traditional “off-line” Catholic communities, such as the elderly, who often need additional reassurance when adopting new technologies.

Third, in order to create a successful Catholic identity in the Australian Internet space, Australian Catholic leadership bodies must be able to establish policies for the **catholic.au** 2LD that uniquely respond to the needs of the Church and Catholic faithful, which they serve. A “closed” 2LD is an ideal vehicle for establishing the necessary rules and procedures for 2LDs intended to be responsive to specific communities.

Fourth and finally, we believe that the **catholic.au** project as an opportunity both for Church Resources and for auDA to demonstrate a successful model for the development of future 2LDs for charitable, community-based purposes.

## **H. Eligibility Criteria**

Unlike other potential 2LDs, **catholic.au** would have a high degree of integrity in the determination of which entities would be eligible. Church institutions, such as schools, hospitals, parishes, religious orders, etc, are clearly defined legal entities under both secular and cannon law. These institutions are clearly established within organizational structures reporting to either the Australian Catholic Bishops conference or the Congregational leaders of Religious Institutes. Church Resources is very well positioned, and very experienced, in determining whether an entity is an established institution of the Australian Catholic Church, and in identifying leadership individual who would be responsible for an application.

As indicated below, Church Resources will undertake a policy development process to delineate the eligibility criteria and process for registration in **catholic.au** by Catholic parishes, hospitals, orders social welfare agencies, aged care facilities, schools, Catholic organizations and other related institutions.

## **I. Policy Rules**

At this time, and pending further consultation with Catholic leadership bodies, it is expected that Church Resources will undertake policy development for the **catholic.au** domain under on behalf of Central Commission of the Australian Catholic Bishop’s Conference. Church Resources will seek to develop its policy rules with input from the intended community of **catholic.au** registrants.

Church Resources is dedicated to pursuing international best practice in developing policy rules and procedures for a 'closed' 2LD. As stated above, and as part of this pursuit of international best practice, Church Resources will also procure the services of an internationally well-recognised expert in the area of Domain Name System management in support of the **catholic.au** project.

We expect initial policy development to focus on the following areas:

1. The development and adoption of a charter and principles statement for the **catholic.au** domain.
2. The development of unique, but flexible, naming conventions across parishes, hospitals, schools, social welfare agencies, aged care facilities and other Catholic institutions (including consideration of third level domains under **catholic.au**).
3. The identification of the appropriate requesting official for each category for registrant and authentication process to ensure validity of **catholic.au** registration requests (e.g. Parish priest for parishes, school principal for schools etc.)
4. Process for resolving conflicts between requests for similar names (e.g. St. Joseph's School and St. Joseph's Parish).
5. Pricing, renewal, and registration terms.

In addition, Church Resources will establish a process whereby additional policy, operational, and management issues can be addressed and resolved on an ongoing basis.

## **J. Peak Management Body**

Church Resources will manage the **catholic.au** 2LD according to the policies and procedures established through its policy development process and under the terms of the relevant auDA 2LD management agreement.

Church Resources possess a keen understanding of the Australian telecommunications and information technology environment, procurement management experience, and a history of successful service to community to Australian Catholic institutions. As the telecommunication and information services procurement body instituted by the Bishop's Conference, Church Resources is uniquely qualified to undertake management for the **catholic.au** domain on behalf of the Catholic Church of Australia.

As previously indicated, Church Resources is a charitable trust that seeks to 1: provide a national Church telecommunications infra-structure to facilitate Church participation in and contribution to the era of on-line and digital communication for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel and building community and 2: combine the buying power of Church institutions and members to achieve savings and improved



levels of service, for the purpose of increasing Church resources and effectiveness for core mission activities of a religious, social and pastoral nature.

The history of Church Resources' provision of telecommunications, IT and web services to Catholic institutions is a successful one. CR currently manages the accounts of 98% of all Catholic Church entities each of which chose to participate in the terms of a voice and data contract with Telstra. The Church spends nationally in excess of \$50M p.a. on access and a further \$2M p.a. on telephone hardware, IT hardware and software can be accessed at discount rates through arrangements we have with providers and resellers. These contracts have now been made available to entities in the Uniting and Anglican Churches through our partnerships with their purchasing arms.

Church Resources is experienced in accounts management and customer relations and currently provides service to over 10,500 Church customers. Its staff includes experienced account managers who manage different institutions accounts and ensure positive cash flow.

Along with its management and technology experience, Church Resources is uniquely qualified to oversee policy development for the **catholic.au** domain. The Catholic Telecommunication Division of Church Resources is responsible for advancing the mission of the Catholic Church nationally in online communications and acts with the authority of the bishops in this area of activity. It also has existing relationships with the vast majority of Catholic institutions and organizations in Australia, which will form the basis of registrations in **catholic.au**. In addition, its close relationships with these institutions and organizations will facilitate the development of the 2LD's policies. As such, Church Resources is very well positioned, and very experienced, in determining whether an entity is an established institution of the Australian Catholic Church, and in identifying leadership individual who would be responsible for an application.

In addition, Church Resources has also arranged to procure specialized consulting expertise in support of the **catholic.au** project.

Appendix 1: Church Resources Summary

# Catholic Resources Trust

Catholic Resources Trust, trading as Church Resources, is a charitable trust, whose trustees are the members of the Central Commission of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. The trust operates in co-operation with the leaders of Australia's religious orders (ACLRI). The beneficiaries of the trust are the institutions and members of the Catholic Church in Australia.

*Registered Office:* Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference  
63 Currong Street  
BRADDON ACT 2612

*Operating Office:* Ground Floor  
118 Christie Street  
ST LEONARDS NSW 2065

*Registered Business Name:* Church Resources Trust  
Catholic Telecommunications and Church Resources  
are registered names

*Australian Business Number:* 61 810 832 919

*Accountant:* Sothertons, Pat Bugden

*Solicitor:* Makinson and d'Apice

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## **Appendix 2: Summary of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference**

The Second Vatican Council, in *Christus dominus*, noted that it is almost impossible, nowadays especially, for bishops to exercise their office suitably and fruitfully unless they establish closer understanding and cooperation with other bishops; and that outstanding examples of a more fruitful apostolate had been produced in countries where Conferences were already established. In 1966, Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Letter *Ecclesiae sanctae* gave directions for the implementation of several Vatican II documents, including this teaching on Conferences.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law, drawing on *Christus dominus*, defines Conferences in this way: The Bishops' Conference, a permanent institution, is the assembly of the bishops of a country or a particular territory, exercising together certain pastoral offices for Christ's faithful of their territory. By forms and means of the apostolate suited to the circumstances of the time and place, it is to promote, in accordance with the law, that greater good which the Church offers to humankind (Can. 447; cf. *Christus dominus* 38).

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Statutes of which were first approved by the Holy See on 21 June, 1976, and definitively on 10 March, 1979, meets at least annually.

The Conference has a President and a Vice-President (each elected for two years), a Central Commission, various Bishops' Committees (each member is elected for three years) and a Secretariat.

## **Appendix 3: Statement of His Holiness Pope John Paul II**

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM DE COMMUNICATIONIBUS SOCIALIBUS

### **MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FOR THE 36th WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY**

**THEME: "Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel"**

*Sunday, May 12, 2002*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. The Church in every age continues the work begun on the day of Pentecost, when the Apostles, in the power of the Holy Spirit, went forth into the streets of Jerusalem to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in many tongues (cf. *Acts 2:5-11*). Through the succeeding centuries, this evangelizing mission spread to the far corners of the earth, as Christianity took root in many places and learned to speak the diverse languages of the world, always in obedience to Christ's command to preach the Gospel to every nation (cf. *Mt 28:19-20*).

But the history of evangelization is not just a matter of geographic expansion, for the Church has also had to cross many cultural thresholds, each of which called for fresh energy and imagination in proclaiming the one Gospel of Jesus Christ. The age of the great discoveries, the Renaissance and the invention of printing, the Industrial Revolution and the birth of the modern world: these too were threshold moments, which demanded new forms of evangelization. Now, with the communications and information revolution in full swing, the Church stands unmistakably at another decisive gateway. It is fitting therefore that on this World Communications Day 2002 we should reflect on the subject: "Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel".

2. The Internet is certainly a new "forum" understood in the ancient Roman sense of that public space where politics and business were transacted, where religious duties were fulfilled where much of the social life of the city took place, and where the best and the worst of human nature was on display. It was a crowded and bustling urban space, which both reflected the surrounding culture and created a culture of its own. This is no less true of cyberspace, which is as it were a new frontier opening up at the beginning of this new millennium. Like the new frontiers of other times, this one too is full of the interplay of danger and promise, and not without the sense of adventure, which marked other great periods of change. For the Church the new world of cyberspace is a summons to the great adventure of using its potential to proclaim the Gospel message. This challenge is at the heart of what it means at the beginning of the millennium to follow the Lord's command to "put out into the deep": *Duc in altum!* (*Lk 5:4*).

3. The Church approaches this new medium with realism and confidence. Like other communications media, it is a means, not an end in itself. The Internet can offer magnificent opportunities for evangelization if used with competence and a clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Above all, by providing information and

stirring interest it makes possible an initial encounter with the Christian message, especially among the young who increasingly turn to the world of cyberspace as a window on the world. It is important, therefore, that the Christian community think of very practical ways of helping those who first make contact through the Internet to move from the virtual world of cyberspace to the real world of Christian community.

At a subsequent stage, the Internet can also provide the kind of follow-up which evangelization requires. Especially in an unsupportive culture, Christian living calls for continuing instruction and catechesis, and this is perhaps the area in which the Internet can provide excellent help. There already exist on the Net countless sources of information, documentation and education about the Church, her history and tradition, her doctrine and her engagement in every field in all parts of the world. It is clear, then, that while the Internet can never replace that profound experience of God which only the living, liturgical and sacramental life of the Church can offer, it can certainly provide a unique supplement and support in both preparing for the encounter with Christ in community, and sustaining the new believer in the journey of faith which then begins.

4. There are nevertheless certain necessary, even obvious, questions, which arise in using the Internet in the cause of evangelization. The essence of the Internet in fact is that it provides an almost unending flood of information, much of which passes in a moment. In a culture which feeds on the ephemeral there can easily be a risk of believing that it is facts that matter, rather than values. The Internet offers extensive knowledge, but it does not teach values; and when values are disregarded, our very humanity is demeaned and man easily loses sight of his transcendent dignity. Despite its enormous potential for good, some of the degrading and damaging ways in which the Internet can be used are already obvious to all, and public authorities surely have a responsibility to guarantee that this marvellous instrument serves the common good and does not become a source of harm.

Furthermore, the Internet radically redefines a person's psychological relationship to time and space. Attention is riveted on what is tangible, useful, instantly available; the stimulus for deeper thought and reflection may be lacking. Yet human beings have a vital need for time and inner quiet to ponder and examine life and its mysteries, and to grow gradually into a mature dominion of themselves and of the world around them. Understanding and wisdom are the fruit of a contemplative eye upon the world, and do not come from a mere accumulation of facts, no matter how interesting. They are the result of an insight which penetrates the deeper meaning of things in relation to one another and to the whole of reality. Moreover, as a forum in which practically everything is acceptable and almost nothing is lasting, the Internet favours a relativistic way of thinking and sometimes feeds the flight from personal responsibility and commitment.

In such a context, how are we to cultivate that wisdom which comes not just from information but from insight, the wisdom which understands the difference between right and wrong, and sustains the scale of values which flows from that difference?

5. The fact that through the Internet people multiply their contacts in ways hitherto unthinkable opens up wonderful possibilities for spreading the Gospel. But it is also true that electronically mediated relationships can never take the place of the direct human contact required for genuine evangelization. For evangelization always depends upon the personal witness of the one sent to evangelize (cf. *Rom* 10:14-15). How does the

Church lead from the kind of contact made possible by the Internet to the deeper communication demanded by Christian proclamation? How do we build upon the first contact and exchange of information which the Internet makes possible?

There is no doubt that the electronic revolution holds out the promise of great positive breakthroughs for the developing world; but there is also the possibility that it will in fact aggravate existing inequalities as the information and communications gap widens. How can we ensure that the information and communications revolution which has the Internet as its prime engine will work in favour of the globalization of human development and solidarity, objectives closely linked to the Church's evangelizing mission?

Finally, in these troubled times, let me ask: how can we ensure that this wondrous instrument first conceived in the context of military operations can now serve the cause of peace? Can it favour that culture of dialogue, participation, solidarity and reconciliation without which peace cannot flourish? The Church believes it can; and to ensure that this is what will happen she is determined to enter this new forum, armed with the Gospel of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

6. The Internet causes billions of images to appear on millions of computer monitors around the planet. From this galaxy of sight and sound will the face of Christ emerge and the voice of Christ be heard? For it is only when his face is seen and his voice heard that the world will know the glad tidings of our redemption. This is the purpose of evangelization. And this is what will make the Internet a genuinely human space, for if there is no room for Christ, there is no room for man. Therefore, on this World Communications Day, I dare to summon the whole Church bravely to cross this new threshold, to put out into the deep of the Net, so that now as in the past the great engagement of the Gospel and culture may show to the world "the glory of God on the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). May the Lord bless all those who work for this aim.

*From the Vatican, 24 January 2002, the Feast of Saint Francis de Sales*

**JOHN PAUL II**