

Vatican opposes faith-based Web addresses: Could lead to "bitter disputes"

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Establishing Internet domain names based on religion would lead to "bitter disputes" among churches, the Vatican has warned the nonprofit entity responsible for the Internet's naming system.

Domain names that refer to religion, such as ".catholic, .anglican, .orthodox, .hindu, .islam; .muslim, .buddhist, etc., . . . could provoke competing claims among theological and religious traditions," wrote Carlo Maria Polvani, a Vatican representative, in a statement sent to the board of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

ICANN officials, who met March 1-6 in Mexico City, discussed proposals to expand the ranks of so-called generic top-level domains, which now number about 30. The Vatican has held its own country domain (.va) since 1995.

Disputes over domains named for religions "would force ICANN, implicitly and/or explicitly, to abandon its wise policy of neutrality" by relegating "to a particular group or to a specific organization the legitimacy to represent a given religious tradition," Polvani wrote. *-Religion News Service*