Finding faith on the Internet starts with a reliable Web site

A Web site might tout itself as a Catholic Web site, but is it really?

Is what's written there responsible and thoughtful? Or is it the opinion of just one guy sitting in his basement? Perhaps it's a group with its own agenda. How do you tell?

"I try to delve into a Web site and see where they stand on church issues," said Wayne Hipley, coordinator of youth and young adult ministry at St. William of York, Baltimore, who gives presentations on Internet issues. "The Internet has become a way we're doing our formation, and you can't trust everything."

Carl A. Schuetz, affiliate assistant professor of communications at Loyola College in Maryland, Baltimore, suggests readers maintain a healthy skepticism.

That's hard to do when it comes to the written word. After all, since those first elementary school textbooks, the written word has carried the assumption that it's been carefully researched, fact-checked and edited – not the case on the Internet.

Both men offered tips to help readers discern a reputable Web site:

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