

## Text-the-pope service launched in Italy

May 9 2010

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Pope Benedict XVI smiles as he arrives in Saint-Peter's square at the Vatican for his weekly general audience on May 5. Roman Catholics can send now text messages of support to Pope Benedict XVI, Italian public television said Saturday, as the Church faces an international paedophile scandal.

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The [mobile phone service](#) was launched by Rai television's Sunday weekly religious programme, ahead of a gathering organised by lay groups in Saint Peter's Square on May 16 to show their backing for the pontiff.

All messages sent to the special number -- +39 335 18 63 091 -- will be passed along to the pope by the end of May, the broadcaster said. They will be shown from Sunday during the television show "In His Image".

"It's a truly unique event, because with this number everyone can show their solidarity without being physically present in Saint Peter's Square," said Rosario Carello, the chief of the programme on the Rai Uno channel.

The Roman Catholic church and the pontiff himself are under fire after a series of revelations on sexual abuse by priests that have emerged over several months.

Pope Benedict on Saturday accepted the resignation of a German bishop who admitted he beat children in a Catholic orphanage and also faces a paedophilia probe, the Vatican said.

Walter Mixa, 69, was the bishop of Augsburg in southern Germany and of the German military, and tendered his resignation on Thursday from both posts after admitting to hitting children some 20 years ago.

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