

Friend the pope? John Paul II gets Facebook page

March 12 2011, By NICOLE WINFIELD , Associated Press



In this Tuesday, June 8, 1999 file photo, Pope John Paul II waves to the faithful as he arrives to celebrate Mass at the bank of Elk River in Elk, Poland. Thousands of Poles are making plans to travel to Rome for the May 1, 2011 beatification of their beloved countryman, Pope John Paul II, but some have already left, on foot. Two men on Thursday March 10, 2011 began the 900-mile (1,500 kilometer) journey from Olbrachcice Wielkie, in southwestern Poland, planning to walk down Europe's roads and across fields and counting on the support and hospitality of people they meet on the way. (AP Photo/Arturo Mari, Pool)

(AP) -- The Vatican will unveil the latest installment in its social media transformation next week - a Facebook page dedicated to the upcoming beatification of Pope John Paul II, officials said.

The site, which will link to video highlights of John Paul's 27-year papacy, is designed to promote the May 1 beatification. But it may well

continue beyond given the global and enduring interest in the late pontiff, Vatican officials told The Associated Press.

The Vatican's first attempt at an event-themed Facebook page - to promote Pope Benedict XVI's September trip to the United Kingdom - is still active six months later and updated near-daily with 10,000-15,000 regular fans checking in, said Monsignor Paul Tighe, the No. 2 in the Vatican's [social communications](#) office.

"What we found is that Facebook doesn't just share information, it creates community," Tighe said in an interview Friday. "People begin talking to each other and sharing ideas."

That interactivity - and the potential it brings to the church's evangelization mission - is behind the Vatican's new [social media](#) push, the culmination of which will be launched at Easter with a new Vatican information web portal whose contents are specifically designed to be tweeted, posted and blogged.

The portal will serve as a one-stop-shop aggregator of news from the Vatican's various information sources: Vatican Radio, Vatican Television, the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, the Holy See's press office and Fides, the Vatican's missionary news agency, Tighe said.

The Vatican's current website - <http://www.vatican.va> - will remain since that's more of a stable site with basic information about the Holy See, key Vatican documents and offices, and papal activities.

The new site, rolled out first in English and Italian and then other languages, will be more news-based, bringing together onto one page the current disorganized web presence of Vatican media.

Designed thematically, with each format's take on, say, the Japan earthquake or the Libyan uprising posted together, it will be multimedia focused but specifically designed for social media use, so people can tweet, post and blog its contents onto their own friends and fans, Tighe said.

"For us it will be a beginning of drawing on the riches of what we have, of our existing communications apparatus, and integrating that to ensure that its formally working with new media," he said.

The Vatican's communications and public relations woes are well known: muddled papal messages, flat-footed responses to crises like the sex abuse scandal and a certain lack of Internet savvy that allowed, to cite one egregious case, for the pope to lift the excommunication of a Holocaust-denying bishop. (Benedict now says he never would have rehabilitated the bishop had he known his views about Jews, which were widely available with a Google search.)

That said, the Holy See has improved getting its message out online, with a dedicated YouTube channel and Twitter accounts, and its increasing presence on [Facebook](#). [Pope Benedict XVI](#) has spoken out recently about how the church's message can get out effectively and in entirely new ways using the interactivity of social media.

"A lot of our communications in the past was: I have a message. I broadcast it. TV takes it, radio takes it, newspaper takes it, and people passively receive it," Tighe said. "With the Internet you have this possibility of getting people's comments, getting their responses, and also of hearing their questions."

Benedict himself will take a step in that direction on April 22, Good Friday, when he responds to questions posed by the faithful that were submitted online. His prerecorded responses will air on Italian state

television, and presumably then find their way onto YouTube.

"This is a beginning, in a simple way, of allowing the pope to interact with the questions of people and allowing people a direct form of access to the pope," Tighe said. "With time we'll see how different initiatives can develop, but the commitment there is to interactivity, to engagement."

More information:

Vatican's YouTube channel <http://www.youtube.com/user/vatican>

Vatican Facebook page for pope's U.K. visit
<http://www.facebook.com/papalvisit>

Website for beatification cause of Pope John Paul II <http://www.karol-wojtyla.org>

©2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Friend the pope? John Paul II gets Facebook page (2011, March 12) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-friend-pope-john-paul-ii.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--