

Pope may go online to launch Vatican news portal

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Monsignor Claudio Maria Celli shows to journalists the new portal, www.news.va, during a press conference at the Vatican, Saturday, June 25, 2011. The Vatican, whose communications problems are well known, is taking a leap into the world of new media next week with the launch of a news information portal that Pope Benedict XVI himself may put online with a papal click. The portal is being launched Wednesday, the 60th anniversary of Benedict's ordination as a priest. Monsignor Claudio Maria Celli, who heads the Vatican office that developed the portal, said Benedict may put the site online himself with a click from the Apostolic Palace. (AP Photo/Pier Paolo Cito)

(AP) -- The Vatican, whose communications problems are no secret, is taking a leap into the world of new media with the launch next week of a news information portal that Pope Benedict XVI himself may put online with a papal click.

Vatican officials said Saturday that Benedict has been following the development of the [portal](#), which will for the first time aggregate information from the Vatican's various print, online, radio and television media in a one-stop-shop for Holy See news.

The portal - <http://www.news.va> - is being launched Wednesday, the 60th anniversary of Benedict's ordination as a priest and a feast day in the church.

Monsignor Claudio Maria Celli, who heads the Vatican office that developed the portal and will maintain it, said Benedict may put the site online himself with a click from the Apostolic Palace.

"This is a new way of communicating," Celli said during a preview of the site at the offices of the Pontifical Council for [Social Communications](#).

It's the latest effort by the Vatican to bring its evangelizing message to a greater, Internet-savvy audience and follows its forays into Facebook, [Twitter](#) and YouTube. It's also a significant step for the 84-year-old Benedict, who has been bedeviled by communications woes during much of his six-year papacy, much of it the fault of a large Vatican bureaucracy that doesn't always communicate well internally.

There was his 2005 speech about Islam and violence, his recent comments about condoms and HIV that required no less than three official Vatican clarifications, and his rehabilitation of a Holocaust-denying bishop, among others.

While the portal is designed mostly to provide Vatican news in an easy-to-use setting for the outside world, Celli said he hoped it would also improve the Vatican's own internal communications by letting various departments know what one another are up to and help provide a more

coherent message.

"I think that we must educate the Roman Curia of what is the real meaning of communication," Celli said. "Little by little they will perceive that this is the real meaning to be present, to have a relevance."

Previously, popes have been very much involved in the Vatican's communications efforts: Pope Pius XI personally inaugurated Vatican Radio in 1931, and Pope John Paul II oversaw the 1995 launch of <http://www.vatican.va> - the Vatican's website.

That site will remain as the Holy See's main home page and documentation warehouse. And each of the Vatican media that are represented on the news portal will retain their independent sites as well: Vatican Radio, the newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican Television Center, the Vatican press office and information service and the Fides missionary news agency.

The portal, though, will aggregate their main [news](#), initially in English and Italian then other languages, and be updated three times a day, Celli said. The portal is outfitted for live-streaming of papal events, audio feeds from Vatican Radio, photographs from L'Osservatore Romano and printed texts of papal homilies, statements and speeches.

It's also designed to be social-media friendly, with Twitter feeds and Facebook links - part of the Vatican's recent realization that it can reach a wide new audience by interacting with the outside world rather than merely preaching from afar.

There are no search functions on the portal or an obvious link to the Vatican's main home page, but that may come in an update of the site, officials said.

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