

Pope to quit Twitter after stepping down

February 23 2013



Pope Benedict XVI clicks on a tablet to send his first twitter message during his weekly general audience on December 12, 2012 at the Paul VI hall at the Vatican. The account, which has more than two million followers in nine languages, will close next week when Benedict XVI leaves office.

The pope's official Twitter account, which has more than two million followers in nine languages, will close next week when Benedict XVI leaves office, Vatican Radio said Friday.

After a high-profile [launch](#) on December 12 under the name @pontifex,

the pontiff's online musings quickly attracted over 1.5 million followers in English. Around a million other users of the site subscribe to his feeds in Italian, Spanish, German, French, Portuguese, Polish, Arab and even Latin and a Chinese account had been planned.

"It seemed unimaginable one could continue to use a [communication tool](#) that is so popular and powerful during the Sede Vacante (Vacant Seat) period," Vatican Radio said.

The leader of the world's 1.2 billion [Catholics](#) is expected to post his final [tweet](#) on February 27, when he will bid a farewell to ordinary Catholics at a general audience in St Peter's Square.

The account will then be closed on February 28 when Benedict formally steps down as pope, according to [Vatican Radio](#).

No clear favourite has emerged yet to succeed Benedict but several cardinals tipped as possible candidates, including American Timothy Dolan, Odilo Scherer from Brazil and Gianfranco Ravasi and Angelo Scola from Italy, are active Twitter users within the Church.

Benedict's bold move to become the first pope to join the Twittersphere sparked heated debate at the Vatican and within the Church. Supporters said it was a useful way to reach a younger generation, but some observers were dismayed to see that his pious posts invited a stream of mockery.

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