

No more tweets from Benedict

VATICAN CITY - The pope's official Twitter account, which has more than two million followers in six languages, will close this week when Pope Benedict XVI leaves office, *Vatican Radio* says.



After a high-profile launch on 12 December under the name @pontifex, the pontiff's online musings quickly attracted over 1.5m followers in English. Around a million other users of the site subscribe to his feeds in Italian, Spanish, German, French, Portuguese, Polish.

"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 1.2bn Catholics is expected to post his final tweet on 27 February, when he bids farewell to Catholics at a general audience in St Peter's Square.

The account will be closed on 28 February when Benedict formally steps down as pope, according to *Vatican Radio*.

No clear favourite has emerged 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. They are all 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.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge