



For God's sake, blog!, pope tells priests

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By Philip Pulella

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - For God's sake, blog! Pope Benedict told priests on Saturday, saying they must learn to use new forms of communication to spread the gospel message.

In his message for the Roman Catholic Church's World Day of Communications, the pope, who is 82 and known not to love computers or the internet, acknowledged priests must make the most of the "rich menu of options" offered by new technology.

"Priests are thus challenged to proclaim the Gospel by employing the latest generation of audiovisual resources -- images, videos, animated features, blogs, websites -- which, alongside traditional means, can open up broad new vistas for dialogue, evangelization and catechesis," he said.

Priests, he said, had to respond to the challenge of "today's cultural shifts" if they wanted to reach young people.

But Benedict warned priests not to strive to become stars of new media. "Priests present in the world of digital communications should be less notable for their media savvy than for their priestly heart," he said.

After decades of being wary of new media, the Vatican has decided to dive in head first.

Last year, a new Vatican website, www.pope2you.net, went live, offering one application called "The pope meets you on Facebook," and another allowing the faithful to see the pope's speeches and messages on their iPhones or iPods.

Benedict still writes most of his speeches by hand in German and it is younger aides who manage his forays into cyberspace.

The Vatican got egg on its face last year when the pope admitted that, if the Church had surfed the web more, it might have known that a traditionalist bishop whose excommunication was lifted had for years been a Holocaust denier.

(Editing by Janet Lawrence)



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