

Hip! The Pope Goes YouTube

The Vatican is going hip : Pope Benedict XVI is set to have his own dedicated You Tube channel for Video and audio footage of his speeches as well as news of the Holy See.

Although the Vatican has its own website, the YouTube venture represents its biggest reach into cyberspace. Officials at the Vatican say it is aimed at everyone from devout Catholics to the casual web browser. But there is a debate within the Catholic Church about the value of the internet as a missionary tool, our correspondent says. 'Digital generation' The Pope's first message for YouTube is expected to be released later on Friday. Working in collaboration with YouTube's owners, Google, the Vatican will supply a variety of material for its new channel. The Catholic Church will retain full control of the content. The Vatican's Osservatore Romano newspaper said the aim of the deal was to "secure the Pope's presence on the web". It added that Pope Benedict had always been "fond of new technologies". Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, head of the Vatican's communications department, told the newspaper the Pope hoped to reach out to "the digital generation."