

Pope Asks 10 Million Twitter Followers to Pray for Him

A jubilant Pope Francis celebrated reaching 10 million followers on messaging site Twitter on Sunday, a milestone in the Vatican's drive to spread the gospel through social media.

"Dear Followers I understand there are now over 10 million of you!" the pontiff wrote on his nine accounts, which publish simultaneously in languages including Latin, Polish, and Arabic.

"I thank you with all my heart and ask you to continue praying for me."

The first non-European pope in 1,300 years has tripled the number of followers of the @pontifex handles since succeeding Benedict XVI in March, according to the Vatican, which announced Francis had reached 10 million after adding together the followers of all his accounts.

This would make the pontiff more popular than the *New York Times* and just behind rapper Kanye West, according to websites.

But he still has a lot of Tweeting to do before he can catch up with the three most followed people on Twitter: pop stars Justin Bieber, Katy Perry and Lady Gaga, who have more than 40 million followers each.

The Vatican has long been interested in using the latest technologies to keep in touch with the world's 1.2 billion Catholics and spread the faith, with radio inventor Guglielmo Marconi setting up Vatican Radio in 1931.

(Editing by Andrew Roche)