

# Vatican Radio starts carrying ads

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BBC News, Rome

**Vatican Radio - the voice of the Roman Catholic Church - is starting to air advertisements for the first time in the station's nearly 80-year history.**

The first company to run its commercials will be an Italian gas and electricity company - Enel.

Until now Vatican Radio has been wholly funded by the Catholic Church at a cost of some \$30m (£17m) a year.

But the Holy See's latest finances show that it too is suffering from the global economic downturn.

## **Shared values**

Founded in 1931 by Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi, Vatican Radio is the international broadcast platform for the Catholic Church.

It transmits its programmes in 45 languages on FM and the internet with the aim of spreading the message of the Pope and the Church's Christian teachings.

But the station - like other organisations - it has recently been looking for outside financial help.

That has now come in the form of Enel. Its commercials are likely to be in keeping with the measured conservative tone of the station.

In return, Vatican Radio could receive some \$250,000 (£155,000) over the next six months.

Enel says it is an honour to be chosen as the first advertiser on Vatican Radio as, it says, the company has some of the shared values of the Catholic Church.

## **Donations down**

Until now Vatican Radio has been paid for out of the Church's central funds.

The Holy See has just published its finances, showing that it had a deficit for the second year running. The costs of Vatican Radio were partly to blame for the deficit.

The Church says donations were down in the past year because of the world's current economic problems.

It will be a few months before it is known if the commercials are working and whether the audience accepts them.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8135753.stm>