

Pope begins writing last volume on life of Jesus

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI is dedicating his holiday to writing the third and final volume in his series on the life of Jesus, which will cover his infancy and childhood.

The Vatican spokesman, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, told journalists July 23 that just a few days after the pope arrived at the papal summer residence of Castel Gandolfo July 7, he already showed signs of being fully “restored and beaming.” v The pope “immediately began to dedicate himself to reading and studying which, even though it’s demanding, it doesn’t tire him out,” he said.

“It’s clear, therefore, how important it is for him to finish this great project begun years ago,” he added.

Pope Benedict started writing the first volume of the work during his summer vacation in 2003, two years before he was elected pope.

After his election, the pope said in that volume’s preface that he used all of his free time to complete the book, which was published in the spring of 2007 and covered Jesus’ life from his baptism to his transfiguration. In the United States, the English translation was published by Doubleday.

The pope handed his editors the final draft of the second volume of his book, “Jesus of Nazareth,” in May. Father Lombardi said it’s not expected to be on sale in bookstores until next spring since the work must be translated and published in different languages.

The second volume is dedicated to the Passion and Resurrection and takes up where the first volume ended, the Vatican has said.

The first volume, which ran more than 400 pages, highlighted what the Bible says about Jesus, what the moral implications of his teachings are and how reading the Scriptures can lead to a real relationship with Jesus.

Father Lombardi said the 2008 world Synod of Bishops on the Bible showed how critical it was to have a book on the life of Jesus. The pope's book is a "guide for the faithful to encounter, through the Gospels, the person of Jesus," he said.

The Vatican spokesman also said that the pope has reviewed the materials for another volume in the series, "The Complete Works of Joseph Ratzinger."

The first volume of the 16-tome series, being published in German and Italian for now, was presented in 2008. The works, almost all of which were completed before the pope's election in 2005, are meant to reflect the pope's personal theological thought and not the magisterial teaching of the church.