

# Pope emphasizes that theology, Scripture must go hand in hand

VATICAN CITY – In his first address to the world Synod of Bishops on the Bible, Pope Benedict XVI underlined that theology and Scriptures must go hand in hand with exegetical studies.

When exegesis – critical analysis or interpretation – does not appeal to theology or when Scripture is not the soul of theology or theology is not rooted in the Scriptures, then there is a problem with the way sacred writings are being interpreted, the pope said during the synod's morning session Oct. 14.

Canadian Basilian Father Thomas Rosica, the synod's English-language briefing officer, told reporters Oct. 14 that in the pope's seven-minute speech on the exegesis of the Bible "he spoke about the three methodological elements of interpretation, the unity of all Scriptures and the living tradition of the church that's present as we read the Scriptures."

Reading from a simple notebook and speaking in Italian, the pope said he would like his talk to be treated as one of the final propositions the synod members would be formulating, Father Rosica said.

The Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, said the pope's talk echoed the 1993 document, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," issued by the Pontifical Biblical Commission which was headed by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now the pope.

That document commented on the strengths and potential weaknesses of a variety of approaches currently found in biblical scholarship.

In his synod talk, the pope said the historical-critical method of interpretation of Scriptures has helped people understand that sacred texts are not myths, but true history, and the method helps scholars understand the "deep unity of all of Scripture," the newspaper said in its Oct. 15 edition.

However, an exegesis that exclusively uses a historical-critical method carries with it great risks, he said. L'Osservatore Romano reported the pope said such an interpretation could lead people to believe the Bible is only a book about the past.

He said if the hermeneutics of faith disappears and is replaced by a positivistic or secular hermeneutics, then the divine does not appear in history and, as is happening in the work of some biblical scholars in Germany, the resurrection of Christ is refuted.

Pope Benedict sees no reason for theology and exegesis to be separated, L'Osservatore Romano said.

Future biblical scholars and exegetes must receive a broader and more complete formation that will complement the current emphasis on the historical-critical approach, he said.