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Pope confirms he's finishing encyclical begun by Pope Benedict

by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service

Vatican City — Pope Francis told members of the ordinary council of the Synod of Bishops that he was preparing to publish an encyclical on faith written "with four hands" -- his own and those of Pope Benedict XVI.

While a formal speech was prepared for the pope's meeting with the council responsible for helping draft post-synodal apostolic exhortations and suggesting themes for the next synod, Pope Francis told them, "The text will be given to you, no problem, but it would be better to talk among ourselves a bit."

Audio from the meeting Thursday was broadcast in the Vatican press office.

Pope Francis told council members he received their suggested draft for a post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the new evangelization, the theme of the Synod of Bishops in October 2012.

"But there's a problem. The encyclical has to come out and it's an encyclical written with four hands, so to speak, because Pope Benedict began writing it and he gave it to me," the pope said. "It's a strong document. I will say in it that I received it and most of the work was done by him and I completed it."

Anyway, he said, "issuing a post-synodal exhortation at this time -- after the encyclical -- would mean it would be hidden."

However, the pope said, it wouldn't be right that the Year of Faith end in November without "a beautiful document to help us. So, I thought of this: Write an exhortation on evangelization in general and, within it, refer to the synod. That way we could take everything from the synod, but put it in a wider framework."

"I liked the idea and I will follow that path. I've written something, and in August -- which will be quieter -- I can move forward with it. This is the reason I didn't respond to the draft you sent me. I thank you for your work, but we'll move ahead this way."

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