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N. 230426g

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Audience with a delegation from the “Catholic Extension Society”

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation from the “Catholic Extension Society”, to whom he addressed the following greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Your Eminence,

Your Excellency,

Dear Friends,

I offer a cordial welcome to all of you from the Catholic Extension Society who have gathered this week in Rome. Your presence gives me the opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude for your efforts in providing assistance to missionary Dioceses, particularly in the United States, and in caring for the needs of the poor and most vulnerable. I thank you, too, for your valuable contributions to the rebuilding of the Church and the broader society in Puerto Rico, following the various hurricanes and earthquakes which brought such devastation to the island in recent years. As well, I congratulate Sister Norma Pimentel, the recipient of the Spirit of Francis Award, for her service to the many men, women and children arriving at the southern border of the United States – that border is really hot – in search of a better future. It is a joy for me also to recognize the presence of leaders from culturally diverse groups that the Catholic Extension Society supports. Thank you!

In striving to build up the Body of Christ, the Church (cf. *Eph* 4:12), by giving a voice to those who are frequently voiceless, you bear witness to the God-given dignity of every person. This is particularly important at the present time, as the entire Church is undertaking a journey together on the path of synodality. Listening to and including the experiences and perspectives of all, especially those on the margins of society, enriches the Church's life and ministry. For the Church is like a rich tapestry, made up of many individual threads that come from various peoples, languages and cultures, yet woven into a unity by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Spirit

creates unity by harmonizing the multiplicity of the members of the Body of Christ and the diversity of their gifts. In this regard, I am pleased to know of your concern to place those who are often victims of today's "throw-away culture" at the heart of the Church's pastoral activity; in this way, their voices can be heard and all can benefit.

Dear friends, I encourage you as well to continue to express "God's style" in the work that you do. God's style is never distant, detached or indifferent. Instead, it is one of closeness, compassion and tender love. This is God's style: closeness, compassion and tender love. God is like this, this is his style. It is my hope that your service will always reflect these qualities of closeness, compassion and tender love, showing that God draws near to our lives, that he is moved to compassion for those in difficult situations and that his love calls us to be in relationship with him and to see our neighbour as truly a brother or a sister. The Church, therefore, remains grateful for every expression of fraternal charity and care shown to all who are in need, for in this way, God's loving mercy becomes visible and the fabric of society is strengthened and renewed.

Once again, I express my gratitude for your commitment to the Church, and I offer my prayerful best wishes for your work. Upon you, your families and all those whom you serve, I invoke the Lord's blessings of wisdom and strength, and I ask you, please, to pray for me because I also need it! Thank you.
