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Pope Francis meets with members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission April 20, 2023, in the

Pope Francis meets with members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission April 20, 2023, in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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Vatican City — April 26, 2023
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The life and ministry of the Catholic Church is enriched by listening to everyone, especially those who are often excluded by society, and by including their experiences and perspectives, Pope Francis said.

"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," he told a delegation from Catholic Extension.

The pope greeted the delegation during an audience at the Vatican April 26. The group included: U.S. Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago, chancellor of the organization's board of governors; retired Arizona Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, vice-chancellor; and Sr. Norma Pimentel, a member of the Missionaries of Jesus, who received Catholic Extension's "Spirit of Francis" Award this year for her work

providing care to hundreds of thousands of people at the U.S.-Mexico border.

"I congratulate Sister Norma Pimentel," the pope said, "for her service to the many men, women and children arriving at the southern border of the United States."

Speaking briefly in Spanish, the pope said the border was "*caliente caliente*," that is, a hotbed of activity with so many people "in search of a better future."

He thanked Catholic Extension, which had a delegation in Rome April 23-28, for its work "providing assistance to missionary dioceses, particularly in the United States, and in caring for the needs of the poor and most vulnerable," especially in Puerto Rico "following the various hurricanes and earthquakes which brought such devastation to the island in recent years."

"By giving a voice to those who are frequently voiceless," he told the delegation,"you bear witness to the God-given dignity of every person."

As the entire church is journeying together on the path of synodality, the pope said, "listening to and including the experiences and perspectives of all, especially those on the margins of society, enriches the church's life and ministry."

"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," he said.

Francis encouraged them to serve others with "God's style," that is with closeness, compassion and tender love so that "God's loving mercy becomes visible, and the fabric of society is strengthened and renewed."

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