

# Ministry cares for fair, circus workers

Joseph Young/CNS

SAUK RAPIDS, Minn. — Their blond hair darkened damp, Alex Forcier, 5, and his brother Andrew, 14, looked as if they had just finished a super-soaker squirt gun duel. Actually, Father John Vakulskas had just poured water from a pitcher over their heads, baptizing them.

The post-Mass crowd clapped their congratulations after the double sacrament, and St. Cloud Bishop John F. Kinney greeted them with handshakes and thumbs-up.

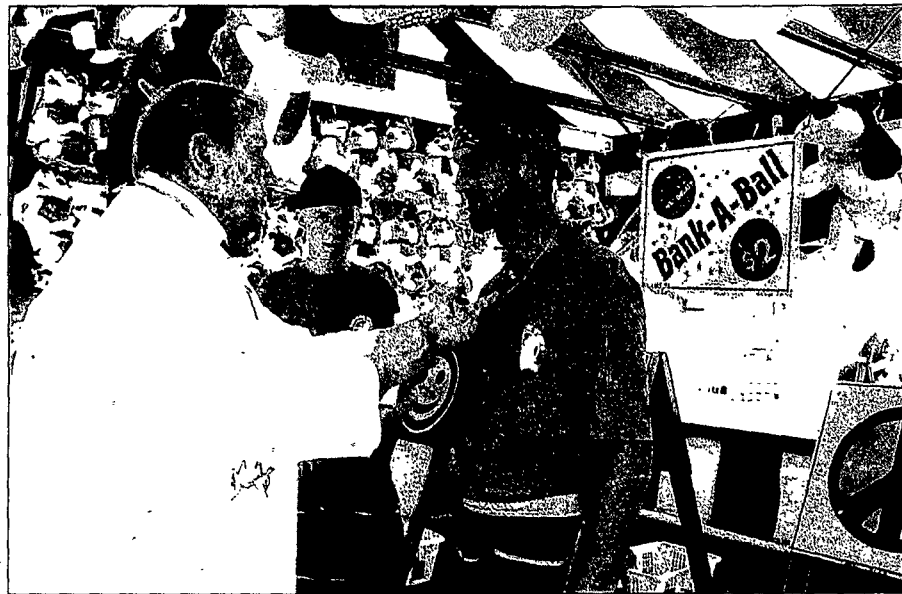
"Congratulations, Alex, and congratulations, Andrew," the bishop said. "We really should have done your baptisms in the dunk tank, however."

The quip was in keeping with the carnival atmosphere, so to speak, that surrounded the celebration. Bishop Kinney had just celebrated Mass Aug. 7 under a tent at the Benton County Fair in Sauk Rapids.

Celebrating with him were about 40 employees and friends of Gopher State Expositions Inc., a St. Cloud-based business that provides rides, games and refreshments at carnivals and fairs all around the Midwest.

Art and Shirley Forcier, owners of Gopher State, grandparents of Alex and Andrew and members of St. Augustine Parish in St. Cloud, invited Father Vakulskas to visit the carnival workers.

His visit coincided with meetings Aug. 5-7 that Bishop Kinney was hosting as the newly appointed episcopal liaison for circus and traveling-show ministries for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops'



Dianne Towalski/CNS

**Father John Vakulskas, a carnival chaplain, blesses a cross for worker Rocky Quade at the Benton County Fair in Sauk Rapids, Minn., in early August.**

Committee on Migration.

Present at those meetings — and concelebrating the carnival Mass with Bishop Kinney — were Father Vakulskas, a Diocese of Sioux City, Iowa-based carnival chaplain; Washington-based Missionary of the Sacred Heart Father Philip DeRea, who ministers to drivers and crews on the race-car circuit; Father John Jamnicki, USCCB coordinator for human mobility apostolates; and Father Jerry Hogan, a Boston Archdiocese-based circus chaplain. Also present was Sister of Notre Dame Charlotte Hobelman, USCCB coordinator of migrant ministries, providing pastoral care for "people on the move," she said.

The USCCB's Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees, established in 1983, coordinates pastoral activity in the apostolate through dialogue and annual meetings with chaplains and members of religious orders engaged in the pastoral care of circus and traveling-show personnel and their families, Sister Hobelman said.

"It is difficult for carnival workers, who travel from town to town, to get away from their duties running rides, games and concessions to attend church," she said.

The office is in the process of "organizing a national network of local parish priests to assist in this ministry of welcoming carnival workers

into local parish communities," Sister Hobelman said, as well as enlisting local priests, religious and lay ministers to "go out to carnivals and circuses to provide pastoral counseling."

"To be a showman is a privilege," Father Vakulskas said during his homily at the Mass. "It's a calling and a ministry. You provide family entertainment for all God's children."

Bishop Kinney welcomed and thanked the fair workers during Mass, saying, "When you come to town you fill us with happiness and joy. You excite us. You teach us how to let go. As people on the move, you remind us that we, too, are not in a city that lasts forever — we are going someplace else, all of us. As our guests, you remind us to be hospitable and to treat each person as Jesus Christ."

After Mass and a catered barbeque lunch hosted by the Forcier family, Bishop Kinney, Sister Hobelman and the priests toured the fairgrounds, visited with carnival workers and blessed the rides, games and concessions with holy water.

Dave Cavallaro, who handles food operations for Gopher State, said carnival ministers "mean a great deal to those in the carnival industry." In spite of negative stereotypes that sometimes still linger, he said, "These workers are not out to rob or steal or do whatever. They spend a ton of money in each town they visit and bring a lot of fun to families."

"These are family people and God's people, and we're called to care for God's people," Father Vakulskas said.

## Bible

During Bible believed children from God, and many children very blessed.

Boys help chores or the while girls help. After a day of studies (usually received training) they made time simple, home games.

Stories about Bible include brothers, David Goliath, the gift by God, and the Jesus, often how much he loved how important kingdom.

## St. Nicholas

Nicholas of Italy in 1245 in Italy prayed that God them with children promised God bring up her throughout his.

When he heard sermon by an Nicholas decided member of the accepted and St. San Ginesio.

He was responsible food pantry or gave daily ration.

Nicholas was in 1270, and he the Augustinian mission sites. Moving urging from returned to his that he felt had.

Nicholas pr streets, ministers and the dying, people resolve peacefully. He honor him on St.

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